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CHRIST IN MY DINING ROOM Michael B. Beaugh
John 4:31-34; John 6:25-34 May 3, 2009
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Recently Christ came knocking at my door. I invited him in. The first thing he wanted to see was my study. So I took him into my study. On our church website, you can find a record of what happened.

Then he said he wanted to see my dining room. I felt considerably better about that. After all, a dining room is a dining room. Or so I thought.

I was pleased to take him into the room. The table just happened to be set with fine china and silverware and beautiful crystal glasses. I watched his face as he took in the whole scene. When he didn't say anything, I started explaining that the china and silverware and crystal had been passed on to us from my grandmother. When he still didn't say anything, I made a comment like, "It is a miracle all of this still exists."

Finally he said something. "Yes, it is a miracle that everything still exists." Then I watched as he ran his hand over the table top and chair. It was like he was trying to feel the wood. He began telling me how he used to help his father Joseph build good furniture like this. Said he especially liked making tables. When he explained why, I understood. "So many important things happen at tables."

"Speaking of which," I said, "want something to eat?"

He pulled out a chair and sat down. Then he asked a question that surprised me. "What are you hungry for?" That's the question I should be asking him, I thought. On the other hand, here was my chance to impress Christ. I said I was hungry for dark green vegetables, and lots of fresh fruit; I wanted plain yogurt and would love some flax oil; those tasteless rice cakes that have not nutritional value but sure fill you up would be great for a snack; and, oh, I am really hungry for two fig newton cookies. Basically I was hungry for anything that had low carbs, and low sodium, and no sugar, and no saturated fats. I told him I was hungry for healthy stuff. I actually said all this with a straight face.

Guess what he did? He let out a belly laugh and couldn't stop laughing. Tears came down his cheeks. Not a rude laugh. I think he thought I was trying to be funny because he said as he gasped for breath, "No, really, what are you hungry for? What are you *really, really* hungry for?"

I figured I best be honest with Christ. He knows what's in my heart anyway.

"You mean like a double cheese pizza and double dutch chocolate cake for dessert?" "That's it," he said. "You can tell me."

"How about a plate of cheese enchiladas with a big helping of refried beans, a big mound of Spanish rice, and a blob of guacamole salad on top?" "That's it," he said. "What else?"

Now I really got on a roll. "A fat juicy steak. Hot rolls fresh out of the oven with butter melted on top, real butter. "A double-decker cheeseburger with a chocolate shake on the side. I could eat two chili cheese dogs with French fries dipped in cheso sauce. I could eat a dozen chocolate chip cookies the size of my hand." I thought for a second. "I could eat five bean burritos from Taco Bell!"

With that, Jesus raised his hand to stop me. I think the bean burritos did him in. Or maybe it was my mouth drooling. He halted my menu of desires by asking, "So, what are we having?"

I gave him a kind of "pity me" look and started explaining how hard my week had been. My wife was on my back for not getting the yard mowed. She ended up doing it herself. Things had been tough at work. Again, he stopped me. "I know all that. I keep up with your life. What I want to know is what we are having to eat."

"I just want you to understand, Lord, that you have caught me at a weak moment. I'll be right back." I left Christ at my dining room table and dashed off to the kitchen. I came back in with a double cheese pizza piping hot from the oven. I set it on the table by his plate. He just stared at it. He leaned forward as if for a closer look. Finally he said, "Looks like triple cheese to me. I've never had triple cheese pizza on fine china before."

I took that as a sign to serve his plate. I put a piece on his plate and then on mine. Just as I started to take a bite, he started talking. He said, "My Father and I love it when you earth beings enjoy the bounty of the earth we provide for you. We created you with hungers and desires for good things to eat. Hungers and desires are what make the world go round. We created you for love, and there would be no love without hungers and desires. You would be incapable of loving us, my Father and me, if you didn't hunger for us and desire us."

I wondered where this was going. He continued. "We created you with the freedom to satisfy your desires as you see fit. What makes us so sad is that so many of you try to satisfy your hunger for us with things that have no nutritional value for your soul."

I was thinking, "What does this have to do with pizza that's getting cold?" My stomach let out a loud growl. I know he heard it. I thought maybe

he was waiting for me to pray so we could eat. Instead, I said, "So, do you want me to dump this in the garbage?" I almost cried when I said it.

