

# FIVE FORKS BRETHREN IN CHRIST CHURCH

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**SERMON:** *Eating Together*

**SERIES:** *Community Life*

**SCRIPTURES:**

**SPEAKER:** *Shaun Kipe*

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*\*Credit to David Camera, Barry Jones, John Ortberg for valuable insights/illustrations used in this Sermon!*

- Ellerbrock baby dedication (Dad)

**Shaun:** Well good morning, it so great to worship with you.

We're in the fourth and final week of a sermon series called Community Life (**Series Graphic**).

Jesus said, **"Where two or three are gathered in my name...I am there."**

And so we've been taking time to talk about the importance of Community Life here at Five Forks and how you can participate in that.

We've said if we're gonna have an authentic community we'll need to be a church working together, playing together, praying/worshiping together.

And this morning, we're reminded that a fourth key ingredient to community life is eating together!

And if you were here for the first week of this series, I told you that for a couple of these messages we be doing some teach preaching. You'll likely remember that Ray -

my dad – joined me up here on the stage for that sermon. And this morning I’ve asked Bill to join me here for the final sermon of this series.

**Bill:** I appreciate you asking me to join you up here Shaun. When you and your Dad shared the pulpit a couple of weeks ago, we not only enjoyed it, but more importantly, it helped us to think about all the good that comes out of working together.

It made a lot of sense to ask your Dad to join you for a sermon where the topic was working together, because as most of us now know, it seems that Ray thrives on doing work. But I’ve got to be honest, when you asked me to join you for this sermon about the importance of eating together, I wasn’t sure what you might be implying. I like to eat as much as the next person, but unlike your Dad and the obvious “work connection”, I don’t think that eating is something I’m known for.

**Shaun:** Actually Bill, I think you’re selling yourself short. It’s true what Bill just said...most of us, if not all of us, love to eat. But one evening just a couple of weeks ago, Josh sent a message to everyone on staff letting us know that there was pizza left over from some event, and the staff was welcome to it when we came in the next day. If you look up at the screen, you’ll see the response that Bill sent to everyone upon hearing this news. Obviously he was excited. **(Minion GIF)**



You may think this is kind of funny. I thought it was too, until the next day. I love pizza and as I headed for the office that morning, I thought this is great, I don't need to worry about packing a lunch today. There's pizza waiting for me! Much to my dismay, at lunch time as I headed for the pizza, with visions of pepperoni's and cheese dancing in my head, the pizza that Josh had said was for everyone on staff to share...it was already gone...and as I walked by Bill's office he kind of gave me half-hearted, "hi Shaun, how's it going" with grease dotting the sides of his face, running down his chin and tomato sauce on the end of his nose!

**Bill:** Okay, it's true, Ray loves to work, I love to eat. And while on the surface, eating may not seem as noble as work, we're going to see that just like working together, eating together is something that is so very important if we want to experience Community Life here at Five Forks.

**Shaun:** You're right Bill, and so I want to begin by showing you a picture this morning. **(KIPE DINING TABLE)** This is a picture of the Kipe dining room table.

You may be thinking, "why a picture of the Kipe dining table?" In fact, in one sense there's nothing particularly significant about this table. This is not hand-crafted. You can order them on-line from amazon. They are a dime a dozen! They come with all of the parts and pieces made on an assembly line, and instructions for putting it together. There are hundreds of tables around the country that look just like this table. And it's certainly not a family heirloom. This table has only been in our home for about 7 years. This is just your average family table.

And yet, and yet, for me this particular table represents something much more than, "just your average family table." This table in particular, is filled with 7 years of Kipe family history, memories, stories, lore...

This the table where little Landon, Ady and Keagan, learned to eat their veggies.

This is the table where every afternoon those same kids sit to do their homework. We might say, it's the place where my kids learned to write.

If you look closely you'll notice the table is stained with various colored ink. Because this is the table where our kids learned to color, and draw and paint.

