An Incredible Invitation

Eternity's Table

Reflections on the Lord's Supper

10.25.26

SUMMARY:

I want to tell you up front what I'm going to teach and tell you this morning. This way, if I lose you somewhere along the way, you will know where we are going.

In these passages, we see God inviting the elders of Israel to share a meal at eternity's table.

The language of the text points us toward the Lord's Supper: When Jesus lifts the cup and tears the bread and says This is the New Covenant in my blood. What was He thinking about? He was pointing to a day, 1500 years before, when the Godhead came down upon the Mountain and ate and drank with the leaders of Israel.

God invites us to have an intimate relationship with Him, and that is open to all of us. To participate in that relationship, not only do we have to believe (accept the invitation), we must reverently attend (consecrate ourselves).

Scripture

Exodus 19:9–12 (CSB)

9 The LORD said to Moses, "I am going to come to you in a dense cloud, so that the people will hear when I speak with you and will always believe you." Moses reported the people's words to the LORD, 10 and the LORD told Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow. They must wash their clothes 11 and be prepared by the third day, for on the third day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. 12 Put boundaries for the people all around the mountain and say: Be careful that you don't go up on the mountain or touch its base. Anyone who touches the mountain must be put to death.

Exodus 24:8–11 (CSB)

[8] Moses took the blood, splattered it on the people, and said, “This is the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you concerning all these words.”

[9] Then Moses went up with Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of Israel’s elders, [10] and they saw the God of Israel. Beneath his feet was something like a pavement made of lapis lazuli, as clear as the sky itself. [11] God did not harm the Israelite nobles; they saw him, and they ate and drank.

Introduction

A. If you were a god, what would you do?

1. Some of you would want to fly.

2. Or disappear or make someone disappear.

3. Of course we would make sure we had all the power, and gold, and glory, and every want satisfied.

4. Here’s what I wouldn’t do: I wouldn’t associate with people.

B. This is the kind of God the religions of the world are familiar with.

1. From Zeus to Pharaoh, Thor to Hermes, the gods that humans create and imagine don’t want to have relationships with human beings.

2. The gods of mythology use, abuse, and destroy humans but don’t fellowship with them.

3. The god of Islam isn’t concerned with being in relationship with the world.

4. In the world’s religions, humans are objects and pawns, not participants in the Divine plan.

C. Then there is YHWH.

1. The God we read about in both the Old and New Testaments.

2. The God above all gods, the King of the Universes.

3. He does what is unthinkable.

4. He not only creates humans, but desires to fellowship with us.

5. Throughout Genesis, we read of God meeting with Adam and Eve in the Garden for fellowship.

a. He met with the Patriarchs at various times and in various ways.

b. A God who repeatedly reaches out to a humanity that has fallen and cannot get up by itself. Truly, the commercial is correct, "I've fallen, and I can't get up."

c. God does what I wouldn't do: He calls out to humankind and invites us to come and to know Him.

Exodus 19 introduces a new phase of relationship

Exodus 19:3–6 (CSB)

3 Moses went up the mountain to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain: "This
is what you must say to the house of Jacob and explain to the Israelites: 4 'You have seen what I
did to the Egyptians and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. 5 Now if
you will carefully listen to me and keep my covenant, you will be my own possession out of all
the peoples, although the whole earth is mine, 6 and you will be my kingdom of priests and my
holy nation.' These are the words that you are to say to the Israelites."

A. God had loved Israel.

1. This relationship that was made explicit and permanent to Abraham in Genesis 12 did not change even during the 430 years they were slaves in Egypt.

2. Hard times are not proof that God doesn't love you.

3. Even during the generations of slavery, God loved His people.

B. When the time was right, God delivered them in a miraculous way.

1. God didn't love them less during their time in Egypt.

2. But now, here in the wilderness, before they enter the Promised Land, God enters into a new phase of their relationship.

5 Now if you will carefully listen to me and keep my covenant, you will be my own
possession out of all the peoples, although the whole earth is mine, 6 and you will be my
kingdom of priests and my holy nation.'

C. This is an incredible contrast: people who were owned, possessed, by Egypt will be owned by God.

1. Former slaves will become God's kingdom of priests.

2. The riffraff of Egypt will become God's holy nation.

3. The Israelites couldn't have planned that or earned that.

4. This is the sovereign work of God.

    a. Perhaps it would be helpful for us today, in an atmosphere charged with antisemitism, that when we struggle with the history and future of Israel, we remember that God's love for this has never been dependent upon them deserving it.

    b. At no time in their history have the Israelites "deserved" God's love.

    c. God's love for them has always been His choice, His mercy, His grace, His plan.

5. Exodus tells the story of God's undeserved, unmerited love and favor.

New Levels, New Responsibilities.

