

Theme: True freedom is found in a proper relationship with food, neither despising nor idolizing it, but rather rejoicing in it as God's good gift which points to our ultimate need for God Himself.

## I. Intro - The Slow Food Movement

- A. Much modern food is really pseudo-food
- B. The slow food movement rebelled against this
- C. It taught the joy of real food, carefully prepared & served
- D. But some took this to extremes - the foodies
- E. What is a proper human relationship to food?
- F. How do we properly respond to food in a way that leads to freedom?

## II. A Theology of Food

### A. Food is a gift from God

Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. <sup>30</sup> And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground — everything that has the breath of life in it — I give every green plant for food." And it was so. Genesis 1:29–30

1. God immediately gives us and all animals the gift of food - all the plants He has created
2. NOTE - after the flood this includes meat as well
3. This is specifically a gift - God gives it to us
4. This means food should never be taken for granted but should elicit gratitude in our hearts to God.

5. This is especially true because food is not only nutritious but also smells and tastes good - a superabundant gift from God to us.

### B. Food is essential for our life

And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground — everything that has the breath of life in it — I give every green plant for food." And it was so. Genesis 1:30

1. Everything with the breath of life - human and animal - must have food to survive.
2. This fact is essential to our creation as embodied beings - we must eat to live.  
In the biblical story of creation man is presented, first of all, as a hungry being, and the whole world as his food. Second only to the direction to propagate and have dominion over the earth, according to the author of the first chapter of Genesis, is God's instruction to men to eat of the earth: "Behold I have given you every herb bearing seed ... and every tree, which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat...." Man must eat in order to live; he must take the world into his body and transform it into himself, into flesh and blood. He is indeed that which he eats, and the whole world is presented as one all-embracing banquet table for man. - Alexander Schmemmann - For the Life of the World
3. Food is essential to life; we are not self-existent but only survive as we consume other things to sustain our life.
4. In fact, we can not survive long without food and water, so they are an essential part of what it means to be human. Food is thus a constant reminder of our need for God and His provision.

C. Food & feasting are important throughout the biblical story

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. Genesis 2:15

1. Our first task is to garden - produce food
2. The importance of food and feasting appears at critical junctures throughout the biblical story:
  - a. The Passover feast (Exodus 12; repeated yearly)
  - b. The elders eat with God (Exodus 24:8-11)
  - c. Israel's worship festivals built around harvest and feasting
  - d. Jesus' first Messianic sign turns water into wine
  - e. The return of the prodigal son is celebrated with a huge feast (Luke 15)
  - f. Jesus fulfills Passover and gives the Lord's Supper
  - g. The disciples recognize Jesus in the breaking of the bread (Luke 24:30-31)
  - h. Jesus first appearance to all 12 - He eats with them (Luke 24:41-43)
  - i. The consummation of God's plan is the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:9) which initiates our eternal feast with God (Isaiah 25:6)
3. Human history and the story of salvation begin and end with feasting, and are structured around food and feasting at every turn.
4. One can not fully understand or enter into the experience of God's work of creation and salvation apart from receiving the gift of food and feasting.

D. Food is also presented as a potential temptation throughout the Scripture

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. <sup>16</sup> And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; <sup>17</sup> but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die." Genesis 2:15-17

1. Adam can feast, but He must obey God's limits
2. Given the importance of food and the blessing of feasting, it is no surprise that the first test for humanity also involves food!
3. Food as a source of temptation also occurs throughout Scripture:
  - a. The first sin involves eating (Genesis 3)
  - b. Exodus 32 is a feast that devolves into excess and idolatry
  - c. Israel repeatedly is tempted and sins with respect to food in the wilderness
  - d. Balaam seduced Israel to sin via a pagan orgy of food and sex
  - e. The first temptation of Satan for Jesus involves food
  - f. Idol feasts were a major temptation in the early church (1 Corinthians 8-10; Revelation 2-3)
  - g. No wonder gluttony is one of the 7 root vices/deadly sins!

E. Food is never viewed as a minor issue in the Scripture but lies at the heart of both proper worship and sinful idolatry and rebellion.