This is the table where we have eaten countless Thanksgiving and Christmas meals.

This is the table where at meal times the Kipe family gathers around and sings our family prayer "Oh the Lord is good to me."

This is the table where, when our closest friends come to our house we sit around play board games.

This is the table I'll be sitting at when the 49ers win the Super Bowl this evening!

**Bill:** Or the table you'll be crawling under if they lose?

I can't talk, as some of you know, I'm a Packers fan and Shaun's 49'ers really took it to the Packers 2 weeks ago. So we'll all be happy for Shaun if the 49'ers win tonight, right?

**Shaun:** Tables, sharing meals, eating together are one of the most important features in our homes. In fact it's one of those things that distinguishes human beings from other creatures. Gathering around a table to share a meal.

**Sharing tables is one of the most uniquely human things we do. No other creature consumes its food at a table. And sharing tables with other people reminds us that there's more to food than fuel.** (Jones)

And as I began to think about the significance of that table in my life, our household, I began to realize that the imagery of food, eating, tables are some of the most powerful images of community life in the Bible. Adam & Eve after they are created are encouraged to eat, birth rights were often passed down by sharing of a meal. Moses and the elders share a meal at Sinai when they receive the 10

Commandments. In the New Testament Jesus is almost always on his way to a meal, eating a meal or on his way from a meal.

We believe that in order to experience Community Life as a church it will involve eating together.

**Bill:** That's right Shaun, from beginning to end the Scriptures contain stories of people gathering together around a table, **eating together** and experiencing the community of faith.

## **I. Eating in Scripture**

One of the most prominent examples of this in the Old Testament is the...

### **A. Passover Meal**

This meal is one of the most significant events that is recorded in the Old Testament. The Israelites are living in the land of Egypt, slaves for the past 400 years. And now God intervenes, intent on rescuing His people from slavery.

He gave instructions to Moses, who called the leaders of Israel together, telling them to pick out a lamb and kill it for the Passover meal, and put some of the blood of the lamb in a bowl. They were to take a brush, dip it in the bowl...

**Exodus 12 - ...Then brush some of the blood above the door and on the posts at each side of the door of your house. After this, everyone is to stay inside.**

**<sup>23</sup> During that night the LORD will go through the country of Egypt and kill the first-born son in every Egyptian family. He will see where you have put the blood, and he will not come into your house. His angel that brings death will pass over and not kill your first-born sons.**

One of the most significant events that is recorded in the Old Testament, and what do we find at the very center of this event? A Meal. Men, women and children – families – gathered around a table to eat the Passover lamb.

This was the very first Passover meal, but it wouldn't be the last as it became a focal point on the Jewish calendar.

Generation after generation during the time of Passover – which occurs close to our Easter – families would gather around a table, eat a meal together and talk about God's faithfulness, God's provision, and God's salvation. Those are good things to be at the center of our conversation when we find ourselves gathered around a table, eating together.

**Shaun:** It should come as no surprise then, that there is a meal in the New Testament that has become the new symbol of God's community. Today we call this meal...

## **B. Communion**

Story is found in Matthew 26...Jesus gathered together with his disciples, for what they believed was going to be the traditional Passover meal. But, this time Jesus was redefining the meal. It wasn't just to celebrate rescue from Egypt...this time it was God rescuing all of humanity from sin.

**Matthew 26 - <sup>26</sup> While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body." <sup>27</sup> Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. <sup>28</sup> This is my blood of the<sup>[b]</sup> covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.**

New Testament scholar N. T. Wright says think about it this way, **“When Jesus himself wanted to explain to his disciples what his forthcoming death was all about, he didn’t give them a theory, he gave them a meal.”**

The communion meal became one of the primary symbols of Jesus followers.

So what’s the connection between...why a meal as the marker of God’s community

## **II. Eating and community**

**Bill:**

### **A. Eating encourages face-to-face interaction.**

I don’t know if this is still the case, but back in my youth, a first date would often consist of a meal and a movie. I think for young men and women, the movie was viewed as safe...not a lot of interaction taking place during the movie.

