

“GHCC Central Kitchen”

Luke 10:1-9

Oct 22 2023

David and I both love eating out.

That may well be because neither of us particularly good at cooking in, so eating out is always our best bet for a decent meal.

What we love to eat while out, however, varies, as you’ve probably discerned over the years of listening to us.

David is willing to try any restaurant, as long as somewhere on the menu there is a burger — or something with red sauce.

Or meatballs. Meatballs work, too.

Me, I’m willing to try almost anything, at least once.

My daughter Brigitta takes it to a whole ‘nother level, from years of living overseas. She really *will* eat anything.

So on those occasions when we are doing mother-daughter outings, she seizes the opportunity to take me places that we both know David would hate.

A few years back, visiting her in DC,

Brigitta and I dined at a Japanese-Peruvian fusion restaurant.

The food was extraordinary,

the kind of food that makes you want to call everyone you know and say “you gotta come eat here.”

Well, almost everyone you know — there weren’t any burgers.

“I knew it would be good,” Brigitta said to me, “because this is a Jose Andres restaurant.”

Jose Andres.

That explained it.

He’s the Spanish-born chef with an empire of restaurants across the U.S., and Michelin stars to boot.

And this guy knows how to feed people, let me tell you.
Jose Andres knows how to feed people.

But not just in a cool DC fusion restaurant.

Jose Andres feeds people when their lives have turned upside down,
when the storms have taken their homes,
or the earthquakes have ravaged their villages,
or war has turned them into refugees.

Maybe you know all this, maybe you've heard the story of Jose Andres and
World Central Kitchen,
but if not, let me tell you about it.

In 2010, when Haiti was hit by a devastating earthquake,
when the pictures coming out of that country showed whole villages
destroyed and children wandering the streets,
Jose Andres and his wife looked at each other and said
“they need food, and we know food.”

So in they went, into Haiti with every volunteer they could find quickly,
and they started feeding everyone they could.

From that moment, World Central Kitchen was born,
and now they turn up wherever tragedy has struck,
popping up tents and cooking vats of food,
and recruiting armies of volunteers to help them place meals
into the hands of the hungry.

In February 2020, when a ship carrying passengers with the new
coronavirus docked in Japan
and no one could get off,

World Central Kitchen were the ones asked to take meals to them.

After Russia's attack on Ukraine, refugees streaming across the border
found hundreds of volunteers stirring great vats of soup to serve them,
and back in Ukraine, more volunteers were gathering food to serve meals to
the families left behind.

“Food is urgent,” Jose Andres says,
“food is not tomorrow, not next week, it’s today.
We feed everybody as quick as we can, that is what we do.”
“Food,” he once said, “ is the language we all speak.”

So now I want to talk about that Gospel story that [Kathleen/Scotty] just read to us.

And I want you to have the image of Jose Andres and World Central Kitchen in your mind.

I want you to picture this man whose only goal is to feed everybody who is hungry.

Because this scripture story is about a man whose only goal was to feed everybody who was hungry.

And to do that, he knew he had to mobilize an army of volunteers, so that he could get food to everyone quickly.

He knew that food was not tomorrow or next week, but today.

Only the food that he knew the people needed so desperately was the food of the spirit,
the food of the soul.

He knew that people were hungry for what would sustain them not only that day but every day.

He knew how hungry people were for hope,
for forgiveness, for Love.

So this man, this man named Jesus,
gathered his volunteers.

He gathered the volunteers he needed to feed everyone.

And that’s the story that [Kathleen/Scotty] read to you.

Luke Chapter 10.

Jesus and his seventy volunteers.

Everybody knows that Jesus had his twelve disciples, his twelve key buddies who went with him everywhere and lent a hand. Not everyone knows that there were a whole lot more people than twelve who helped Jesus out.

Because it took way more than twelve people to get out there and feed all those folks who were starving.

All those people who were starving for hope and healing.

So in Luke chapter 10,

we get the story of all those other volunteers.

It says that Jesus gathered them all together for a little training session, and he said,

here's what I need you to do.

I need you to go out into every village you can find and carry a message of peace.

I want you to look for the ones who are hurting, and I want you to heal them.

And to everyone, I want you to say this:
the kingdom of God has come near to you.

The kingdom of God is here.

It was like World Central Kitchen for the soul, what Jesus was offering. It was him mobilizing an army of volunteers to go to everyone who was hungry for good news, and to give it to them.

