

“Invitation to Sup: A reflection on dining with Jesus.”

Sermon for TUMC on August 23, 2026. Jacqui Schmucker

[sharp knocking] Oh, they’re knocking on the door. Who are they? Who is coming for dinner?

Once upon a time, I overheard someone say that cooking or baking could be a spiritual practice! At the moment, that statement didn't resonate with me. I asked myself how that could be? Because for me, at that time, cooking was just a tedious task.

Even when I was a teenager and a young adult, I wanted nothing to do with cooking. Kitchen work? Nope, no cooking for me! When my mom, who at the time owned a restaurant, wanted to teach me, I would disappear. When one of my favourite aunts tried to teach me how to cook rice, no matter how many times she showed me, I just didn't get it. I would always burn the rice until she finally gave up!

And now—you who know me and my cooking skills—will wonder what changed?

Well, even though I completed a college culinary program in my early 20s, I must confess that was a last resort. The professional programs I really wanted right after high school were folklore dancing or airline pilot. But these were denied to me because I was too short. So reluctantly I found myself learning how to prepare gourmet meals as a professional chef.

However, despite my lack of interest in cooking at a young age, I did learn at home the value of celebrating special events where food took centre stage. Whether sharing a family meal or participating in lunches at Teusaquillo Mennonite Church in Bogotá, I always had the sense that something special was happening when we sat down to eat together.

When I immigrated to Canada 34 years ago, I had no idea that I would be starting a new journey in my understanding of cooking. Tim's family, my TUMC community, and my friends have shown me a whole new dimension of sharing a meal around the table. They have taught me that cooking with gusto was not enough. They showed me that the meal itself transforms those who gather around the table, making it a sacred act of fellowship, warmth, and deep connection.

The table has become for me an intimate sanctuary where we open our hearts and share our lives—embracing joy, holding space for sadness, and celebrating everything in between. For me, these moments of vulnerable sharing have become spaces for profound learning. I am not only discovering the depth and character of the people gathered around me, but I am also absorbing their life stories and keeping their wisdom close to my heart. This helps shape who I am as an individual, both in my everyday life and in my spiritual journey as a child of God.

I have also realised that what is required of me when we gather to share a meal around the table, is the willingness and awareness to keep the door of my heart open, while allowing myself to truly enjoy the life journeys of those with whom I share the meal.

Tim and I have sought to experience this dimension of the table within our family, with our friends and in the TUMC community. We have experienced it at potlucks where we all sit together like one big family; at the meals that New Life Church lovingly prepares for fundraisers; and, for me, TUMC's most exciting event of the year, "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner," where neither the host nor the guests know where or with whom they are going to dine.

Whatever the occasion, these are the moments when the table becomes a place of welcome and grace-filled connections, of joy and reconciliation, of peace. The Peace Table.

As I journey through these cooking and dining experiences, I have also been learning the value of hosting. I have come to understand the importance of every detail in creating a meaningful experience. Despite what I learned in culinary school, being a host is not about following a rigid set of rules; it is about making everyone feel welcome, comfortable, and valued. A host's foundational role is to infuse the occasion with hospitality and generosity. And on the flip side, the guests arrive, willing to embrace the celebration with joy and enthusiasm.

I treasure all these meaningful and deep experiences. However, as I reflect on them, I begin to wonder about spiritual food. The question that comes to mind is: How does our human experience of growing or buying, preparing and cooking, hosting and eating food around the table relate to our spiritual lives?

So, what comes to my mind is Revelation 3:20, where Jesus says, "Look, I'm standing at the door and knocking. If any hear my voice and opens the door, I will come in to be with them, and will have dinner with them, and they will have dinner with me." This verse contains such powerful images—the knocking, the opening of the door, and the sharing of a meal. At the same time, it shows us the profound importance of food, both physically and spiritually.

I would like to explore this verse without going into the historic context of this apocalyptic book, as some preachers do. Instead, I want to stay with the image of the invitation itself—the door, the knock, the response, and ultimately, the meal. For me, Revelation 3:20 is the consummation of Jesus' invitation—not only to each individual but also to us as a TUMC community—to sit at the table and dine with Him.

As the Gospels tell us, Jesus did not only teach, offer forgiveness and redemption in synagogues and along the roads; he did so most significantly at the table as well. The meals Jesus shared were not superficial gatherings, but moments charged with profound theological symbolism, revealing the heart of the Kin-dom of God: an open, inclusive reign [RAIN] where everyone has a place.

Jesus' fellowship was characterised by inclusivity, not exclusivity. His meals were invitations to grace—not gatherings to reinforce barriers, but rather open spaces of communion. For him, the table is a place of profound encounter.

In Revelation 3:20, we read that Jesus is also clear in his invitation. He is not going to impose himself on us and dine with us un-invited. Although Jesus frequently dined with all kinds of people, at times announcing his presence, here we see something different. Jesus stands at the door and knocks. He waits for the door to be opened.

I'm standing at the door and knocking. I wonder: What does the door symbolise? I find meaning in the traditional image of the door representing the human heart. And I also wonder: Why does Jesus knock before entering a place and announcing who he is? The verse doesn't say what he said. I imagine it was something like, "Hi, this is Jesus. I have come to spend some time with you, with this community. Perhaps we could dine together."

