



St. Michael's Church  
CHARLESTON, SC

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2016

1 PETER 4:7-11  
LUKE 14:12-23

PREACHER: THE REV. AL ZADIG, JR.

HELP US LORD TO BE SO CONNECTED TO YOU THAT WE MIGHT BECOME THE SERVANTS OF OTHERS.

TAKE OUR LIPS AND SPEAK THROUGH THEM,  
OUR MINDS AND THINK THROUGH THEM,  
AND TAKE OUR HEARTS, AND SET THEM ON FIRE

GOSPEL COMMUNITY PRODUCES  
THE GREAT REVERSAL

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When was the last time you just had a good old fashioned fail?

I mean a total flub up? I think of:

- The field goal kicker who shanks a game-winner
- The golfer who blows a 3 foot put for the win..

One of my biggest sermon fails came just last week...

I was trying to get across the understanding that when Paul said,  
believe in your heart

Jesus is Lord,

He was describing more than an intellectual belief, after all, even Satan believes.

He was saying that belief from the heart means believing here that:

- Jesus is for us!
- We can have confidence that He believes in us!

My fail though came in my metaphor when I said:

It's the confident belief that comes for instance when you attend a Carolina Football game...and the announcer says...

It's another...  
Carolina...

And the stadium roars with jubilation:

First Down!

Therein lies the sermon fail..

I had expected St. Michaelites to kind of yell out...

- First down...
- Instead...crickets mockery
- and how dare you, I'm a Clemson fan...

One of my worst sermon fails in years...!

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One of the most **critical failures** of the **worldwide church** has been our teaching on mission.

When I say mission, I don't mean **missions**, for there is only one mission of the church,

to reach the lost for Jesus Christ.

Mission therefore is always singular.

Here is the evidence of our failure...

When I say mission, what comes to mind?

Probably 2 things...

- Our team in India right now
- And secondly, that could never be me.

Mission is of course global, yet as Jesus said in Acts 1, mission begins locally.

Be my witnesses in:

- Jerusalem
- Judea
- Samaria
- and the Ends of the Earth
- It's local to global.

Yet we always jump to the furthest places and forget about our:

- Dining room
- front doorstep
- and our neighbor don't we?

- Family is mission!

- And imagine if we continually saw mission through the lens of the person who lives through our kitchen window...

Yes, we are our brother's keeper.

I call this, this morning: **the great reversal**...

Jesus said it...when you have a party, a luncheon a dinner...

when you invite people to come to the table...

**Reverse your guest list!**

Instead of folks that

- Live
- Look
- and laugh like you
  
- put them on the end of your guest list!

Invite the

- Poor
- the crippled
- the lame
- the blind

And in the words of Johnny Cash:

“Those living on the hungry side of town.”

- the least, the last and the lost.

What would our dinner parties look like?

Can you imagine everything from the odor, to the conversation?

This my friends is mission.

Let me confess to you a personal mission fail...

I remember in Washington, we were leading the Alpha Course at the Metropolitan Club near the White House...

I had stepped off the Subway and was walking to the club when I spotted a homeless man that would often come to our church.

I thought:

“I should invite him for Alpha today...”

But then rationalized...

- He’s soo dirty
- His smell would be awkward
- The chemistry in the room would change

I ended up not inviting him and it haunts me to this day.

So in preaching Luke 14 today, I admit to failure in this area.

But Jesus has much more to say about the great reversal...

We're told in verse 15 that a Jew overhears Jesus talking about this reversal and says:  
Jesus, Blessed be the man who will eat the feast in the Kingdom of God!

This was a Jew who couldn't wait for the Messianic banquet!  
That day when God would break into history,

and gather the Jews for that heavenly feast.

In fact the Jews even believed that Satan in the form of the Leviathan,

the great serpent monster would be the slain food they would eat @ that banquet!

They also believed that only the Jews would share this end of time meal with Jesus, there would be no gentiles, no non-Jews.

This is what causes Jesus to launch into the Parable of the Great Feast, what I'm calling the Great Reversal round 2...

Jesus tells the story of a man preparing a great dinner party with tons of invited guests,

and when the food is prepared, he sends out servants saying come to the Feast!

Quick word about the ancient RSVP process...

If you were having a dinner party back in the day, you always sent out '2' invitations..

1. The first was sent out long before hand...but the time was never given.
2. The second invitation came on the day of the party, with the time.

However,

The host would always decide what animals to butcher based on the RSVP's and who was coming...

their food preferences...

So the RSVP process was critically important.

But astonishingly, Jesus says upon receiving the second invitation they all say no!

This just wasn't done, these would be expensive and embarrassing no's!

They all have good excuses...

By they way, they are the same excuses we have today for missing Sundays..

1. My business is really consuming me right now
2. I'm married, my family needs me
3. I just got some new toys for my hobby, I can't make it

Notice these are all good things, but they all crowd out the larger and eternal banquet feast!

The host is furious...

- All the custom made food Wasted!

Without skipping a beat, the host says to his team, go into the streets and alleys and invite everyone!

They do, and the host says, there's still more room,

so the host says okay, go further, out to the highways and hedges!

Okay, here's what's going on,

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Jesus in telling this parable is saying to the Jews, because of your excuses..

I'm opening the floodgates inviting the non-Jews.

The heavenly banquet is now open for everyone!

- The gentiles
- The poor, crippled and lame...

This is radical for two reasons...

- First, Jews would not be able to fathom a non-Jew at the messianic feast..
- And Jewish authorities said no one who was blind, crippled or lame could enter the earthly temple much less heaven..

Yet Jesus is about to die on that cross so that everyone would come within the reach of His saving embrace.

