

“Come, Lord Jesus”

Mark 16:1-8

Richard C. Allen

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From the time our first child was old enough to sit at the table, our family has offered the simplest table blessing, often three times a day. We bow our heads, hold hands, and pray, “Come, Lord Jesus, be thou our guest, let us and these thy gifts be blessed.”

This is an ancient Christian prayer. It has been spoken in homes for many generations. For me, it is more than a prayer. It is a lesson in Christian theology. Whether our grown children end up attending church or not, they will have these marvelous words upon their lips and within their hearts. Whether they ever become deacons or youth group leaders, they will have this witness in their ear. It is an everyday prayer; it is an Easter prayer; it helps me to know that for the Christian community everyday is an Easter day.

This simple table prayer has three phrases, lending themselves nicely to a three point sermon. “Come, Lord Jesus.” Often, when I pray, I don’t use this term, ‘Lord.’ For many people it can carry a negative connotation, but in this prayer, the word conveys for me not a cold, authoritarian power; but a warm, loving, supportive, nurturing power. When we pray, “Come, Lord Jesus,” we are calling upon the Easter God who calmed the women at the empty tomb saying, “You have nothing to fear; fear not; I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

At our dinner table, when we pray, “Come, Lord Jesus,” we are talking with an old friend, a spiritual friend who needs not ring the door bell, who drops by often at meal time, not to bum a free meal, but to love us into a surprising new vitality.

Do you have anyone in your life like that? We have Ed. For many years, this guy named Ed has shown up at our back door. He comes right on in! He has a smile that is bright enough to light up all of Siberia for an entire winter season! He inhales food! And he tells stories with gusto! He laughs and the house shakes. When Ed is in our home, we have nothing to fear. Do you have an Ed in your life?

When we pray those words, “Come, Lord Jesus,” we are acknowledging a God whose authority is established not by how loud he can shout or by what degree she has earned from the university, or even by what weapons abide in the arsenal; but by the way love is poured out! This Lord Jesus whom we invite to our table is the Risen Christ of Easter morning who comes to love us in a way that raises us up from whatever tomb we have fallen into.

The prayer moves on to a second phrase, “be thou our guest.” If you are a person who is still waiting for some evidence of the risen Christ before you’ll believe it, invite a few guests over for dinner. But do it with this one twist. Don’t invite the people who are already on your A list or your B list or even your C list. Invite some people you’ve never invited before. Invite some folks who probably won’t have the means to return the favor. Think of the person your mother would least want you to bring home for dinner, and invite that person! To welcome an unlikely guest into your home is to welcome the risen Christ.

When we pray that phrase, “be thou our guest,” we are expressing an unqualified affirmation that the presence of guests is tantamount to the presence of Christ. I’ve been spending a lot of time with my mother lately. There has been a stream of visitors at her home as she recovers from a surgery. I’ve been meeting friends I didn’t know she had. One guy told me he had just been walking by on the sidewalk when he heard this voice calling out to him from the porch at 57 Western Avenue, “Have I met you yet?”

Come on up for some pink lemonade!” This was my mother inviting an unlikely stranger into her life. Some call that risky. Some call it crazy. My mother calls it meeting Christ. She just knows that something awesome happens when we move beyond the A list and welcome the unlikely one. You don’t have to emulate my mother. But if you are still waiting for an Easter moment, some evidence of a risen Savior, offer some kindly hospitality to someone you might otherwise pass by. “Come, Lord Jesus, be thou our guest.”

“Let us and these thy gifts be blessed.” This last phrase is best understood when we unpack the meaning of the word, ‘blessed.’ When one is blessed, one has enough for today. When you have enough for today, you have enough for yourself and some to share with someone far less fortunate. To be blessed is to have enough to share. So, essentially, when we pray these words, we are asking God to provide such that we can become instruments of peace in the world, partners with God in ministries of compassion. So, one must be careful praying this simple prayer because God will give us more than we need for our own welfare. The temptation is to stockpile the leftovers for some future time rather than to share the abundance with a neighbor who has lost a job or fallen on tough times. If you pray for God to bless you, be prepared to share what you have been given!

After Easter, as those first Christian disciples gathered in small communities, sharing became their means for survival! Outsiders looking in thought of the early Christians as ‘sharing fools!’ They were simply carried away by this core value. They prayed for a blessing. They received more than enough. They shared their substance.

When I think of Easter, that first Easter morning, I think of God doing a whole new thing. I think of God choosing to be stingy no longer with the love gifts. I think of God turning over a new leaf and saying, 'I am going to bless the whole world with so much love that no one will feel a need to hoard it; so much love that everyone's first impulse will be to share it. I think of Easter as the day when God pours so much love batter into the waffle iron that it overflows in every direction. I think of Easter as God's greatest blessing to the world!

"Come, Lord Jesus, be thou our guest, let us and these thy gifts be blessed!" In the greatest of hope, Amen!