



February 2020
Table Under Lyme

Food, gathering together to eat food at whatever kind of mealtime, was a very dominant part of my growing up years. Mum, an adventurous cook, was always experimenting, always baking and there were frequently other people at our table, certainly every Sunday and at Christmas. We kids would talk amongst ourselves about those that were coming. Did we like them, weren't they a bit different, even weird? Mum struck up a friendship with the milk lady Betty and she came in for coffee every day on her milk rounds. Mum felt she hadn't achieved much if she hadn't baked before breakfast...often fruit cakes....and always 3 at a time to freeze for the various teas and meals she organised at church and to feed a large household.

Mealtimes were happy times of talking and listening to each other, often teasing from the older brothers but also stories from mum and dad (if he was back from work), about their lives growing up; how they met, and stories from their time working on the farm, mum in the land army or when she was an evacuee. Because I find people interesting, (some may say I am just nosey) I too enjoy meals with family and friends, and hearing their stories.

Recently I shared dinner on two occasions with people who said to me how lovely it was to share a meal because living on their own, they don't bother much. Of course, sometimes it is lovely to have quiet sandwich reading a book, or a TV meal with no-one around interrupting, but would it be so pleasurable all the time? Sharing food is more than just the food. Actually, the food is almost irrelevant although it is great if it is enjoyable! For me, preparing food is giving a bit of myself to someone else. Opening my home and saying 'come eat with me' is something I do to show my love and care for the person I invite. When I am invited I feel cared for.

I have been wondering why eating together should be a Holy Habit. In the story we looked at today we saw that Jesus was happy to eat with anyone...his was, and is, an inclusive love. At our Eucharist/Communion services, Des always emphasises that ALL are welcome because Jesus welcomes all.

In the story today, Levi held a banquet for Jesus and Jesus went, eating alongside other tax collectors. The tax collectors have been described as leeches that sucked the financial blood out of the hard working labourers, transferring it into the coffers of the occupying Roman Empire, whilst taking as much as they could for themselves. They were wealthy at the expense of their fellow countrymen who were disgusted by them, isolating them from the community they lived in. But, Jesus still loved them, the outcasts, the immoral as much as he loved those who were religiously keeping to the 'straight and narrow'. By loving them, he broke down invisible barriers and they changed - well Levi certainly did.

As disciples of Jesus, learners of his way of doing things, He asks to be like him. Love those, not like us, maybe we disprove of them, maybe they even hurt us. A meal is almost a vehicle to do this...it gives you a table to sit at and something to

do with your hands and your mouth!!!! You can always talk about the food (after you have talked about the weather). Sometimes it is easy to eat together, especially with those we love, those we can laugh with and learn from. But it can be hard. I invited someone for a meal just after Christmas - I really felt I should as I had discovered she had been on her own for a lot of Christmas. She came, it was okay but the following few days showed me why she probably spends so much time on her own!!! Fortunately, she lives a long way away and I don't have to follow up this lonely person BUT it could have been the start of a lovely enriching friendship where we both mutually benefited from knowing each other. So I know living as Jesus asks us demands a lot from us and sometimes we see how good it is and sometimes it is just plain obedient hard work!

We have set the children a challenge to go with this Holy Habit. We have asked them to invite a friend to the Pancake Party on Shrove Tuesday...maybe you would like to invite the mum and dad? But maybe they could invite someone that they wouldn't normally invite...someone who seems not to be the class favourite or have loads of friends.

Please email me a few days before to let me know who will be coming so that we don't run out of pancakes. It will be over by 5pm, (although help clearing up would be greatly appreciated)

Liz

Dates for diary

Sunday @10 on Feb. 9th is an all age service where you don't have to worry about small children keeping still and quiet! It lasts about 45 minutes to an hour and we have coffee afterwards.

Pancake Party February 25th 3:30-5pm for Messy Church and their friends.

St. Marks Community Cinema: Feb. 9th at 7:30pm Downton Abbey (PG)
Feb. 23rd at 7:30 pm Judy (12)

Next Messy Church: Tuesday March 3rd

Liz: liz.townsend3@btinternet.com

Des: minister@stmarkschurch.me.uk

stmarkschurch.me.uk
Charity Number 1176784