

## **“The Last Supper: Conversations that Led to the Cross”** By Dr. Will Willimon

### **Session 6: The Host Who Becomes the Meal**

**March 29, 2026**

**4:00 PM**

**Thank you for joining us again for this Lenten journey with Jesus. We have arrived at Holy Week at the destination Jesus has been leading us toward all along – his table.**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

- What has surprised you most about Jesus’s parables during our study?
- How has your understanding of God’s kingdom changed through these “riddles”?

**What sort of God’s Son would spend his last hours hosting a dinner party for his twelve best friends who were also his most notable betrayers. - Willimon**

- How does this question frame our understanding of the Last Supper?
- What does it reveal about Jesus’s character that he chooses a meal over other ways to spend his final hours?

#### **OPENING PRAYER**

*Gracious Host, throughout this Lenten journey you have been preparing us for your table, teaching us through riddles and parables what your kingdom looks like. Now we arrive at the meal where all your stories converge – where you become both host and meal, both teacher and truth. Open our hearts to receive not just bread and wine, but your very self, given for us and for the world. Amen.*

## **SESSION 6 VIDEO – “The Last Becomes First”**

Thoughts to consider as we watch the video...

- How does Willimon’s interpretation of the Last Supper as “enacted parable” change your understanding?
- What struck you about his emphasis on Jesus’s refusal to be refused?

## **FROM RIDDLES TO REALITY**

**Along the road and at the table Jesus told so many riddles; he now dramatically becomes the greatest conundrum of all. – Willimon**

Note how the parables prepare us for this moment:

- The reckless sower now sows his own body and blood.
- The seeking shepherd now becomes the lamb.
- The persistent host now offers himself as the meal.
  
- How do Jesus’s parables help us understand what happens at the Last Supper?
  
- What does it mean that Jesus moves from telling stories about God to embodying God’s love?

## **THE SWORD PROBLEM**

***Scripture Passage – Luke 22:35-38***

**In asking, “Any of you have a wallet, bag, or sword” Jesus is asking, “When I told you travel without extra baggage or worldly means of self protection, did you disobey me?” – Willimon**

**Disciples’ Response – “Sure. Here are two swords that prove our insubordination.”**

- How do the disciples’ swords represent our tendency to hedge our bets with Jesus?
  
- What are the modern equivalence of carrying swords while following the Prince of Peace?

- How does Jesus's later rebuke ("Stop! No more of this!") challenge our assumptions about self-defense?

## **THE CHURCH AS KINGDOM BANQUET**

**Every Sunday is a replay of the supper at Emmaus. Jesus at the table with us once again, as he promised, eating and drinking our way toward the Kingdom. Your church is the way God's kingdom takes up room, establishes a beachhead, a colony of resident aliens amid the failing, failed kingdoms of the world. – Willimon**

- How does FBC Elon embody Jesus's kingdom banquet?
- What would it mean to see every church meal as part of God's great feast?
- How can the church better reflect the radical hospitality Jesus demonstrated?

## **IT AIN'T OVER TILL GOD SAYS IT'S OVER**

**We gave our best shot to get God off our backs, to put an end to the constant inviting, pushy intrusion, sly enticing, relentless giving, and the persistent teaching and storytelling. We tried to shut him up, attempted to silence this itinerant parabolist once and for all by killing him and sealing his body in a tomb. But God wouldn't take "No!!" for our final answer - Willimon**

- How do you see Jesus continuing his ministry of radical hospitality today?
- Where have you experienced "kingdom breakthrough" in ordinary meals and or gatherings?
- What does it mean that Jesus "refuses to be refused"?

## **THE ONGOING FEAST**

**One day, the promised Great Banquet of God shall come in its fullness, and we shall feast with one another and Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – not just for a while on Sunday morning or a Thursday evening, but for all eternity. But you don't need to wait until then to have your hunger assuaged. - Willimon**

- How does knowing about the future banquet change how we approach current church meals?
- What does it mean that “anytime two or three of us are gathered, and the bread is taken, blessed, broken, and given, Jesus promises, “Just like in the upper room, I'll be there”?

## **CLOSING**

### ***The Table Setting***

**Willimon reminds us that we are here only by invitation, just like the disciples at the Last Supper. Each of us has heard Jesus's call to “come to the table” in different ways.**

- How did you first receive Jesus's invitation to the table?
- What invitation from Jesus might you need to accept more fully?

**All I've done is to tell you some of the stories of Jesus so that Jesus is enabled to speak for himself: “Let's eat.” - Willimon**

**On the basis of our experiences of his real presence at table with us, because of the many riddles he told us about a loving God who keeps turning toward us, whenever we break bread and pass the cup in his name, whenever we tell “the stories of Jesus” we know Jesus is here. – Willimon**

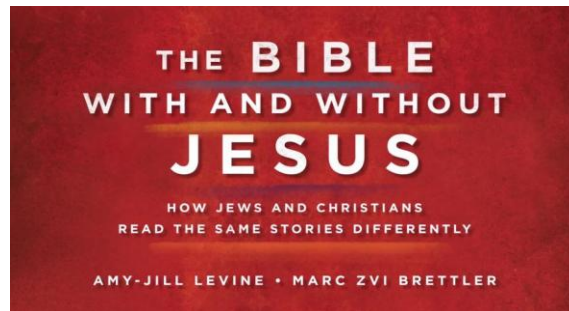
- When do you most feel the living presences of Christ?
- What is your most vivid memory of a celebration of Maundy Thursday?

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

Jesus, our persistent host and gracious meal, you have brought us through these forty days of riddles and stories to your table. Thank you for refusing to be refused, for continuing to invite us even when we betray, deny and disappoint you. As we prepare to celebrate your passion and resurrection, help us carry your kingdom feast into the world. Make us bold ambassadors of your radical hospitality, setting tables of welcome wherever you send us. Until that great day when all sit down together at your eternal banquet, keep us faithful at the tables you give us now. Amen.

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## **NEW SPRING STUDY**



Esteemed Bible scholars and teachers Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Z. Brettler take readers on a guided tour of the most popular Hebrew Bible passages quoted in the New Testament to show what the texts meant in their original contexts and then how Jews and Christians, over time, understood those same texts. Passages include: the creation of the world, the role of Adam and Eve, the Suffering Servant of Isaiah, the book of Jonah, and Psalm 22, whose words, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me,” Jesus quotes as he dies on the cross.

Comparing various interpretations – historical, literary, and theological - of each ancient text, Levine and Brettler offer deeper understandings of the original narratives and their many afterlives. They show how the text speaks to different generations under changed circumstances, and so illuminate the Bible’s ongoing significance. By understanding the depth and variety by which these passages have been, and can be, understood, *The Bible With and Without Jesus* does more than enhance our religious understandings, it helps us to see the Bible as a source of inspiration for any and all readers.

## **STUDY BEGINS SUNDAY, APRIL 12**

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