

**Rev. Dr. Yugo Suzuki' s sermon**

6/14/09 "Jesus' Table Was Open to All"

Luke 14: 15-24

Throughout his entire ministry, Jesus emphasized sharing a meal as an essential expression of the love of God.

The "Parable of the Great Banquet" which was read as this morning's scripture lesson illustrates this point.

A person prepares a dinner party and sends out his servant to invite friends to attend. But they make excuses for not being able to attend. So the host sends his servant to bring anyone he can find off the streets.

We can imagine how crazy the situation was. If anyone had been brought in off the street, there undoubtedly would have been people of different sexes, classes, ranks, and ethnic groups.

Anyone could have been sitting next to anyone else: female next to male, free next to slave, socially high next to socially low, ritually pure next to ritually impure.

That would have been a social nightmare. It would have been a threat to the carefully constructed social structure of the first century Palestine.

However, Jesus is saying that this social nightmare is exactly the way God wants us to live.

People are sharing a meal together, passing bread, drinking wine, conversing and laughing amiably. It is the open table with Jesus as its host.

At the table of the Last Supper, Jesus took the cup, blessed it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "This is my blood that is shed for you. Take and drink in remembrance of me."

Jesus took the bread, broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "This is my body which is broken for you. Take and eat this in remembrance of me."

Jesus was reminding the disciples that they were to choose the table of oneness and equality under God and refuse the table of division and inequality under no god.

This morning we are at the Lord's Table with Jesus as our host. The person who is kneeling next to you is your brother and sister in Christ. You are infinitely precious in God's sight apart from status, rank, class, or occupation.

It is this affirmation enacted in Holy Communion that gives us the courage to live joyfully and loving in the world in which so much goes wrong. It is this affirmation enacted in Holy Communion that braces us for the living of these days.

Thanks be to God.