

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

**Chapter 1 — SOWING, SEEKING, FINDING**

**SECTION 1: Forgiveness At The Table – Luke 7:36-43, 49** (Pgs. 1-3)

In this scene, Jesus is not merely forgiving a woman; He is reordering the moral universe of the table. Simon assumes that holiness keeps score, that righteousness knows who belongs and who does not. Jesus tells a story that exposes a dangerous illusion—that we love God because we are good, when in fact we love God because God has been merciful. The woman's extravagant act is not inappropriate emotion; it is truthful worship. She knows the depth of her needs, and therefore the depth of her gratitude. Lent begins here, not with our resolve to do better, but with our honest recognition that we are people who live by mercy alone. (Pgs. 1-2)

**Scripture: Luke 7:36-43, 49**

36 One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and took his place at the table.

37 And a woman in the city, who was a sinner, having learned that he was eating in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster jar of ointment.

38 She stood behind him at his feet, weeping, and began to bathe his feet with her tears and to dry them with her hair. Then she continued kissing his feet and anointing them with the ointment.

39 Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw it, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what kind of woman this is who is touching him—that she is a sinner."

40 Jesus spoke up and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." "Teacher," he replied, "speak."

41 "A certain creditor had two debtors; one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty.

42 When they could not pay, he canceled the debts for both of them. Now which of them will love him more?"

43 Simon answered, "I suppose the one for whom he canceled the greater debt." And Jesus said to him, "You have judged rightly."

49 But those who were at the table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?"

**Discussion Questions:**

What if forgiveness is not the reward for repentance, but the cause of it?

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How does Jesus redefine holiness, not as separation from sinners, but as nearness to them?

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Why does grace so often offend those who believe they have earned their place at the table?

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**SECTION 2: The Risk of the Word - Luke 8:4–14 (Pgs. 3-7)**

Jesus tells this parable to a crowd, not to explain why some people fail, but to warn that hearing the Word is a risky affair. The seed is never the problem, God's Word is lavish, reckless, and generous. The problem is that lives cluttered with fear, distraction, and unexamined desire leave little room for roots. Willimon reminds us that the church does not control outcomes; we are witnesses to a Word that exposes, disrupts, and sometimes fails to take hold. Lent is not about producing fruit on demand, it is about clearing the ground so that when the Word comes, it can stay.

**Scripture: Luke 8:4-8**

4 When a great crowd gathered and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable:

5 "A sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell on the path and was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up.

6 Some fell on the rock; and as it grew up, it withered for lack of moisture.

7 Some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew with it and choked it.

8 Some fell into good soil, and when it grew, it produced a hundredfold." As he said this, he called out, "Let anyone with ears to hear listen!"

9 Then his disciples asked him what this parable meant.

10 He said, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God; but to others I speak in parables, so that "looking they may not perceive, and listening they may not understand.'

11 "Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.

12 The ones on the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved.

13 The ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe only for a while and in a time of testing fall away.

14 As for what fell among the thorns, these are the ones who hear; but as they go on their way, they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature.

**SECTION 3: Mercy That Interrupts - Luke 10:25-37 (Pgs. 8-13)**

The lawyer wants a definition; Jesus gives him a disruption. The parable refuses to let neighbor-love remain an abstract virtue or a manageable obligation. Mercy appears here not as sentiment but as interruption, an unscheduled demand that reorders priorities, risks contamination, and costs real resources. The priest and Levite are not villains; they are professionals with obligations. The Samaritan is dangerous because he

acts without permission. Lent presses us toward this unsettling truth: faithfulness is measured not by intentions, but by who we stop for.

**Scripture: Luke 10:25-37**

25 Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

26 He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?"

27 He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself."

28 And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live."

29 But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

30 Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead.

31 Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

32 So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

33 But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity.

34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

35 The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, "Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend."

36 Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?"

37 He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

**Discussion Questions:**

Why does Jesus' place responsibility for fruitfulness not on the seed, but on the soil?

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What does this parable suggest about the vulnerability of God's Word in human lives?

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How does Lent function as a season of soil-tending rather than self-improvement?

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**SECTION 4: The Politics of Mercy - Luke 1: 50-55 (Pgs. 13-18)**

Mary's song is not gentle spirituality—it is prophetic disruption. Mercy, in Luke's Gospel, is never neutral. It topples the proud, empties the rich, and lifts those who have learned to live without power. Willimon insists that this is not ideology; it is theology. God's mercy is faithful to God's promises, not to human arrangements. Lent reminds us that God's saving work often feels like loss to those who benefit from the status quo. The question is not whether God's mercy will rearrange the world, but whether we will recognize it when it does.

**Scripture: Luke 1: 50-55**

50 His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.

51 He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

52 He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly;

53 he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.

**Discussion Questions:**

Why does Mary speak of mercy in terms of upheaval and reversal?

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How does God's mercy challenge systems built on pride, power, and scarcity?

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What does it mean to proclaim this song in a world that prefers stability over justice?

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**SECTION 5: Mercy as the Shape of Blessing – Matthew 5:7 (Pgs.15-18)**

Jesus does not say the merciful *deserve* mercy; He says they *receive* it. Mercy is not currency, it is communion. To practice mercy is to step into the very life of God, who refuses to deal with humanity according to strict accounting. Willimon would say that mercy is not optional Christian behavior; it is evidence that we know who God is. As Lent moves us toward the cross, this beatitude reminds us that the crucified Christ is God's final word on mercy, given freely, received humbly, and never controlled.

**Scripture: Matthew 5:7**

7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

**Discussion Questions:**

Why does Jesus place mercy at the center of blessedness?

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How does mercy function as both gift and discipline?

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What does it reveal about God that mercy given is mercy received?

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**CLOSING PRAYER**

**Merciful God, Thank You for meeting us here, at the table, in the Word, and in truth. Forgive us when we resist Your mercy or try to manage Your grace. Soften the soil of our hearts, that Your Word may take root and bear fruit. Teach us to recognize our neighbors, to follow Jesus beyond comfort, and to trust Your mercy to lead us forward. As we continue this Lenten journey toward the cross, shape us by Your love, send us with courage, and keep us faithful. We offer ourselves to You again, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.**

Monica Jefferson is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

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)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82311645270>

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# NOTES

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