- "Go to the highways and hedges!
- Get everyone you can!
- Compel them
- Persuade them
- So my fathers house will be full!"

Why?

So they would be saved from the eternal fires of hell!

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The great reversal for the Jews is that through Jesus Christ, salvation would be available for everyone..

The great reversal for us is realizing to the Jews,

- We are the lame,
- We are The poor,
- And the blind!
- Spiritually if not physically!

So, while mission is global, but it begins like ripples in a puddle...it begins:

With us, Our families, That estranged child, That Neighbor, That bartender, that waitress, Right on to the outer reaches of Durgapur India, Bujumbura, Burundi.

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How do we reach the local world?

2 key bits of good news from the passage:

First....radical simplicity....Jesus teaches mission begins in the ordinary-ness of our life...

Tim Chester in his fabulous book called:

“A Meal with Jesus....”

Says we too readily think of mission as extra-ordinary:

- passports
- shots
- long plane journeys

Highways and Hedges are the words Jesus uses to convey the ordinary—

Meet people where they are in the highways and hedges..

Meet your teens and neighbors where they are in the ordinary-ness of life.

Jesus challenges us to take mission home!

As Chester says, don’t depend on the church’s hospitality ministry,  
Just open your home!

So, First, mission begins in the ordinary places...

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Second, mission happens over meals!

Why? Meals erase social hierarchies.

We all need to eat and when we sit down together, the playing field is neutralized.

As one scholar said:

“I know of no more effective environment for mission than a dinner at home.”

Inviting to eat, and when we do, we then picture Jesus as our guest of honor!

This means that mission isn’t something we can clock in and out from at the end of the day,

nor can it just be outsourced to the professional mission director at the church!

Reversing your guest list at your next dinner party! Try it! Try it over Christmas!

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But just as the Jews had excuses,

I certainly have mine and maybe these are yours too.

- Jesus I would love to but gosh I'm just too busy.

Which is why the most extinct room of the house these days is the dining room!

In fact, in the last 30 years, there has been a:

- 33% decrease in families eating together,
- 17% are eating while watching TV...
- 10% of American families never eat together at all!
- Over the same 30 years
- there has been a 45% decrease in entertaining friends...

Yet meals are the chief way Jesus did mission!

We like Jesus all have to eat,

- that's 3 meals a day
- 7 days a week
- EQUALING 21 opportunities for mission!

What do we do when we eat together?

- Tell our stories
- Hear their stories
- Admit our failures
- Talk about where we have seen Jesus in our lives.

That's when the great **reversal relationally** takes place.

This great reversal is the very heartbeat of Jesus and Scripture:

- Hebrews 13:2:
  - Don't forget to entertain strangers
  - for by doing so,
  - you are entertaining angels without even knowing it!
- Peter from his letter today writes:
  - Offer hospitality to others without grumbling!
  - Use your home to serve others!

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My friends, I know we're living in anxious times..

- A week ago, evil strikes a Texas church ending the lives of 26 believing souls
- Hollywood scandals rampant
- Even a church mediation we were hoping to be over-delayed another month..

If we aren't living this parable of the great reversal, the more likely our hearts will harden, and our view of:

- The world
- The poor
- The church
- Will become calloused and cynical.

Don't wait for the world's conditions, or national church junk to be solved...

Take out that anxiety, even discouragement by going to the highways and hedges...invite!

So many of you already are!

- hosting strangers and now friends at Holy City Connects
- delivering meals on Wheels
- hosting life groups..

Bless you..

But let's take it even further..

I am going to double dog dare each of us to go to the highways and hedges and bring one person, whether:

- Homeless or homeowner
- Rich or poor
- Spiritually or physically blind

To a built in feast Holy City Connects this week:

- Monday-West Ashley
- Wednesday-Downtown
- Thursday-Mt. Pleasant.
- Sunday here to the great feast of Holy Communion!

Open up your world!

Invite and eat, what a great way to do mission..

Other things may need to be pruned away to live the great reversal..

But realize this central truth:



**Jesus will never ask us to give up something good**

**Unless He plans to replace it with something even better!**

Jesus isn't calling us into a labor-camp-joy-less- kind of meal, but a feast where again,

Jesus is the guest of honor--  
And look out, those you invite might just change your life.

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One of the least, last and lost of our day are Veterans.

Statistics tell us that 22 veterans commit suicide every day, that's one every 64 minutes...

Your invitation to the great reversal could mean eternity even for that veteran in your path.

Invite invite, invite.

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Let me end with this great reversal lived out,

the story of Mike Davis.

Born in Israel to Jewish but agnostic parents,  
there was a disdain for anything religious in his home.

Proud of his Jewish heritage yes,  
but God was unnecessary and only for the weak.

After a move to the United States,

Mike enlists as Calvary Scout in the US Army and finds himself in Iraq.

He writes:

"I returned to the US, more committed to Atheism than ever..."

But after moving into his house, his next door neighbor asks him to join his life group, dinner group...

Surprisingly, Mike says yes.

For almost two years his small group who knew he was a non-believer was patient with his questions.

In fact, Mike would later write:

Every single one of those couples over dinner taught me something about God  
and about what it meant to need Jesus as my Savior.

Through that group, I was invited to a men's retreat.

During the retreat

I was out on the lake pondering how I ended up surrounded by Christians.

At that moment with a slight drop of my armor,

the Holy Spirit entered my body and complete truth filled my soul.

Having to tell my Jewish family I found Christ is about the worst thing I could have said.

This wretch who was blind is now more joy filled than and I could possibly imagine.”

My friends, this is the power of the great reversal,

with Jesus as your guest of Honor.

Join me, in the highways and hedges.