

Come Lord Jesus, be our Guest, and let these gifts to us be blessed. Amen. Hurry up, the food will get cold, I've just yelled. Have you washed your hands? Sit up straight, don't eat before we pray. Fold your hands, close your eyes. Then Come Lord Jesus.

How often I've thought how out of place that seems, in the midst of the yelling and the telling. Stay away Jesus, I should pray, wait Lord until I get the kids shaped up, and I can tell Sue how upset I am about what this one said to me, or how that one treated me. Let me clear my mind of all the distractions and the anger, I need time to drain the bitterness and the hurt of another day from my heart. Then come Lord Jesus when my words shall be careful and pure, when I take the time to be an attentive Father and a loving husband. Then come, Lord Jesus, to be our guest.

I think of how many were the years I prayed this prayer, spoke the words but never heard it. ^{of these gifts to us be blessed} Bless the food I heard, and wondered what it meant. What is the difference between blessed and unblessed food? Is there any? I wondered. The prayer seemed an empty form, until in the midst of the yelling ~~at~~ at my children, the screaming turn off the TV and get over here to the table, No, you can't watch while we eat, Come Lord Jesus jumped out at me.

I think it is at Christmas in some cultures they set an extra place at the table for the unseen guest, the Lord whom they have invited. Maybe we should do that from time to time in your home and mine, to remember whom we have invited to share our meal, to hear our conversation. I was startled once when someone said that our prayer makes every meal a religious meal, a kind of sacramental meal, where Christ is present.

Come Lord Jesus, Be our guest.

When I was young, the preacher talked about the other meal ~~thatx~~ where Jesus would be. The sacrament of the altar. I learned that I should confess all my sins, that in this way my heart and mind would be cleansed to receive this meal. And the Lord who comes in it. Here he is not the guest, but the host, even the meal itself. Every grudge, every anger, every sin that needs forgiving and forgiveness is to be cleared away before I come here. So we

Now, I remember Pastor Lucht instructing us, before you come to the Lord's Table you must examine yourself. Read through the ~~catechism~~ ten commandments and the explanations in the catechism, consider each commandment and how you have broken it since you last came to the Lord's supper, confess your sin and pray that God will forgive it. Do not come to this Holy Supper until you have prepared yourself through confession.

I remember my first communion, how disappointed I was. It is so special they all told me, I remember my nervousness, my fear that I would do the wrong thing, when I returned to my pew I wondered what to pray, sure there must be a ^{proper prayer} ~~proper~~ pray, a correct prayer that was expected.

Now I find something different happening to me. I see people coming to the table. ^(Others) This one is angry at me, that one is disappointed in my preaching, my teaching. That one I yelled at, and never asked his forgiveness. A mother tugs at the sleeve of her child to keep him from grabbing the morsel of bread he is not allowed. Another has said, I just come for the wife, to keep her happy. Yet another couple are near to getting a divorce.

I pour from the chalice, the alcoholic takes the only sip she will have this week, the dying man takes his promise of the feast on the other side of death. The widow reaches out for the only one who is left to be with her through the long dark nights.

I wish life were simpler, not all confused. I wish I could come to this table, and to my table at home to greet my Lord with a pure heart. I wish I could stop my life for a time and get every relationship cleaned up, every obligation covered. I wish, I wish.

But I come to Maunday Thursday, to the night of remembering the meal when Jesus hosted the twelve; He said he wanted to eat with them before he suffered. He said he would not eat the meal again until it was fulfilled in the kingdom of God. He spoke of one who would betray him, looking at each other they could not decide who it would be. They started to argue who among them was the greatest. Jesus told them the greatest would be their servant. He looked at Peter and told him he would deny him. Three times. Before the night was over.

Yes, I think of Maunday Thursday, when Jesus shared a meal that was a promise, a foretaste of the great feast they would share in the kingdom of God, yet in a few hours his chosen ones would run in fear.

Come Lord Jesus I pray between the yelling, this is the blood of Christ
I say to one so angry at me she will not speak to me.

Jesus died for my broken world, and your broken world. Jesus died for
broken weak disciples, his body broken to make us whole. I need him in my
home, at my meals to bring his love and his healing and his forgiveness to
me and my wife and my children. Though I yell I will continue to pray, come
Lord Jesus. We need him there, at our meals.

And I will continue to accept the invitation to his supper, though
I remain a most unworthy guest. I pray that he will work his miracle of
forgiveness and reconciliation here in this supper this night, that every
barrier that divides us from one another and from our God may be broken by his
broken body, his shed blood.

Come Lord Jesus, be our guest. At our tables, in our hearts, in your
feast, O Lord, Amen, Come Lord Jesus. Amen