

TFTD L3: Guess who's coming to dinner?

Wednesday March 9th

Today's TFTD comes from Revd Linda Lonsdale.



Mark 2. 13-22

Jesus went out again beside the lake; the whole crowd gathered around him, and he taught them. As he was walking along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, 'Follow me.' And he got up and followed him. And as he sat at dinner in Levi's house, many tax-collectors and sinners were also sitting with Jesus and his disciples—for there were many who followed him. When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that he was eating with sinners and tax-collectors, they said to his disciples, 'Why does he eat with tax-collectors and sinners?' When Jesus heard this, he said to them, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners.' (Mark 2.13-15)

Perhaps you're like me when it comes to watching films. I'll nearly always choose an oldie over the more modern stuff, I prefer the subtlety with which the storyline is usually handled. And when it comes to great oldies, one of the classics has to be "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?" It was made in 1967, an American [romantic comedy-drama](#), starring [Spencer Tracy](#), [Sidney Poitier](#), and [Katharine Hepburn](#), and dealt with the then knotty issue of inter-racial marriage. Most of the action takes place over a dinner when the white parents and the black parents of the engaged couple meet for the very first time. Thankfully the subject matter is now somewhat dated but it was ground-breaking when first released as it tried to show inter-racial marriage in positive light and was a brave attempt to challenge not only outdated ways of thinking but also those States in the US where inter-racial marriage was still illegal at the time of filming.

Who we choose or would rather not choose to share a meal with probably says a lot about our own worldview. It begs the question, if you could pick anyone, living or

departed, to be your perfect dinner guests, who would you invite?

If we were to use Jesus as our example then perhaps, we would do well to look beyond the outward appearance and any preconceived notions we might hold and look instead for unfolding possibilities and adopt new ways of seeing. When Jesus walked by Levi's booth that day, he didn't just see a treasonous man full of greed. He saw a broken man full of guilt. He saw something in Levi that no one else could see. And he gave him what no one else wanted to give him. He broke down the boundaries which the Pharisees had erected and gave Levi acceptance, a place at the table and the grace to become his disciple, the one we would later come to know as Matthew.

Shattering boundaries - from the very beginning of Jesus' ministry he challenges and shatters the boundaries that deny and exclude others. He eats with the unclean, heals on the Sabbath, touches lepers, and even claims divine authority to forgive sins. Jesus is resisted by those of his day who hold power and authority, those whose lives are dedicated to keeping boundaries intact. Yet for the leper who is cleansed, for the paralytic who is healed, for the sinner who is forgiven and welcomed to the table, Jesus offers liberation, healing, forgiveness of past wrongs and life in all its fullness.

In today's passage Jesus' call of Levi reveals to us both a warning and a promise. Jesus may very well be trying to break down the boundaries that others are desperately trying to hold in place. Yet this boundary-smashing Jesus is our only hope of deliverance from all that separates us from one another and denies our common humanity or as Martin Luther King Jr cautioned us: *"We must either learn to live together as brothers (and sisters), or we are going to die together as fools."*

Lenten blessings, Linda