We have no idea who these 70 were,

but we know they had to be people who loved Jesus and loved God, we know they had to be people of deep faith and compassion.

Because look what they did:

they did exactly what Jesus needed them to do.

They went out to those whose hungers were soul-deep and they fed them.

They went to those who were hurting and they cured them.
In Jesus' name, they saw the need and they met the need.
It was World Central Kitchen of the spirit,
bringing hope and healing to those who were hungering for the kingdom of
God's love.

So here's what I think.

Here's what I'm thinking today.

I believe that this church, Greenfield Hill Church,
is here in this place, in this time,

to serve as that same kind of World Central Kitchen of the spirit.

I believe that this church is here to feed people who are hungry for hope,
hungry for healing, hungry for community.

I believe that we are all here to serve, to be the kitchen servers —
which is to say that we are here to be Jesus' 70 volunteers,
only we are 7 times 70 and then some.

I believe that we are here because Jesus needs us to offer the bread of life,
and the healing of the spirit.

I believe that we are here to meet the needs,
the profound needs of our community and our world.

I know that sounds mighty lofty,
to speak of this church as being that place where hungers can be fed.
But I truly believe it.

I believe that what we have to offer here is desperately needed.

We offer community in a time when people are feeling tremendously
disconnected.

We offer welcome, in a time when many are not sure where they belong.

We speak of hope, in a time when it is not easy to discern.

We refuse to let go of joy, no matter what.

And we believe.

We believe in a God who never gives up on any of us,

we believe in God's Son who walked this life with us.
We believe in Love.

Here's why I can say all that with such confidence.
Because of what I've seen here in just the last two weeks.
I've seen nervous 14 year olds walk through the door of the Barn and discover immediately that they are welcome there, whether they've ever set foot in a church before or not.
I've seen people who just needed a place of support heading into a meeting in the Church House, knowing that there will be someone to listen.
I've seen a bunch of teens gathered in the kitchen, cooking up chicken and pasta for 60 people they've never met, and packing up dinners to be distributed on the streets of Bridgeport.
I've stood in front of our Church School kids and talked to them about prayer, and had them teach everything I needed to know about it.
I've seen love and service and faith and acceptance all around me, and that's just two weeks.

That's why I can say with confidence, and a whole lot of pride, that this church truly is World Central Kitchen of the soul, right here. And we are needed, this church is needed.
In a world that is hungry right now, we are needed right now, we are needed *in such a time as this*.

Back in August,
I preached on the Book of Esther.
I managed to work in a lot of Barbie references as well, which made for a lot more hits on our Facebook and YouTube postings than usual.
But what I was really focused on was the moment when Queen Esther realizes what she was called to do, when she realizes that she has been called by God, to quote the scripture,

“for such a time as this.”

And in that sermon,

I asked you all to look for the moments that you’ve been called into, to recognize the moments when God has put you somewhere “for such a time as this.”

Those moments when we are most needed, when we are the one who is needed.

Today I’m saying to you that we together, the body of Christ on this hill, in this community, in this moment, we are the *church* that is needed for such a time as this.

The welcome, the love, the compassion, the service that we offer is what is needed in such a time as this.

This is our time.

If at any point in the service today you’ve gotten a little bored, or a little restless, you may well have picked up a brochure lying on the pew next to you today. And if you’ve done that, you’ve already noticed those words I’ve kept mentioning — For Such a Time as This.

We have chosen this scripture as the theme of our Stewardship Campaign this year.

And yes, those brochures are our Stewardship Campaign brochures, because yes, this is *that* Sunday that comes every Fall called Stewardship Sunday.

What we are saying with this Stewardship theme is that we truly believe that this church, all of us, are here for such a time as this.

That a church like this is what is needed in such a time as this.

What we have to give is what our world hungers for.

And just like Jose Andres' army of volunteers feeding the hungry,
just like Jesus' team of 70 sent out to care for the hurting,
this church needs each of you, each one of you,
to love and to serve,
to welcome and to pray,
to rejoice and to hope and to praise.

And yes, to offer what you can, each one of us,
to keep this Kitchen of the Spirit up and running.
So that we can continue to feed God's people with love,
and strengthen one another in faith.

Because we are needed, this church, and each one of us,
truly needed for such a time as this.
Amen.