"What I want is for you to realize that you have a hunger that cannot be satisfied in any other way." It looked like he was going to keep going. Sure enough I was right. Instead of eating he kept talking.

"Do you remember the time I fed over 5000 people with nothing but a couple of fish and some bread?" I said, "That was an awesome miracle." He snickered and said, "Well, if you are talking about multiplying the bread and fish so all could have some, that's no big deal. Think about it. If God is God, He could turn a frog into a prince if He wanted to, or make a dead man rise from the grave and have eternal life. Accelerating the growth of cells in a loaf of bread or in a fish is no big deal. The cells divide and multiply. The more I pulled off, the more there was so all could have some to eat. That part shouldn't come as a surprise. I know your scientists have never been able to do that. They say it is scientifically impossible. It violates the laws of nature and all that. What laws? We, my Father and I, made the laws so you could exist. You are the reason we did this creation thing in the first place. We know what's good for you and we know how it has to work."

Christ went into his scientific mode. "For example, one of you earth beings named Albert Einstein discovered that the universe is expanding. Plus he calculated the speed at which stars and planets and galaxies are moving apart. Your scientists know that this speed has been a constant since the beginning of time. They also know one other thing. If the speed were different by even a fraction slower or a fraction faster, you would not be here. Nothing would be here if we, my Father and I, had not carefully planned it this way. We know what we're doing. It's best that things work in an orderly manner. But sometimes we make an exception in order to reveal to you, to help you see, who we are. Don't tell me that we, my Father and I, couldn't speed up cell division and multiplication if we wanted to. No, that's no miracle in the usual sense. The miracle was that my disciples kept coming back to get more bread and fish to hand out to the people. You should have seen their faces. That was the moment I knew they were beginning to get an inkling of who I am. Eventually they came to know me as the bread from heaven that gives life to the world."

I suddenly had this vision of a pizza franchise with Jesus in the kitchen. One pizza feeds everyone. Low overhead. He interrupted my silliness.

"Here's another miracle," he continued. "The people ate everything my disciples gave them, but the people still had no idea who I was. The next day those same people came begging for more free food. I told them, *'Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has*

set his seal. They just didn't get it. My Father and I created you earth beings with a hunger for us. You keep trying to fill up your hunger with things that don't even last a day. That's why you can never get enough of anything. Because you don't have enough of me inside you."

He looked at me as though he were expecting a response. I just blurted it out. "Lord, I am happy to report that I have lost 20 pounds since January."

He said, "See, that's just what I mean. I am glad you are taking care of your body. Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. But for you earth beings it's all about you. You always think it is the next thing that is going to do the trick for you, make you happy, give you peace, satisfy your need for a purpose in life, keep you living forever. It's really all about what you want, what you desire."

I looked down at my cold pizza. It didn't look so appetizing anymore. My stomach didn't even growl. I couldn't look Christ in the face.

He said, "Look at me." I looked up. He said, "Let me ask you again. What are you hungry for, really, really hungry for?"

I looked into his incredible eyes. He got up from the table and reached toward me with a piece of bread. I don't know where it came from. As I took it, he said, "This is my body given for you." Then he handed me the crystal glass that was beside my plate. I looked, and it was filled with wine. As I drank it, he said, "This is my blood shed for you." Instantly, I began to see my hunger. He asked again, "What are you really hungry for?"

Words came slowly to my mouth. "I am hungry for truth." "That's it," he said. "Go on. What else?"

"I am hungry for acceptance. I am hungry for love." My heart was like an onion being peeled back, one layer at a time. "I am hungry for assurance. I am hungry for holiness. I am hungry for justice." "Now we're getting somewhere." The onion kept getting peeled away. "I am hungry for life." I bowed my head. Then I saw it. "I am hungry for the approval of our Father in heaven."

He said, "Look at me again." I looked again into his eyes. I knew what I was hungry for, more than anything in my life. I said, "Lord, I am hungry for you."

He said, "Just as I have fed you, so are you to feed others."

With that, he got up and walked into my family room. I just sat at the table staring at the stone cold pizza. He yelled back at me, "When you finish eating, come on in here." The pizza started steaming again. "Nah! Couldn't

be!" I thought. "Try some," he yelled again. I did. It was really good but not nearly as good as the bread of life who was now waiting for me in another room. I hurried and joined him. But that's another story.