A. At Mt. Sinai, a new level of relationship begins.

1. As great as it had been up to this point, the best was yet to come.

2. The Jews had read about God meeting with their forefathers and mothers.

3. They themselves watched as the plagues and the Angel of Death came upon Egypt.

4. They walked through the Red Sea on dry ground.

5. As great as all of these miracles and stories were, the best was yet to come.

B. This new stage and level of relationship began with conditions.

Exodus 19:9–12 (CSB)

9 The LORD said to Moses, "I am going to come to you in a dense cloud, so that the people will hear when I speak with you and will always believe you." Moses reported the people's words to the LORD, **10** and the LORD told Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow. They must wash their clothes **11** and be prepared by the third day, for on the third day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. **12** Put boundaries for

the people all around the mountain and say: Be careful that you don't go up on the mountain or touch its base. Anyone who touches the mountain must be put to death.

1. We don't like talk of conditions or requirements.

    a. I do agree that we must be careful here.

    b. It is easy for us to push a form of legalism that leads us to bondage and not freedom.

    c. Yet, American Christians by and large don't like the sound of any conditions.

2. God loves us unconditionally is what our version of God says.

    a. The god we would create would say God loves everybody and everybody goes to heaven.

    b. We have created a god that is much more like a doting grandparent and not a sovereign ruler.

    c. This is not the God of Scripture.

3. God tells Moses to go tell the people:….IF!!!!!!

    a. If you will carefully listen to me and keep my covenant.

    b. Love has rules.

    c. These rules are not to keep a relationship from being fun but to protect the parties.

C. Each stage of a relationship has requirements.

1. What is restricted and cursed in the dating stage is blessed in marriage.

    a. Sex is not for those who are dating; it is for those who are married.

    b. Marriage brings a restriction.

        1. You can date other people before you are married.

        2. But marriage is exclusive.

2. This new stage, phase, and level of access to God for Israel came with a requirement:

    a. Listen and keep my covenant.

    b. These weren't exactly knew requirements but not it was clear.

c. You will be a kingdom of priests, my chosen people.

d. You must listen and obey.

D. God didn't have to do this here.

1. He could have saved them and then turned them loose on their own.

2. This is how we often picture salvation:

a. God saves us from our sin and keeps us from going to hell.

b. But we have to figure the rest of it out on our own.

3. Instead, God enters into a new covenant with the people.

4. This is taking the relationship to a whole new level.

A New Covenant

Exodus 24:8–11 (CSB) **8** Moses took the blood, splattered it on the people, and said, "This is the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you concerning all these words."

A. To "covenant" means to cut.

1. It's the binding of parties together.

2. And in the Ancient world, part of the cutting of a covenant meant taking sacrifices and cutting them in half.

3. Then, the parties would share a meal together.

4. This would bind the two parties and signify the agreement.

5. Instead of going to court, they would go to the Table.

B. Moses took the blood of the sacrifices and sprinkled it on the people.

1. The writer of Hebrews tells us why.

2. He says:

Hebrews 9:22 (CSB) **22** According to the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

C. If I'm honest, the power of blood doesn't make a lot of sense.

1. It's kind of like the laws of gravity.

2. I know they are true, and I know it works, but I don't fully grasp the significance.

D. In the Old Testament, a lot of covenants involved the shedding of blood.

1. The blood points us to the realities of life and death.

2. The blood reminds us this was a serious and important agreement: so much so that something had to die.

E. All of this was God's idea:

1. God comes down.

2. God gives the commandments.

3. God directs the covenant.

4. All of this is God's plan.

5. He has sought out Israel, and Israel's job was to respond.

Consecration

A. To consecrate is to cleanse and prepare.

1. They had things to do, like wash their clothes and get clean.

2. There were things not to do, like have sexual emissions for three days.

3. Although God is leading all of this, there was a part for the people to play.

4. Prepare yourself for the presence of God.

B. Consecration does not convince God to come down.

1. Instead, the consecration of the people was God's command: He says, "I'm coming down, and you have to get ready."

2. Grace brings us to God's presence; consecration allows us to stay there.

3. On our own, we have no right to come into God's presence.

a. We have no access, no ability, nothing.

b. If God had not made a way, we could never earn our way into heaven.

c. But God decided to make a way.

C. For believers today, we must be reminded: Grace is free, not cheap.

1. I've been given some incredible gifts in my life.

2. Although they may not have cost me anything, they cost the giver a great deal.

3. When I think of the love Julie and I share for each other, we do not deserve each other's love, we do not give each other a bill, or no such thing. Our love is free, but not cheap.

4. God's love for us is a gift, but it isn't cheap.

5. Covenant and Consecration are two words that remind us that God loves us first:

a. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

b. Our response to this free gift of love is the need to set ourselves apart from the world and to cling only to Him.

D. It was God's decision to come down upon the mountain, and it was His idea to later come down and take on human flesh and dwell among us.

