

Virtual Lenten Study 2025
THE LAST SUPPER
Conversations That Led To The Cross by Will Willimon
February 11- March 18, 2026, Wednesdays, 6 pm – 7 pm
New Awakening UMC

Chapter 2 – OPEN INVITATION

SECTION 1 — Jesus Ten Dinner Party Invitations Culminates with The Last Supper. Luke 14:1-24

Biblical Foundation: The ten dinner parties (Luke 5:27-39; 7:36-50; 9:10-17; 10:38-42; 11:37-54; 14:1-24; 19:1-10, 22:7-38; 24:13-35; and 24:36-53. Culmination of the ten dinner parties: Thursday Passover supper where Jesus takes a loaf of bread, a cup of wine, and pronounce, "This is my body given for you...This is my blood shed for you. (Pg.19)

Luke's Gospel insists that salvation happens at the table. From tax collectors to Pharisees, from the curious to the condemned, Jesus has been hosting a revolution one meal at a time. By the time we arrive at the Passover table, we realize this is no mere religious ritual, it is the climax of divine hospitality. Bread becomes body. Wine becomes covenant. The host becomes the offering. At this final supper, Jesus does not simply talk about grace; He gives Himself as grace. The church is born not in a strategy meeting, but in a meal where Christ declares, "This is for you." The Kingdom of God is not an abstraction; it is embodied, broken, poured out. And we are not spectators—we are recipients of costly love.

Scripture: Luke 22:19-20 (Pg.19)

19 Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given 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."

20 And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."

Discussion Questions:

How does the breaking of bread and sharing of the cup at the Last Supper transform an ordinary meal into a radical act of covenant and self-giving love?

If the Last Supper is the culmination of ten dinner invitations, what does this tell us about God's persistence in inviting humanity into relationship?

SECTION 2: Jesus Crashes the Dinner Party Luke 14:1–14 (Pgs.19-26)

Jesus refuses to behave at respectable tables. He heals on the Sabbath, confronts social climbing, and dismantles reciprocity-based hospitality. In doing so, He reveals that the Kingdom is not arranged according to human hierarchy but divine mercy. At God's banquet, status is inverted. Those scrambling for seats of honor misunderstand the Host. True honor comes not from elevation but from humility. And generosity is not transactional—it mirrors God's own self-giving love. Jesus exposes the subtle ways religion baptizes social systems of power and exclusion. Lent invites us to ask: Have we mistaken etiquette for holiness? The Kingdom feast reorders our values, reshapes our guest lists, and redefines what it means to belong.

SECTION 2A: Sabbath Healing Luke 14:1-6

Scripture:

1 One Sabbath, when Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee, he was being carefully watched.

2 There in front of him was a man suffering from abnormal swelling of his body.

3 Jesus asked the Pharisees and experts in the law, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?"

4 But they remained silent. So taking hold of the man, he healed him and sent him on his way.

5 Then he asked them, "If one of you has a child or an ox that falls into a well on the Sabbath day, will you not immediately pull it out?"

6 And they had nothing to say.

SECTION 2B: Table Etiquette – Luke 14:7-11)

Scripture:

7 When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable:

8 “When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited.

9 If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, ‘Give this person your seat.’ Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place.

10 But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, ‘Friend, move up to a better place.’ Then you will be honored in the presence of all the other guests.

11 For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

SECTION 2C: Guest List – Luke 14:12-14

Scripture:

12 Then Jesus said to his host, “When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid.

13 But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind,

14 and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

Discussion Questions:

Where might Jesus be disrupting our comfort, traditions, or unspoken “table rules” today?

Jesus tells the host to invite those who cannot repay him. How does this redefine generosity and hospitality and what would it look like for our church or personal lives to embody this radical hospitality during Lent?