But the real essence of the date would be found in the meal...going out to a restaurant and sitting at a table, across from each other face-to face. Unlike the movie which would usually come later, the meal is where you began to get to know the other person, and the other person began to get to know you. I can remember Karen and I – when we first started really getting to know each other - going to this one specific restaurant up near Messiah College while she was a student there. Even if not a whole lot of eating was getting done, the food was still there...it was something to pick at, something to talk about...and most importantly, it lent itself to face to face interaction.

The technology that we have at our disposal these days makes it somewhat challenging. I saw this commercial on TV recently, where they had a small group of people hanging out together and having a good time, and then this voice was heard

saying these words: “The Original Social Media”...followed by these words on the screen: “A few friends are better than a few thousand followers.” Face to face interaction, rather than screen to screen.

Facial expressions, tone of voice, looking into someone’s eyes...all give a fuller expression of communicating and connection, and many times it happens around a table, eating a meal.

**Shaun:**

*(Reference Bill eating staff pizza on his own)*

You know how easy it is to get zoned in to a screen, you become oblivious to the world around you.

Face to face meal time has a way of re-centering us, refocusing us on the people around us. It helps us to be fully engaged with others.

Meals, become the perfect opportunity for reflecting on and processing life. The dinner table is usually where conversations about manners, homework, school, classmates, friends, dating, theology...will happen!

**Bill:** Another connection between eating and community...

### **B. Eating breaks social barriers.**

Who we choose to eat with says a lot about us. It said a lot about Jesus, because in the ancient Jewish world, there were these really tight restrictions when it came to food and who is was okay to eat with...and who it was not.

And so one day Jesus addressed this, saying **“John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon.’”** (Matthew 11:18)

Jesus is talking about John the Baptist, who would fast, and because of this, the Jewish leaders called him crazy. Then Jesus went on to say, **“The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.’”** (Matthew 11:19)

Jesus was constantly being accused of associating with riff-raff, with sinners...and it's telling how often eating a meal is at the center of it all. He is anointed by a sinful woman and scolded for it during the eating of a meal. He eats a meal with Zacchaeus, the reviled tax-collector, and his life is forever changed.

Still, the religious leaders would accuse Jesus of being a glutton and a drunk, but it didn't stop Jesus as He sought to break down social barriers.

Author Gordon Smith points out that **“Eating was for Jesus a key means by which he proclaimed the coming of God's reign and acted, or enacted, its arrival.”**

**Shaun:** Third, one of the reasons that eating and community are connected is because...

### **C. Meals make memories.**

I don't cook, love the food network, but I don't cook. About 15 years ago, I cooked a meal. I remember it well. I was actually house sitting for Uncle Ken. It was a special night, I had a special guest coming over. So I prepared a meal. Lasagna, **(PICTURE OF LASAGNA)** because Lasagna was her favorite meal. Garlic toast, salad.

Following the meal, I had created a song playlist which by the way 15 years ago was not an easy thing to do. It was very romantic, I was very nervous, I asked her to dance with me. I don't like to dance, I'm uncoordinated, kind of awkward, sweaty

hands. But I asked her to dance that night. We danced, we ate a meal. I remember that meal, because that was the meal Jenny and I shared that time when I asked Jenny to marry me. **(PICTURE OF SHAUN AND JENNY WEDDING)** Every time I eat Lasagna, I remember that meal, most of all I think about Jenny. It will always be that way. That meal is Jenny's meal. For me it's more than just food. It's become a memory, it's a meal that has shaped my life from that day on.

It's kind of neat there's a fascinating meal story in John 21. This is after Jesus death and resurrection. The disciples are out in a boat fishing at night. And they aren't catching anything.

Very early in the morning, they hear someone yelling from the shoreline... "Throw your nets on the other side." They listen. And of course they begin hauling in more fish than they can handle.

