

How often do you think about the meals you eat or what's included in the time of consuming nourishment? I'd like to invite you to imagine something with me. Imagine you've just had a long, relatively challenging day at work, school, running errands, appointments, commitments or anything else your day may have included. You're arriving home and you walk in the front door and are instantly hit with a wall of delicious smells as you open the door. Smells of your favourite food or even just the smell of meal being cooked, meaning you don't have to. But wait, it gets better! You walk in and you see that all of your closest and most treasured people are there and you get to eat a meal with them. What a treat! Take notice of what you're feeling right now. I'd imagine perhaps some joy, excitement and gratitude.

Have you ever considered that this situation is how we are designed to live? To live in community, sharing meals with each other. But even further, what if I suggested that when we eat a meal together, we are experiencing the kingdom of God on earth and we can see more of Jesus's character by sharing a meal and looking at the meals he shared while he was on earth? I'd love to dive into exploring some of these questions with you today as we look at a few passages in the Gospel of Luke.

Have you ever noticed how many times the Gospel of Luke mentions Jesus eating a meal or talking about food? I'd invite you sometime to try reading through all of Luke's Gospel in one or two sittings and pay attention to how often a meal or food is mentioned! It's a lot! I'll name a few examples to jog your memory on some stories that are included in Luke. This is only a small list, there are so many more. Some of the meal occurrences include: Jesus feeding the five thousand, Jesus eating with the tax collectors (5:27-39), Jesus anointed by a

sinful woman at a banquet (7:36-50), Jesus at Mary and Martha's house (10:38-41), Jesus eating with Zacchaeus the tax collector (19:1-10), and the last supper (22). The thing I'd like us to focus on and see today is that **all the food references and meal scenes in Luke's Gospel reveal Jesus's identity and give us a glimpse of the kingdom of heaven on earth.**

Beyond the meal references, there are a few mentions of food, one of them being recorded in Luke 4 where Jesus is being tempted by the devil. This is where I'd like to start today. If you have a Bible or want to use a Bible app on your phone I'd invite you to open to Luke 4:1-4 where we'll read ...

Jesus, as human, is clearly vulnerable at this point in his life. He has been alone, with no food or water for the last 40 days - it is the perfect time for the devil to strike. His temptation is an attack on Jesus's identity and Jesus's response reveals more of who he is. As the Christ, the Messiah sent from God, Jesus is supposed to be someone who provides for others and holds true to who God is. The devil is tempting him to deviate from that identity and provide for himself. Instead, Jesus brings scripture to mind and declares that food is not the only thing humans live on. Jesus is teaching us we need to rely on God to truly live. "In insisting bread is more than just mere bread, Jesus is helping us interpret our hunger, helping us make sense of our fundamental insufficiency in ourselves that our need to eat affirms every day. Our need for food teaches us of our need for God, God's creation and God's people." **Jesus reveals his identity as our provider.**

When Jesus calls his first disciples, he spends time teaching them and having them learn from his lifestyle. In Luke 9, Jesus sends them out into the world, in the areas they're in to begin sharing what they've been learning. Luke 9:1-6 reads like this... (read the passage) Jesus intentionally instructs them to not bring anything with them and allow the hospitality

of others to take care of them. Jesus is once again demonstrating that reliance on God's provision is essential. He is instructing the disciples to experience kingdom fellowship. The goal is to detach themselves from the worries and values of the world and instead to hold onto the kingdom of heaven values of trust in and reliance on God and sharing with those around them. Jesus's calls for the disciples to accept hospitality comes full circle when just a few verses later, Jesus asks and instructs the disciples to demonstrate hospitality to the crowd of 5,000 men who have been listening to Jesus teach all day. Luke 9:10-17 reads like this ... (read the verses) It's likely this crowd wasn't locals because if they were from the area, they wouldn't have needed food to be provided. There also would have been more than 5,000 people there because that number only includes the men who were present, not women and children. Jesus demonstrates his immense hospitality, generosity and care as he provides for the crowd. Here his identity is revealed again - he is the Messiah who has great care for people and always chooses hospitality. As we are shown hospitality, we don't need to wait to receive it first before giving it. Here again, we clearly see the kingdom values of hospitality. Jesus often becomes the host, caring and providing for those around him.

The Lord's Supper, which is what we call it today, or as it's known in the Bible, the Last Supper, is another clear indicator of Jesus's identity and values. As he breaks the bread and shares the cup, he invites his disciples and now all of us, to partake in his work and mission of demonstrating his love and hospitality to others, revealing the kingdom of God. **He is their true provider and sustainer which they are to remember every time they have a meal.** This remembrance is demonstrated shortly after when Jesus appears and joins the 2 men on the road to the city of Emmaus. The men are discussing the events of the previous

days - Jesus's trial and death, when Jesus joins them on their journey. Luke 24:13-35 reads ...