We know that knocking is a polite way to ask for entry, to announce your arrival, or get the attention of people inside a building or room. It serves as a social signal to show

respect for privacy before entering a private space. But we don't usually announce who is knocking. Jesus does.

Then in the second half of the verse there is a pivotal moment – a call to exercise our agency and answer Jesus: “If any hear my voice and open the door...” At this juncture, we are each invited to hear Jesus’ knock and the gentle announcement of his presence. We must then decide whether to unlatch the door of our hearts to welcome Jesus into our most intimate space – to have a relationship around the table and have a sacred encounter with him. OR to remain behind the door that is firmly barred.

Hans Schlaffer, a sixteenth-century Anabaptist thinker and leader who was martyred for his faith in 1528, reflected on this passage, saying:

"I admonish you, indeed all at whose heart's door the Lord stands and knocks with longing, to open the door to him and to sup [s-up] with him. For certainly the Great Supper is near at hand.... So, open the door while he stands and knocks, for he may tire and leave and then, when you open, he is no longer there."¹

Schlaffer's understanding of Revelation 3:20 was defined by apocalyptic urgency and inward mysticism. For him, Christ's knocking was not a timeless, open-ended invitation. I am struck by his warning that Christ will not knock forever. He cautioned that if a person hesitates or ignores the call, Christ "may tire and leave."

Schlaffer viewed true faith as an intense, internal transformation. To "sup" [s-up] with Christ means to experience an inward spiritual communion that alters how a person lives. Schlaffer believed that answering Jesus’ knocking and opening the door required a willingness to suffer for the truth. The Anabaptists called this willingness to suffer *Gelassenheit*, meaning "yieldedness" or "surrender." Perhaps you remember our pastor Peter’s sermon exploring *Gelassenheit* a couple years ago.

For Hans Schlaffer, *Gelassenheit* was not just a passive feeling of peacefulness or calmness, as it is used today in modern German. It was a radical, costly, and active

¹ *Anabaptist Community Bible*, side column commentary, 1518.

submission to God through Christ. As his contemporary Anabaptist mystic Hans Denck said: “No one may know Christ truly unless they follow him daily in life.”

I feel conflicted about Schlaffer's perspective of Jesus getting tired of knocking at the door and leaving. But I do agree with him that to "sup" with Christ means to experience an inward spiritual communion. I also concur that opening the door to Jesus requires willingness, trust and commitment to *Gelassenheit's* surrender completely to God—to empty ourselves and let Christ rule within us.

Returning to today's passage of the book of revelation in the last line Jesus says "I will come in to be with them, and will have dinner with them, and they will have dinner with me." To my heart, this feels like a sacred pledge. I envision the gatherings where Jesus sat to eat, echoing the Gospel stories of a communion rooted in radical inclusivity. This is no mere private invitation; it is a resonant call reaching out to every person and our community, his table stands as a sanctuary of welcome, providing a holy ground where he desires a deep and transformative encounter with each of us.

And this brings me back to the table where we sup with Jesus. So, how do we dine around the table with the Divine?

While I have been refining my culinary techniques and discovering the art of hosting, I have also been exploring spiritual tools that nourish the inner life. Practices like Centring Prayer, Lectio Divina, and Audio Divina have become part of my journey. I find myself returning to the simple, profound command of Psalm 46:10: "Be still and know that I am God." I am also drawn to the invitation in Matthew 6:6, where we are encouraged to retreat into our inner room—which I understand as the sanctuary of the heart—to close the door and commune with the Mother-Father in secret. These contemplative rhythms call me to cease my striving, to release my anxieties, and to trust that the Spirit will create a holy atmosphere within.

In that stillness and intentional presence, we foster a deep, sacred intimacy with the Divine. By opening the doors of our hearts to Eternal Love through silence and contemplation, we are truly providing the necessary sustenance for our souls.

Jesus asks us to invite him to our table—but we must open the door, surrender ourselves, embrace *Gelassenheit*, and welcome him fully into our lives. Jesus also reminds us with his invitation that we are not meant to rely on our own limited energy,

but rather to find our home in him—staying rooted in his presence and in return, he loves us, he nourishes us, he heals us, and he sups with us every day.

I'd like to close with a meditation ~~that I've adapted from Catholic poet Edwina Gateley.~~

I invite you if you feel comfortable and safe to close your eyes.

Put a hand over your heart.

Take a deep breath in, and as you breathe in, notice any distraction or tension in your body, mind and spirit.

As you breathe out, let all that distraction or tension go.

With the next breath in and out, allow your mind, heart and spirit to open to what is to come and just listen:

Be silent.

Be still

Presence

Door

Knock

Listen

Choice

Allow

Trust

Promise

Empty before your God.

Say nothing

Ask nothing

Be silent.

Be still.

Sacred

Intimacy

Divine

Let your God look upon you.

That is all.

God knows.
God understands.
God loves you with an enormous love,
and only wants
to look upon you
with that love
Quiet
Still
Be
Let Jesus and your God
Sup with you
Every day
Quiet
Still
Be
Nourish
Heal
Peace
Enjoy
Once more take a deep breath in, and let it out
Amen