

# Tales from the Roaring Rapids Ranch

*Adventure Stories from the Old West*

## A Quiet Table

By Bern Venters & Cole Braddock



The afternoon settled gently over the Roaring Rapids Ranch. The cattle were fed, the horses rubbed down, and the usual clatter of the yard had given way to a deep, honest quiet.

Jake Harmon sat alone at the long wooden table in the bunkhouse. It wasn't mealtime, not exactly. A single tin cup sat in front of him, half-filled with water. Beside it lay a small piece of bread Mary had set aside after supper.

Jake hadn't planned on sitting there this long, but this was a habit.

He turned the cup slowly between his hands, the way a man does when he's thinking about things he'd rather not rush. The ranch had taught him

plenty over the years—how to read the weather, how to trust a horse, how to mend a fence—but some lessons took longer. The kind you couldn't fix with nails or rope.

Footsteps sounded softly behind him.

Mary didn't say anything at first. She just set a hand on the back of the chair across from him and waited, giving Jake the dignity of finishing his thoughts.

"Ever notice," Jake finally said, "how easy it is to show up... and how hard it is to come honest?"

Mary smiled—not the kind meant to smooth things over, but the kind that told the truth kindly. "Every day."

Jake nodded. "Sometimes I wonder if I've got any business sitting at a table meant for grace. Here, or on Sunday mornings at church."

Mary pulled out the chair and sat. "Jake, none of us earn a place at that table. If we did, it wouldn't be grace."

He looked down at the bread. "I keep thinking I should be better by now."

"Better than who?" she asked gently.

Jake let out a quiet breath. "Better than yesterday."

Mary considered that. "Trying to follow the right trail matters," she said. "But so does knowing you still need help walking it."

Outside, Boone padded past the open door and paused, tail thumping once against the frame before wandering off. Even the dog seemed to know this wasn't a moment to interrupt.

Mary continued, her voice steady. "When a person comes to that table thinking they've got it all figured out, that's when they miss the point. But when they come knowing they're still learning—still listening—that's when the table does its work."

Jake picked up the bread, not eating yet. "So the question isn't whether I'm worthy."

"No," Mary said softly. "The question is whether you're willing."

Jake closed his eyes for a moment. Not to escape—but to look straight at what was there. Regrets. Gratitude. Hope. And a quiet request for forgiveness where he'd fallen short.

When he opened them again, the ranch looked the same. But he wasn't.

Mary stood. "I'll leave you to it."

Jake nodded, finally taking the bread, then the cup—grateful not because he was finished growing, but because he didn't have to pretend, he was.

Out on the ranch, the work would go on. The days would keep coming.

And growth—real growth—would keep happening the same way it always had.

Quietly.

One honest step at a time.

### ***The Table Beyond the Sanctuary: A Reflection***

When we think of the Lord's Supper, we often picture a sanctuary—rows of pews, a quiet hush, familiar words spoken in a familiar place. And that matters. Gathering as a community to remember Christ is a gift that should never be taken lightly.

But the first table was not in a church.

It was in an ordinary upper room, with Passover food, among people who did not yet understand everything—but who were loved and would learn.

That is why there are moments when the table can appear beyond the sanctuary.

Sometimes it shows up in silence, with simple bread and water.

Sometimes it appears when a person pauses long enough to tell the truth about their own heart.

Sometimes it meets us alone—on a porch, at a kitchen counter, or at a ranch table after the work is done.

Private communion does not replace gathered worship.

It reminds us of what gathered worship is meant to form in us.

The question is never whether the setting is proper or the elements impressive.

The deeper question is whether we come honestly.

Are we still learning from Christ?

Are we still trying to follow Him?

Are we willing to receive forgiveness instead of pretending we no longer need it?

The table beyond the sanctuary is not about earning grace.

It is about receiving it.

And wherever and whenever a person comes with humility, remembrance, and trust in Christ, the presence of Christ is with us.

The table is already set.

### **Discussion Questions**

#### **1. Jake sits alone at the bunkhouse table, unsure whether he belongs at a place meant for grace.**

Why do people often question whether they are “worthy enough” to receive grace or forgiveness? What experiences or beliefs tend to shape those feelings?

#### **2. Mary says the table is not about having things figured out, but about being willing.**

Why is willingness sometimes harder than effort or discipline? What keeps people from being honest about their need for forgiveness or growth?

#### **3. The story places a moment of communion outside a church setting, using simple bread and water.**

Why do people often associate spiritual practices only with formal spaces or rituals? How might recognizing God’s presence in ordinary places change the way we live day to day?

#### **4. Jake pauses to examine himself—not to escape his past, but to face it honestly.**

Why is self-examination uncomfortable for many people? How can honest reflection lead to healing instead of shame?

#### **5. Jake leaves the table changed, not because the ranch is different, but because he is.**

Why does real growth often happen quietly rather than dramatically? How might viewing communion as an ongoing posture—not just an event—reshape someone’s spiritual life?

This is an experimental endeavor and will not continue if people do not find it helpful. Please let us know if you find stories like this and the audio version helpful for your teaching. Please let us know your opinion at [lgp@theiblc.com](mailto:lgp@theiblc.com).

Do you have suggestions for improvement? Do you think the audio version might make the story more helpful if your class hears it read rather than reads the story themselves (or both hears and reads)? Do you find the discussion questions helpful? Do you like the idea of just choosing 1 (or fewer than 5) questions depending on time and your class needs?

Tales from the Roaring Rapids Ranch  
© 2025 by Bern Venters & Cole Braddock  
Free for not-for-profit use.