

“Prepare a Table...”

A sermon by Pastor Steve Easterday-McPadden
for FUMC Grand Junction, Sunday, Feb. 21, 2021

This sermon can be listened to on the FUMCGJ
website: <https://www.fumcgj.org/sermons/>

Scripture Text:

Psalm 23 [NKJV]

OPENING

Anna and Matt busy running back and forth...

Anna: Oh my! There is just so much stuff to do and so little time to do it!!!! OMG...I don't know how I'm going to get everything done!

STEVE: “Anna, STOP!”

Anna: “I’m sorry Steve, I just have so much to do... David and Adam have music class, then David has ninja. I have so much laundry to do and our washer is on the fritz. I still need to vacuum and clean the floors and bathroom because we have guest coming over for dinner, which reminds me I have to set out the meat...!”

STEVE: “Anna, God is telling you to Slow Down... NOW!”

Anna: You’re right Steve, I really need to take a minute and slow down...(*message continues with a great lesson on “hurry sickness” and the story of Martha and Mary, Luke 10:38-42*).

SERMON THOUGHTS

- This is a GREAT Children’s Msg – and not just for today, but for the whole Lenten worship series! (*Move over to the “living room”. *Ad lib* here in a meaningful way – *Busy: Reconnecting with an Unhurried God* – referring to “their” participating in worship for the past 11 months in slippers with coffee mug; now it’s MY turn! – to set the tone for the sermon and the series.*)
- “Prepare a table...” is actually the second segment in this series, but it was necessary to shift the order b/c of my desire to do communion today, as we came back together for limited in-person worship for the first time since Nov. 15th (2020)!

TO THE SCRIPTURES – Expository work here...

The Lord is my shepherd;

I shall not want.

† *He makes me to lie down in green pastures;*

† *He leads me beside the still waters.*

† *He restores my soul;*

† *He leads me in the paths of righteousness
For His name’s sake.*

*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow
of death, I will fear no evil;*

For You are with me;

† *Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.*

† *You prepare a table before me in the presence
of my enemies (*come back to this below*);*

✠ *You anoint my head with oil;
My cup runs over.*

*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me (pursue
me...Hebrew: 'יְהוָה יְרַחֵם!)*
All the days of my life;
And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

SERMON THOUGHTS

- The LORD “preparing a table in the presence of my enemies”, v. 5 – three thoughts in connection with this:
 1. A statement of David’s deep sense of God’s affirmation of him. For God to prepare a table for David in the presence of his enemies (*the* symbol of acceptance and blessing) means that God was honoring him to the extreme, while rebuking those who hated him for his life of faith.
 2. An expectation that, as the LORD offers me such grace and acceptance, I might do the same for my enemies.
 3. The imagery of table fellowship and its connection with the peace that comes from being in harmony with God and others.

Questions for the week ahead:

- How does this change the way we approach the communion table today?
- How do I begin this Lenten season to connect with an unhurried God through table fellowship – with God and those around me?

TRANSITION TO COMMUNION

Adapted from the Iona Community, this also appears on p. 564 of Common Prayer: A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals by Claiborne, Wilson-Hartgrove, and Okoro. Zondervan, 2010.

Come, the table of bread and cup is being made ready.

It is the table of company with Jesus, the good Shepherd, and all those who love him.

It is the table of sharing with the poor and outcasts: those with whom Jesus identified himself.

It is the table of communion with those who reject Jesus but who are recipients of His love & grace, nonetheless.

It is the table of creation: stone, wood, ore – that which is built up and that which is torn down.

It is the table of communion with the earth, from which we come and to which we return: ashes to ashes, dust to dust.

So, come...come to this table:

You who have much faith –
and you who would like to have more;

You who have been here often –
and you who have not been for a long time;

You who have tried to follow Jesus –
and you who have failed.

Come, come to the table. It is Christ who invites us to meet him here.

♪ Into Cohen’s “Hallelujah” for communion