1. No amount of consecration could have brought God down.

2. The religions of the day believed that they could convince their gods to come down.

a. They could cut themselves; they could pray for hours on end.

b. They would beg their god to come down.

3. But the God we read about in the Bible didn't need to be convinced, bribed, or begged.

a. God came down to Israel in Exodus and traveled with them all the days of their wilderness journey in the cloud and the fire.

b. And in the Gospels, we read that God came down in human flesh, naming himself Immanuel, for God is with us.

Notice what God does in this text!

Exodus 24:9-11

9 Then Moses went up with Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of Israel's elders, 10 and
they saw the God of Israel. Beneath his feet was something like a pavement made of lapis lazuli,
as clear as the sky itself. 11 God did not harm the Israelite nobles; they saw him, and they ate and
drank.

Dinner at God's Mountain

A. God comes down upon the Mountain.

1. There he invites the leadership of Israel to meet with Him.

2. 73 people follow Moses up the mountain.

3. I don't know how far it was, how steep the terrain was, or how long it took.

4. The destination was not the goal; the person waiting there was the goal.

B. Then it happens.

1. There is God, allowing Himself to be seen.

2. Twice this verse says, "they saw Him."

3. Imagine seeing the God of Israel with your own eyes?

a. Where God touched the mountain, the ground became like lapis lazuli or sapphire.

b. A sapphire so pure that it was clear, like the sky at its best.

c. In this moment, all of the elements, all of nature, of creation, begin to change and be transfixed in the presence of God.

d. Why does the writer only mention the pavement?

e. Likely because, at least for a time, they were on their face before God and all they could see were his feet on the ground.

C. And waiting for them is a table…prepared in the Presence of God.

1. It was not likely a wooden table that we are familiar with.

2. Very likely, it was a rug-type structure, made with animal hides, laid down so that they may recline at the table.

a. Think about it: Just as God had sacrificed the first animals to cover the shame and nakedness of Adam and Eve,

b. God now lays the hides of the animals down upon the mountain, so the elders and leaders may eat the meal in comfort.

D. Why a meal?

1. In the ancient Near East, eating together was an expression of intimate fellowship and trust.[1]

2. God isn't only signing a contract with Israel:

a. He was entering into a new phase of fellowship and trust.

b. The elders "ate and drank" with the God of Israel.

3. Does God actually eat of the food and sacrifices?

a. In this instance, it seems He does.

b. Just as Jesus did with His disciples after His resurrection to prove His existence, God eats with the elders.

Why is this important?

E. This meal, this covenant, is what Jesus referred to on the night that He was betrayed.

1. At the First Lord's Supper, Jesus has this meal and moment in mind.

2. Just as Moses said this is the blood of the covenant, Jesus declares to the Apostles, this is the "blood of the New Covenant."

3. And He does it while reclining at a table, sharing a meal, eating and drinking with those He loved and trusted.

F. There were scoundrels at both tables.

1. Nadab and Abihu would be dead a few chapters later, having brought strange fire to the Tabernacle.

2. Judas Iscariot would betray Jesus and Peter would deny Him too.

3. In both instances, the perfect, sinless God does what no other god has ever done:

4. He came down to fellowship with humanity.

---

[1] R. K. Harrison, "Table," in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Revised*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1979–1988), 707.

When we eat of the Lord's Table…

A. When believers receive communion, we share in a moment of fellowship, intimacy, and trust with God.

1. We remember what Jesus has done for us.

2. We are also reminded that Jesus is with us now.

3. Your encounter with God might not include a vision of God on sapphire pavement, but it is not less valuable than the stories we read.

4. In fact, you have access that those men never had.

5. God no longer has to come down upon a mountain to dwell with us, but He dwells in us through the presence of His Spirit.

What do we do in light of this text?

We see several remarkable truths in this passage.

B. Never forget how much God loves you.

1. I know reading the Bible can be challenging and confusing.

2. But never lose sight of this incredible reality: God loves you.

3. Not because you have earned it, deserve it, or bought it.

4. While you were at your worst, God loved you.

C. No matter how approachable God is, He is still worthy of respect, reverence, and awe.

1. This is where consecration fits in.

2. Love does not give us permission to let ourselves go or treat God as common.

3. We live in an informal culture, where nobody respects anyone, it seems.

4. Over 80 years ago, A. W. Tozer said: We've brought God down until nobody can respect Him anymore.

5. Even though God came down upon the mountain, rules and boundaries were still in place.

6. Even though God loves you, there are rules and boundaries that direct our love for Him.

D. Are you worshipping God with love and respect?

1. The Lord's Supper reminds me of how God loves me, and how that love is not cheap.

2. Instead, the kind of love that God has shown me is worthy of all my life, my respect, my honor, and reverence.

Prayer and Communion