Immediately this recalls a memory for Peter. This is exactly what happened several years earlier when Jesus first called Peter to be his disciple. Acting impulsively, as Peter often does, he jumps into the water, fully clothed (most likely) in an effort to get back to Jesus. As the fisherman, arrive back on land, Peter begins to pick up on a smell that is hauntingly familiar.

Jesus has a fire going on the beach and invites the disciples to "sit and share a meal with him."

What's fascinating is the word, John uses to describe the fire Jesus has made to prepare this meal. It's a very specific word in Greek, meaning **a charcoal fire**. And it's a word that only appears one other time in all of the Bible...only three chapters earlier in Peter's own story. **John 18**...the night Peter denied he knew who Jesus was.

**18 It was cold, and the servants and officials stood around a fire they had made to keep warm. Peter also was standing with them, warming himself.**

**25 they asked him, “You aren’t one of his disciples too, are you?”**

**He denied it, saying, “I am not.”**

See it was around, a charcoal fire in John 18, that Peter denied knowing Jesus. For Peter that charcoal fire, that smell, that meal, was a vivid memory. A memory of his failure, shame.

**Bill:** But it wasn’t just a memory that brought about failure and shame, this memory also helped to bring about **healing and restoration.**

You see, here’s Peter, sopping wet, walking towards Jesus when suddenly, he smells the charcoal and is taken back to that night of failure and shame. But John, in his gospel describes how Jesus takes that memory, that smell, and redefines it for Peter.

On the beach Jesus says to Peter, “Come, let’s eat. Have breakfast with me.” Jesus words were more than an invitation to eat...it was an invitation to receive forgiveness and healing and restoration. Jesus knew all about Peter’s betrayal, but He wanted Peter to know that he was forgiven, and that the friendship they had built would continue, now stronger than ever.

Perhaps there is a relationship in your life that is broken...where healing and restoration is needed. May I suggest that perhaps a good place to start, is by extending an invitation to that person for the two of you to eat together.

If you need restoration with someone...a good place to start is the dinner table.

Before we close, let’s talk about opportunities that we have to...

### III. Eat together as a church.

Throughout the course of our lives, there are a number of times when we get to experience these two events that appear to be on the opposite end of the spectrum...and yet both provide opportunities for us to eat together.

The first is a wedding...and weddings are great aren't they? Jesus attended them, they are a joyous occasion.

And yes, family is the first on the invitation list, but most of us have had the pleasure of being invited to attend a wedding simply because we are friends through the church. And so we attend and witness the ceremony...and then what do we do? We go into another room and we sit down and we eat together. And while we look forward to and enjoy the meal, it is in the conversations that take place where true joy is found. There is sharing, there is laughter and there is community for not just the family, but for us as the church.

At the other end of the spectrum is the funeral, and Jesus was present at some of those as well. And again, while the family is at the center of it all, we as a church come alongside of our brothers and sisters who are grieving, and we mourn with them. And then, after the service and after the graveside, what do we do next? We gather together in a room and we sit down and eat together. It is in these conversations – sitting at the table – that community takes place as we share memories, and cry together and even laugh together...yes as a family, but also as a church.

#### **Shaun:**

Second, consider eating together **on a small scale**, rather than corporately. I encouraged you to do this two weeks ago, I want to remind you again to look around this room. This is a room full of opportunity.

Who in this room could you have over for a meal? Your family, their family. Learn their names, eat together, share fellowship. If we start doing this as a church it will be good for us. It will help us to connect.

In a world today, where authentic communication and real relationships are in decline. Where many people are lonely, isolated. Where many people are divided...we believe that the Church may have something to offer. And as crazy as it sounds, what we have to offer isn't radical or miraculous or extreme...it will simply be an invitation to eat together.

This morning as we close our time together, we're gonna eat together as a symbol of our community. A community united by the body and blood of Jesus.

Communion instructions.