

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 3 – FEASTING WITH THE FOUND

SECTION 1: Biblical Foundation Summary: Luke 15:1-32

Jesus responds to criticism from the Pharisees and scribes who question why He welcomes and eats with sinners. Their complaint becomes the setting for three parables: the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the beginning of the prodigal son narrative. Jesus' table fellowship is not accidental; it reveals the very heart of God. In Luke 15, God is portrayed as One who actively seeks the lost, rejoices extravagantly over their return, and restores them fully to community. The shepherd searches, the woman sweeps, and the father runs.

Each story highlights divine initiative and joyful celebration. The "feast" becomes central imagery. When the lost are found, heaven throws a party. Grace does not whisper it rejoices loudly. The father in the prodigal story does not demand repayment or probation; instead, he restores identity, dignity, and belonging.

The table is an extension of the divine feast. Jesus' ministry consistently moves toward the lost, not the deserving. The religious leaders are troubled because grace disrupts their systems of worthiness. But in God's economy, the found are celebrated, not scrutinized. The Gospel is not about guarding the table it is about expanding it. The Cross, then, is the ultimate act of "feasting with the found," where sinners are welcomed home and restored through costly grace.

SECTION 2: The Reckless Shepherd - Luke 15:1-7 (Pgs. 39-41)

1 Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him.

2 And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them."

3 So he told them this parable:

4 "Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it?

5 When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices.

6 And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.'

7 Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

Discussion Questions:

What is so absurd about this shepherd's behavior?

What does the shepherd's behavior tell us about God's character?

SECTION 3: The House-Wrecking Woman - Luke 15:8-10 (Pgs. 40-41)

8 "Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it?

9 When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, "Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.'

10 Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

Discussion Questions:

Why does the woman's behavior seem so excessive for finding one coin?

What does this story reveal about what God considers valuable?

SECTION 4: The Most Wonderful Word (Pg. 41)

8 "Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully **until** she finds it?

Discussion Questions:

When does God call off the search for the lost?

How does the word until change your understanding of God's persistence?

SECTION 5 — The Prodigal Father - Luke 15:11-23 (Pgs. 41- 44)

11 Then Jesus said, "There was a man who had two sons.

12 The younger of them said to his father, "Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.' So he divided his property between them.

13 A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living.

14 When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need.

15 So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs.

16 He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything.

17 But when he came to himself he said, "How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger!

18 I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you;

19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands." '

20 So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him.

21 Then the son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

22 But the father said to his slaves, "Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet.

23 And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate;

Discussion Questions:

Why doesn't the father want to hear the son's carefully prepared apology?

When has God surprised you with celebration instead of scolding?

SECTION 6: Meeting the Older Brother - Luke 15: 25-32 (Pgs. 45 -49)

25 "Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing.

26 He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on.

27 He replied, "Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.'

28 Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him.

29 But he answered his father, "Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends.

30 But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!

31 Then the father said to him, "Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours.

32 But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.' "

Discussion Questions:

How does this story illuminate the older brother's mindset?

What is the difference between faithful church membership and older brother syndrome?

SECTION 7: The Church Search Party - Luke 15:32 (Pgs. 50-57)

32 But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.' "

Discussion Questions:

Do you think you would be among the celebrators, or would you be a grumbler outside the party for the homecoming of the prodigal son?

How is New Awakening UMC joining with Jesus in seeking out, searching for, and saving the lost?

Closing Prayer

Gracious God, you practice, your kind of economics, that leaves the ninety-nine to search for the one, throwing expensive parties of children who use your gifts unwisely. Help us trust your love and lessons even when your lessons offend our sense of fairness. Make us partners in your search and rescue mission plans to find the lost. Give us your worldview of the importance of seeking others. Save us from the older brother's spirit that would rather be right in our own eyes than celebrate. As we continue toward your table, help us remember that we are there only because you searched for us first. 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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