SECTION 3: Absurd Excuses - Luke 14:15-20 (Pgs. 26-32)

The Parable of the Great Banquet

The tragedy of the parable is not rebellion but indifference. The invited guests are not hostile; they are busy. Their excuses are ordinary, land, work, marriage. Yet the ordinary becomes idolatrous when it dulls our response to grace. The Kingdom arrives ready, prepared, abundant, yet we delay. Willimon reminds us that the greatest threat to discipleship is not persecution but preoccupation. God's banquet does not compete well with our calendars. The invitation exposes what we truly treasure. Conversion begins when we recognize that what we call "responsibility" may be resistance to a joy we cannot control. The question is not whether we are invited, but whether we will come.

Scripture:

15 When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, "Blessed is the one who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God."

16 Jesus replied: "A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests.

17 At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.'

18 "But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, 'I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.'

19 "Another said, 'I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.'

20 “Still another said, ‘I just got married, so I can’t come.’

Discussion Questions:

Why do you think Jesus portrays these excuses as tragic rather than practical and what modern “reasonable excuses” keep people from responding fully to God’s invitation?

In what ways do comfort, possessions, or relationships subtly compete with our response to God’s Kingdom banquet?

SECTION 4 - There Is Still Room - Luke 14:21-23 (Pgs.32-35)

Divine hospitality refuses to be thwarted by rejection. When the first invitees decline, the Master widens the circle. The poor, crippled, blind, and lame, those who never expected a seat, are gathered in. The Kingdom is not diminished by refusal; it expands through grace. “There is still room” reveals the relentless generosity of God. The Church does not exist to curate an exclusive gathering but to embody this expansive mercy. The command to “compel them” is not coercion but urgency, the urgency of love that refuses to leave anyone outside the feast. Lent calls us to see the empty chairs in our sanctuaries and the overlooked neighbors in our communities as signs that grace is still moving outward.

Scripture:

21 “The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, ‘Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.’

22 “ ‘Sir,’ the servant said, ‘what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.’

23 “Then the master told his servant, ‘Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full.

Discussion Questions:

The master expands the invitation to the poor, crippled, blind, and lame. What does this reveal about who God prioritizes and how does this challenge our assumptions about worthiness?

The servant is told to “compel them to come in.” Where do you see that there is “still room” in your life or ministry for others to experience Christ?

SECTION 5 – The Uncomfortable Truth About Invitation - Luke 14:24
(Pgs. 34-38)

Grace is free, but not casual. The final warning unsettles us because it reveals that invitation carries consequences. God’s hospitality is abundant, yet it demands response. To continually refuse the Host is to forfeit the feast. This is not divine pettiness; it is the sober truth that love cannot be experienced if it is persistently rejected. Lent confronts us with this uncomfortable reality: neutrality toward Christ is not possible. The cross, foreshadowed at the table, forces decision. Will we receive the bread? Will we share the cup? The Kingdom banquet is open, but not indefinite. The time to respond is now.

Scripture:

24 I tell you, not one of those who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.”

Discussion Questions:

Jesus ends with a sobering warning that those who refused the invitation will not taste the banquet. What does this teach us about the seriousness of responding to grace?

Lent calls us to examine our response to Christ. Are there areas where you have politely declined God's deeper invitation?

Closing Prayer

Gracious and loving God, we thank You for the open invitation of Your table, where mercy is abundant and grace is freely given. Lord Jesus, You took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it for us; You poured out the cup of a new covenant sealed in love. Forgive us for the times we have been distracted or slow to respond to Your call. Renew in us a humble and grateful heart that says yes to Your invitation. Holy Spirit, open our eyes to those who are still waiting to know there is room, and make us faithful servants of Your grace. As we journey through Lent, draw us into covenant with You. In Jesus' holy name, Amen

Topic: The Last Supper - Lenten Study 2026 - New Awakening UMC
Pastor Monica Jefferson - Facilitator
Time: Feb 11 – March 18, 2026, 6:00 PM Central Time
Every week on Wed, until Mar 18, 2026, 6 occurrence(s)

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NOTES

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