



EMBODIED HOSPITALITY

by Lena Van Wyk

“Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning, and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks,” Jesus tells his disciples in the 12th chapter of Luke.

Peter, in turn, asks Jesus, “Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for all?” And Jesus replies, “Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions.”

In this teaching, Jesus is making it clear to his disciples that they are to be stewards, or managers, of his Kingdom household until he returns in the Last Days. They are to be ever vigilant, perpetually awake, and constantly alert, awaiting his return. But it is to be an active period of waiting, attending to the economy of the household they are entrusted with: the caring of all the precious bodies under their care.

Jesus doesn't say that they are to wait and craft perfect theology or build soaring cathedrals, though these are also goods for the Kingdom. But their essential task in

tending to their flock is attending to their embodied needs. Interestingly, this parable comes directly after the famous passage in Luke 12:22 where Jesus teaches, “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on.” For the Father will care for you. After that passage, the reader is always left wondering: but how is God going to feed and clothe me? What are the mechanics of that provision? And this parable seems to provide an answer: Christ will literally feed his followers through his Church.

The early church took the task of feeding one another very seriously, as an essential part of being the body of Christ, through their eucharistic meals together and through feeding the widows and orphans and anyone in need. In Acts, the apostles even appointed a particular office of leaders—deacons—to attend to table ministries of the church and keep everyone fed, since the task was taking so much energy and time and needed Spirit-filled leadership (Acts 6).

It is in this tradition that Christians have continued to eat together and feed those in need for over 2,000 years. The Church has fed people across every century, in perhaps every country on earth, over millions of tables, with every kind of food known to man.

For over two millennia, we have kept the table of Christ laden with

good things for our fellow servants of God and our fellow children of God. We do so because we know that every human body is of sacred worth to God and he delights in sustaining our bodies until the time that He resurrects them into eternal life. And even then, in the New Creation, we are told the feast will continue in the most remarkable wedding feast (Rev 19:7-10). Jesus eats broiled fish after his own resurrection, suggesting that eating together will be an eternal part of our life with Him (Luke 24:42). And so it is in this holy tradition that Church of the Redeemer pursues our food and farming ministries at New Garden Park.

We farm so that we can be the hands and feet that feed our parishioners and those in our community.

We run our Free Farmers Market so that we can nourish the widows, orphans, and anyone who is suffering or marginalized in our city.

We host potlucks at our Feast Days and our life groups so that we each can practice the simple but sacred art of feeding a brother or sister in Christ from the bounty of what God has gifted us.

We sit at the table together, one eye on the door, hoping that our beloved Jesus will open it and find us breaking bread together in love and say, “Children, I am well pleased. Let's continue to feast together now that I have joined you.”

