



Matthew, Tax Collector: All Are Invited to Dine with Jesus

A Meal Ritual

Table Center

Small box overflowing with small coins or play money or gold wrapped chocolate money

Preparation

If a group is gathering, organize a potluck supper and have every one bring a favorite dish or food item. Otherwise serve a simple meal of your choice.

✚ We Gather...

Invite those gathered to remember a time when they felt excluded from something – maybe it was a party that they did not get invited to, maybe it was an event at which they just watched from the sidelines because they had not been invited into the activities, etc. Or perhaps someone is willing to share a time when they felt like the “excluder,” when they were responsible for keeping someone from participating in an event.

✚ We Tell the Story...

Invite someone to proclaim the Gospel reading...

As Jesus was leaving, he saw a tax collector named Matthew sitting at the place for paying taxes. Jesus said to him, “Come with me.” Matthew got up and

went with him.

Later, Jesus and his disciples were having dinner at Matthew’s house. Many tax collectors and other sinners were also there. “Some Pharisees asked Jesus’ disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and other sinners?”

Jesus heard them and answered, “Healthy people don’t need a doctor, but sick people do. Go and learn what the Scriptures mean when they say, ‘Instead of offering sacrifices to me, I want you to be merciful to others.’ I didn’t come to invite good people to be my followers. I came to invite sinners.”
(Matthew 9: 9 –13)

✚ We Share a Meal...

Place the meal on the table.

Pray together...

God of wisdom and love, send your blessings upon this food and those gathered to share it. May we be welcome company for one another and your son Jesus. Amen.

As the meal is being shared, invite those gathered at the table to discuss...

- Why do you think Jesus said in the reading we just heard that he has come not to be with those who are well and living good lives but with the sick and sinners?
- What does that mean for us as we live out our Christian lives?

✚ We Go Forth...

Conclude by saying...

As we leave our meal together, one challenge to put before ourselves is the challenge of being inclusive. Whom do we

try to avoid? Whom do we try to exclude from our lives? Do I allow only certain children to play with me at the park, do I shun anybody in my work place, etc.? Let's keep our eyes and hearts open this week to pay attention to those who seem to be intentionally excluded from something.

We pray...

Jesus, you showed us the power of your love by the way you spent time with people others would not spend time with. Fill our hearts with your persistent love so that we too may be present to others and help them to feel part of your body. Amen.

