

# Sermon Note: The Host Who Becomes the Meal

## Palm/Passion Sunday

### Introduction

As we come to the final week of our Lenten series *The Last Supper: Conversations That Led to the Cross*, our journey reaches the table it's been heading toward all along. Over the past five weeks, we've watched Jesus tell stories about a God who scatters seed recklessly, who keeps sending servants into the streets with invitations, who throws a party before an apology is finished, who sees those lying outside our gates, and who sends a beloved son to a vineyard full of violent and selfish tenants. Each week, Bishop Will Willimon has encouraged us to ask: *Who is God, and what is God up to?*

This week, on Palm Sunday, those questions lead us to a table in an upper room. Here, Jesus takes his place, he gives thanks and breaks the bread, and he gives it to his disciples. He even gives it to the one whose hand is on the table and whose heart is bent on betrayal. He calls the cup a new covenant. Then, Bishop Willimon traces the story forward to Emmaus, where we discover that what looked like the last supper was actually the first of many. The host who becomes the meal is also the risen one who keeps showing up at tables, breaking bread, opening hearts. As Bishop Willimon writes, "It ain't over between us and God till God says it's over."

### Illustration Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7N-a72jEFh0>

In this clip from *Hook* (1991), Peter Banning sits down to dinner with the Lost Boys in Neverland and discovers he can't see the feast everyone else is enjoying.

### Why This Video?

Peter Banning is a man who has forgotten who he is. He sits down surrounded by children who are feasting enthusiastically, yet he can't see a thing. The food is there, the community is there, but he isn't really there. He's too guarded, too controlled, too locked inside the person he became after he stopped *believing*. And then something changes in him. He gets pulled into something messy and unguarded, and in that moment of letting go, the feast appears. It was already there, and Peter had to drop his defenses to receive it.

This is how the table is a miracle: tables *transform* the people who sit around them. When Peter stops trying to control the moment and lets himself be drawn into the chaos and joy and imagination, it's almost like he comes alive again. It is a momentous renewal as he starts to remember who he is. And this table invites everyone: Rufio, who resents him, the Lost Boys who aren't sure they trust him, rivals and skeptics and believers all eating together around the same table. When we're all invited to the table, we're invited into the closest community: where presence outweighs agreement, and where transformation happens in the ordinary act of showing up.

### Video Discussion Questions

1. Peter sits at a table full of food and can't see any of it. The Lost Boys are eating all around him. Why do you think the feast is invisible to him?

2. Peter tries to see the food by concentrating and squinting, by working at it. That doesn't change anything. What finally opens his eyes? How do you think this makes a difference?
3. The food was on the table the whole time, and Peter is the one who changed. When have you experienced something similar, where what you needed was already present and you were the one who had to change?
4. Rufio has been leading the Lost Boys in Peter's absence and clearly resents his return. Even so, they're sitting at the same table. What does it mean that rivals, skeptics, and believers are all eating together? What other examples of this have you seen?
5. When the food appears, Peter takes a moment to savor it. Then, almost immediately, a food fight breaks out. Why do you think this happens? Is it important to the characters in this clip? Is it important to you? Why or why not?
6. Peter catches a sword and cuts a coconut in half with a skill he had forgotten, and looks as surprised as everyone else. What is starting to come back in him, and why does it show up here, at the table, in the middle of the mess?
7. The Lost Boys have been feasting like this every night. For them, the table is normal. For Peter, it's a revelation. What does it take to intentionally seek the extraordinary amidst the ordinary?

### **Luke 22:9-21 (CEB)**

<sup>9</sup>They said to him, "Where do you want us to prepare it?"

<sup>10</sup>Jesus replied, "When you go into the city, a man carrying a water jar will meet you. Follow him to the house he enters. <sup>11</sup>Say to the owner of the house, 'The teacher says to you, "Where is the guestroom where I can eat the Passover meal with my disciples?'" <sup>12</sup>He will show you a large upstairs room, already furnished. Make preparations there." <sup>13</sup>They went and found everything just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover meal.

<sup>14</sup>When the time came, Jesus took his place at the table, and the apostles joined him. <sup>15</sup>He said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. <sup>16</sup>I tell you, I won't eat it until it is fulfilled in God's kingdom." <sup>17</sup>After taking a cup and giving thanks, he said, "Take this and share it among yourselves. <sup>18</sup>I tell you that from now on I won't drink from the fruit of the vine until God's kingdom has come." <sup>19</sup>After taking the bread and giving thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." <sup>20</sup>In the same way, he took the cup after the meal and said, "This cup is the new covenant by my blood, which is poured out for you.

<sup>21</sup>"But look! My betrayer is with me; his hand is on this table.

### **Scripture Study Questions**

1. The crowds who welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem expected a particular kind of king. Days later, at the Passover table, Jesus takes bread and says, "This is my body, which is given for you." What kind of king gives himself away at a dinner table? What were the crowds expecting, and what did they get?
2. The crowds shouted, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord." At the table, Jesus says, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer." What does it mean that the one who comes in the name of the Lord earnestly desires to sit at a meal with these specific people?

3. “Hosanna” means “save us.” The crowds cried it on Sunday. By Thursday evening, Jesus responds by breaking bread and calling a cup of wine a new covenant in his blood. Is this the kind of saving the crowds were asking for? Is it the kind you are asking for?
4. This Sunday is Palm Sunday, and the same community who spread cloaks on the road will call for crucifixion by Friday. Jesus sits at the table knowing this, and he still breaks bread and offers it to everyone, even to the one whose heart is already bent on betrayal. What does it take to both celebrate Jesus and push him away in the same week? What does it take to celebrate Jesus on one issue and ignore him on another?
5. The crowds on Palm Sunday waved branches and spread cloaks, caught up in a moment they didn’t fully understand. At the table, the disciples eat bread and drink wine, caught up in a meal they didn’t fully understand. What does it mean that God invites people into something before they grasp what it is? Where have you experienced God working in similar ways?
6. Jesus enters Jerusalem on a borrowed donkey and eats the Passover in a borrowed upper room. He uses ordinary bread and common wine to enact a new covenant. What do these borrowed, ordinary, humble choices tell you about who God is and what God is up to?
7. Bishop Willimon observes that what we call the “Last Supper” turned out not to be the last meal at all. The risen Jesus showed up again at Emmaus, breaking bread, and the disciples’ eyes were opened. The risen Jesus showed up at a beach while the disciples were fishing and provided breakfast. What does it mean to you that this meal keeps happening and that the table keeps growing?

## Weekly Action

This week, share a meal with someone. It could be a family dinner, a coffee with a friend, lunch with a colleague. Before you eat, pause and share one thing you’re grateful for about the person across from you. During the meal, pay attention to them. What do you notice about this person that you might have missed before? What do you think Jesus would have you do with what you learn in this table time?

Afterward, use a notepad or app on your phone for these questions: *What did I see that I usually overlook? Where else is God already at work in my life that I’m not seeing?* Take what you’ve written to God in prayer. Ask God to open your eyes to the meals, the people, and the gifts already set before you.

## Prayer

God, you are our God, and we praise and exalt you. We confess that sometimes we want you to come in power or prestige to save us, and you choose a humble path: a borrowed upper room, ordinary bread, and common wine. Help us to recognize the many ways you invite us into your humble path of grace, and may we always give you thanks. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

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