



December 23, 2024

Dinner Etiquette According to Jesus

As we celebrate Advent this year, many of us may have received dinner invitations to share a meal with friends, or attended an Advent Dinner, or invited neighbors over for a cookie exchange.

I fondly recall an Advent Dinner I attended with my family at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Gainesville, FL. Several members of the congregation were accomplished chefs. At least one attended the Culinary Arts Program in Jekyll Island, Georgia. Our “in-house” chefs would prepare a delicious advent dinner for the congregation. We paid \$10 per person to attend. The chefs would wear their chef hats and jackets, making us feel special and appreciated.

One year, we seemed to have an abundance of food left over after everyone had been served. As was the custom, Advent Dinner was always served on a Saturday night, the same night that Narcotics Anonymous met in the evenings at our church. To my surprise, a few of the “Mary” church members started inviting the Narcotics Anonymous members to join us for dinner. They lined up quickly and were served with the same dignity and respect afforded to church members. There would be no leftovers to bring home that night.

My first reaction was to bristle and stew about the fact that our family paid \$10 a plate to partake in this Advent Dinner, and these folks were eating our food for free! Admittedly, I was a bit jealous that our chefs displayed the same hospitality that had been afforded our church members. To add insult to injury, (or so I thought) our church was paying our custodian an hourly wage to wash the dishes, so this spontaneous group of diners were increasing our costs for the dinner. Why do these guys get to eat for free?

And then, the words of Luke 14: 12-14, came crashing down upon me. "And the King will answer them, "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me."

"When you give a lunch or dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or your rich neighbors—for they will invite you back, and in this way, you will be paid for what you did. When you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind; and you will be blessed, because they are not able to pay you back..."

I thought I had it all right; these folks should have paid like the rest of us, and then I realized that the "Marys" in the church had it all right, and I had it all wrong. Following the dinner choir practice was held. I will never forget the sight of one of the Narcotics Anonymous members sitting on the floor outside the sanctuary with his ear pressed against the door, eager to hear familiar Christmas carols and yet reticent about entering our sanctuary.

It should have been apparent to me that Jesus always supports the outcasts, whether it was the Samaritan woman at the well, the children seeking his attention, or the blind man seeking to be healed. I was grateful to the "Marys" of the church who acted upon their calling to extend hospitality to the outcasts of our time. As we celebrate the birth of Christ, let us remember the words of Matthew 25:40;

"And the King will answer them, "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me."

~Written by Tom Webster

Click [HERE](#) to read previous "Faith Matters" articles



8190 Lincoln Rd. Beulah, MI 49617
231.882.4241
www.benziestandrews.com





Try email marketing for free today!