### III. Applying the Word: Embracing Feasting and Fasting

#### A. Enjoy food as a feast, not as fuel

1. One stream of our culture teaches us to view food as fuel - like gasoline for a machine
2. This view is seriously unbiblical for three reasons
  - a. We are not machines - we are human beings
  - b. Food is not simply fuel - it is a delight to smell, taste, and enjoy in its texture
  - c. It ignores that food is a gracious gift from our loving Father that should be received with careful gratitude rather than merely consumed.
3. Enjoying food as a feast for body and soul
  - a. Take time to prepare real food - not junk
    1. One reason we don't delight in food and act as if it is fuel is that modern food is so bad!
    2. Eat real food, not pseudo-food.
  - b. Sit down as a family (or friends) to eat
    1. Human cultures universally view eating together as one of the key components of community
    2. One of the great losses of modern life is that families often do not sit and eat together, but eat at different times or on the run
    3. We were created to eat together, and it is pleasing to God and brings joy to us  
The fellowship of the table has a festive quality.  
Through our meals, God is calling us to rejoice.  
Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*  
The sun looks down on nothing so good as a household laughing together over a meal. CS Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*

- c. Take time to give thanks to God for your food  
They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth. <sup>4</sup> For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, <sup>5</sup> because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer. 1 Timothy 4:3-5
  1. The practice of giving thanks makes us slow down and thus helps us to feast rather than refuel.
  2. This practice cultivates gratitude and the practice of noticing all the gifts of God which sustain us each day.
- d. Let food point us to our ultimate hunger - our need for God and His Word  
He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. Deuteronomy 8:3
  1. Our bodily hunger for food is meant to point to the hunger of our souls for God and His Word.
  2. This will completely escape us if we constantly eat in an unthinking manner, fueling rather than feasting.
- e. Let our meals remind us of the feast to which all history is moving: the Marriage Supper of the Lamb  
On this mountain the Lord Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine — the best of meats and the finest of wines. Isaiah 25:6  
The climax of history is not a higher form of disembodied consciousness but a feast. Tim Keller, *The Prodigal God*  
This life gives us foretastes and glimpses of the next life. When I'm eating with people here, enjoying food and friendship, it's a bridge to when I'll be eating there, enjoying food and friendship. Randy Alcorn, *Heaven*

4. Feasting does not require fancy food, nor do we have to feast every meal. But we need to cultivate the attitude of feasting rather than refueling.

B. Periodically practice a full or partial fast

1. In Scripture, fasting includes avoiding all food, or alternatively avoiding certain foods. A fast can also last a full day or part of a day.

2. Fast to curtail the temptation to gluttony

a. Gluttony is a disordered love that excessively craves food and drink, attempting to fill spiritual hunger with material fare.

b. Fasting reminds me that I am more than body; I also am a soul, and true freedom requires I attend to the needs of both body and soul.

c. This is an ever-present danger for every human!

3. Fast to reinforce the fact that freedom is found in embracing the limits set for us by God

a. Fasting reminds us that true freedom is not found in indulging every desire but embracing the limits given to us by God.

b. Gratifying our every desire leads to bondage, not freedom. Thus, fasting is helpful because it gives us the chance to discipline our appetite.

4. Fast to spend more time in God's Word and prayer

a. We fast from food to feast on God's Word

b. Don't just skip a meal - draw close to God

5. Fast to renew our ability to properly feast

a. The problem of the hedonic treadmill - we get acclimated to things that bring pleasure so that the amount of pleasure begins to decrease - and we are tempted to over-indulge to experience the pleasure.

b. Fasting is a periodic "reset" to recalibrate our ability to enjoy the gifts of God, including food.

c. This is why the Church calendar has seasons of fasting like Lent, followed by seasons of feasting such as Easter-Pentecost.

6. I encourage you to fast in some way this week

C. The Lord's Table - Our Communal Feast

1. This Table is a feast for our souls

2. This Table is a feast for our whole church family

3. This Table is the Eucharist - giving thanks

4. This Table reminds us our ultimate need is God

5. This Table points us forward to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb!

6. Come and feast today!

## Embracing Feasting and Fasting

Genesis 1:29-30; 2:15-17

March 14, 2021

Communion

Genesis 27:28; Deuteronomy 33:15-16

Teaching keywords: Freedom; humanity; Lent; fasting; Lord's Supper

May God give you of heaven's dew and of earth's richness — an abundance of grain and new wine, with the choicest gifts of the ancient mountains and the fruitfulness of the everlasting hills; with the best gifts of the earth and the favor of our Lord, until you sit at His Wedding Feast on the final day!

Genesis 27:28; Deuteronomy 33:15-16 (Paraphrase)

Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. <sup>30</sup> And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground — everything that has the breath of life in it — I give every green plant for food.” And it was so. Genesis 1:29-30

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