

April 7, 2019

Luke 14:15-23

Jesus was/is a movement founder

His followers received the Spirit in their resurrection experience, were transformed by the experience, and, just like Jesus, desired to share the vision, and a movement was born

Over time this movement began to codify things in order to pass on Jesus' teachings "correctly"

Thus, the church, as an institution, was born

But, was a movement and birth of a new "institution" Jesus' intent?

No, Jesus was about reforming, not reinventing, his faith tradition

Jesus born, lived, died, resurrected a Jew

Why, then, the church?

Two strong factors:

First, fall of Jerusalem and exile (diaspora) no longer allowed Jewish community to be as tolerant of various approaches to the faith; diaspora led to orthodoxy

Second, and a larger factor in this, is the radical notion of inclusion, all are welcome

Borg draws a distinction between "law of purity" and "law of compassion" – "holy as God is holy" vs. "compassionate, as God is compassionate"

Purity law allow for some to be excluded – illness, poverty, caste

Jesus' compassion law saw all welcome within God's love; God's compassion

(I, personally, believe Jesus' experience of Holy Spirit was a vision of unity, oneness)

As followers shared what they had learned from Jesus, message expanded beyond Judaism

Gentiles, non-Jews, became part of "all are welcome"

This radical welcome, this law of compassion included much more than just Gentiles, it included those everyone else excluded

This inclusion was most visible at the table fellowship – rich and poor, Jew and non-

Jew, male and female, slave and free, all sat together, ate together as equals

This table fellowship soon became “outward and visible sign of the inward and invisible union” in God

The Parable of the Great Dinner is best description of who is invited “to the table”, welcome in the fellowship

“all who look like they need a square meal, all the misfits and homeless and wretched”

These are the members of the movement Jesus founded

And, these are still the members to be welcomed – friend and foe, acceptable and unacceptable, rich and poor, all are to be welcomed to the table, to the abundance God promises all creation

May we, who seek to be part of the Jesus’ movement, be filled with God’s Spirit, the spirit of compassion, the spirit of welcome, the spirit of the Oneness of all creation.

Amen.