It is in the act of breaking bread, sharing a meal and extending hospitality that they recognize Jesus. This should remind us of Jesus feeding the 5,000 and of course, more recently the Last Supper. This is the very nature of Jesus - living in community and sharing. The men comprehend Jesus's identity through a shared meal and the fellowship of connection. The nature of Jesus can be found in community.

Today I've used the word hospitality a lot. But let's take a moment to break down what this word actually means. "For Jesus, hospitality was not simply entertaining family + friends. Hospitality had to do with the process of "receiving" outsiders and changing them from strangers to guests." To better understand why this is significant, we need to back track and understand the context of meals in the biblical era. Meals in the Greco-Roman era were a big deal. It mattered who you sat beside and that the important people got a place of honour. It also mattered who was and wasn't invited. Today we are often concerned about getting in trouble for who we've forgotten to invite. For Jesus, he got in trouble for who he did invite. He ate with the outcasts, those of low status, the worst of the worst. And that was intentional. Jesus is clearly demonstrating that fellowship and community can be created around a table.

To summarize what we've tried to see from these passages in Luke is all of the food and meals scenes in Luke's Gospel reveal Jesus's identity and give us a glimpse of the kingdom of heaven on earth. There are an immense amount of food references and details recorded of meals that Jesus attended in Luke. Jesus always ate with those who you would have least expected him to. He welcomed and intentionally invited those on the margins, those who were shunned and those who others wouldn't dare eat with. Jesus often took on the role of

the host, making others feel loved, accepted and welcome. Each meal shows who Jesus is and they give us insight to what the kingdom of God is like. Jesus's identity and the kingdom of heaven is revealed in the simplicity and community of sharing a meal.

So why does this matter? How do these observations impact the way we live? As people seeking to follow him, we are to become like him, reflecting his character to those around us, both believers and non-believers. In order to be able to become more like him, we need to know who he is, how he lived and what his values are. Through reflection and noticing, we've learned that Jesus is our provider, he is deeply compassionate and he extends hospitality to everyone around him. He is a host and he invites us to his table! As our earthly hunger shows our spiritual need to be filled by him, he invites us to join him, sitting at his table, being filled and provided for. We are invited to be in his presence and to be loved. And in response to receiving from him at his table, he asks us to do the same for others. He asks us to be slow, to take time to notice others, making them feel seen. He asks us to be generous with our time and resources as he has been generous to us.

Society and the ways of the world often directly and indirectly tells us we don't have time to do these things. It's a nice thought but how would we ever plan that in the midst of our busy lives? Or emphasizing the need to hold onto the resources we've been given because we don't have anything to give. Or it can be scary to introduce ourselves to someone new, let alone invite them over to have dinner, we don't even know them! But I'd love to suggest and invite us all to consider if this, though at times beneficial and necessary form of thinking and planning, perhaps gets in the way of and prevents us from experiencing Jesus in each other and robs us of the opportunity to be the hands and feet of Jesus to someone else.

In Luke 4, Jesus being tempted, we specifically saw Jesus model for us dependence on God in the midst of physical hunger and need. He shows a redirection of hunger to remind us of the source of our life and who are sustainer is. Food will only temporarily satisfy us our true hunger and desire is for God the one who ultimately can satisfy. Are you hungry? Are you searching for meaning in things and people who just keep letting you down? Are you feeling lost or unsatisfied? Accept the free invitation to sit at Jesus's table and allow him to satisfy you.

Are you hungry for Jesus? are you hungry for his table? Are you hungry and craving the values Jesus demonstrates at the table? The world offers us so many tempting alternatives and quick fixes that may fill us, but they won't satisfy nor will they last. We will continue to be hungry and long for more. Jesus is the more that we long for friends. He is the one who can fill us and give us true sustenance. What would it look like for you to accept the invitation to live as Jesus did and demonstrate his values and bring more of God's kingdom to earth? What would it take for you to do one small thing every day to live more like Jesus? What would it look like to say yes to the next right step rather than needing the whole path laid out in order to start?

Maybe it looks like being intentional about engaging in community in some way. Maybe it's inviting someone over for a meal. Maybe it's having a conversation with someone you don't know at church or at work. Maybe it's being intentionally present throughout your day so you can better notice people. Maybe it's making an effort to intentionally sit down to have a meal with your family and connect. Maybe it's reaching out to someone on your street. Maybe it's intentionally recognizing that Jesus is in every moment of your day and all things even the mundane and necessary like eating a meal.

The next time you sit down to eat a meal or feel hungry I encourage you to remember that Jesus is your ultimate provider and he invites us to sit at his table and to be at peace. And as we have received from him at his table he asks us to extend his grace and hospitality to others. May we all recognize our deep craving for him and share what he's given us with the world, revealing his identity to those around us through intentionality, hospitality and sharing in life together.