

Recycling Gluttony
Ecc 2:24-25, Phil 3:17-21

Friends, its January... and for many of us that probably means we are trying to be more diligent in watching what we eat and making sure that we exercise, especially after we may have eaten more than what we should have over the holidays.

And while the diet and weight loss industry has been around for quite a while, it seems that recently our society is developing a growing concern over too much food intake for reasons that go far beyond simply “trying to lose a few pounds” before beach season comes along.

And maybe you’ve noticed as well. It seemed like before, nobody really cared if you ate a lot, in fact fast food restaurants would offer you the option to “Super-size” your meal for only a small charge...

But somewhere back in the early 2000’s the public sentiment on portion size and how much we eat began to shift.

Maybe it was the documentary movie “Supersize Me” which illustrated the shocking health consequences of eating too much fast food.

Maybe it was because the media started focusing on the all warnings being issued by health professionals about the increase in childhood obesity and all the health complication of being overweight.

But whatever it was friends, today we are far more aware of the consequences that come from eating unhealthy food and eating way too much of it – and by and large this is what most people understand as gluttony.

Especially after the holiday season is over... right? We step on the scale and we see the evidence that we’ve over-indulged in too much holiday food, too many goodies, too much egg nog... and we feel guilty and gluttonous.

Well friends I’ve got good news and bad news... the bad news is that as one of the seven deadly sins there is far more to

Gluttony than simply feeling guilty for indulging in too much food and drink... and in actuality there's a lot more gluttony going on than what we realize.

But that's the good news too... because friends, wherever we find sin – we find the opportunity in that exact spot... to look at what is being twisted, and thus what can be recycled – untwisted... so that it can be used to serve God, and to honor Christ.

So, becoming more aware of all the gluttony that goes on around us simply means becoming aware of more opportunities to recycle.

And so this morning we want to look at Philippians 3 to find out what exactly is involved in Gluttony and why it is so prevalent among us... as Paul states there are “**many**” who live as enemies of the cross of Christ.

Because friends that where Gluttony puts us... but how do we get to that point?

Because someone who is an enemy of the cross of Christ sounds more like a radical Islamist... or an adamant secular humanist... or perhaps a Satanist... not really a glutton.

But, let's start by examining the list of descriptors that Paul uses to describe those who live as enemies of the cross of Christ.

And we can see that descriptors that are pretty broad. These people are destined for destruction, their stomach is their god, their shame is their glory and their mind is set on earthly things.

So this could certainly include Islamists, Secular Humanists and Satanists... as well many others, even gluttons.

And we should notice that there is “cause and effect” relationship between these descriptions.

Being an enemy of the cross is equated with being destined for destruction, which is the result of having your stomach for

your god, which comes from glorying in your shame, which starts with having your mind set on earthly things.

So let's look at where this starts... having our minds set on earthly things.

So in our introductory message to this series we learned that sin is parasitical in nature and that it twists what God created and intend to be good.

So having our minds set on "earthly things" means that we become preoccupied with the pursuit of what God created us to do here on earth with no regard for the creator.

Ecclesiastes 2:24-25 says *"A man can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in his work. This too, I see, is from the hand of God, for without him, who can eat or find enjoyment?"*

So, when sin twists this good arrangement that is from the hand of God... these verses are reduced to *"A man can do*

nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in his work." And how many people do you know whose lives could be characterized like this?

You see friends when the acknowledging and including and honoring God in these activities is dropped out... friends; that is when our minds become set on earthly things.

The result of this preoccupation friends is that these good things, twisted by sin, become god things. They become that which our lives are centered around. They demand all of our time, all our energy, all our resources, all our heart, everything...

Now when something good - like alcohol, drugs, or food - become god things, they will enslave us and disgrace us.

If you've ever seen someone in the chains of addiction, you can't help but see the disgrace that comes along with it. How it reduces someone created in the image of God into a slave to the bottle, pills, or the refrigerator.

How it makes a person binge on enough food to feed a family for a week and growing fantastically obese until they can't fit into their clothes, their homes or even their car. You can see this happen on reality TV shows friends....

Or drinking, and taking drugs until they begin to waste away, until they stop taking care of themselves, until all they care about, all that matters is getting that next drink, that next high no matter the cost.

Their glory is their shame.

But, let's not pat ourselves on the back too quickly. Other good things like our work or our possessions for example – can become god things too.

They won't enslave us as quickly, and at first they might seem more benevolent and kind and very generous but... over the years and ever so gradually they become more and more demanding, and eventually we find ourselves a slave to our

paycheck and all that we supposedly own, unable to break free from it.

Our glory – our big paycheck and all that we can afford because of it... is really our shame. They might be golden chains but they are chains none the less.

At this point the next description seems rather obvious doesn't it? Paul says their stomach is their god.

But we can go a bit deeper with this statement with the understanding that when sin twists things it destroys relationships by turning them into something they weren't meant to be.

So what we need to understand here is that sin even twists the relationship we have with our own bodies – our stomach becomes our god...

God created us with appetites and desires and made it pleasurable to satisfy those desires – that's a good thing.

This truth is reflected again in Ecclesiastes in 9:7-9 *“Go, eat your food with gladness, and drink your wine with a joyful heart, for it is now that God favors what you do. Always be clothed in white, and always anoint your head with oil. Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love....”*

But when sin twists our relationship with our body... and feeding those appetites and desires becomes the sole focus of our life – that’s gluttony, so much more than food.

Sin will even twist those appetites and desires so that we genuinely want things which are destructive, or will harm us, or go against God’s design... without our even choosing to want them...

Maybe you’ve seen that reality TV show which features people who have a compulsion to eat bizarre things like scotch tape, dirt, plastic or drink nail polish.

And the show usually is about how friends and family are trying to intervene because this compulsion to eat tape or drink nail polish is making them sick...

So in cases like this it’s easy to see that the next consequence for those whose minds are set on earthly things, whose shame is their glory, whose stomach is their god... are destined for destruction.

Keep eating plastic and drinking that nail polish much longer and it will damage your internal organs and you’ll die from organ failure – that’s rather obvious.

But we also know now that a long term diet that is high in saturated fats, cholesterol, and too much sugar and salt will do you in eventually too... clogged arteries, type II diabetes...

In fact there’s a certain amount of frustration we all feel with the continual stream of information that comes out about which foods are currently good or bad for you.

At first it was don't eat the eggs, then its eat the eggs, don't eat butter – use margarine, then its eat butter – avoid the chemicals and oil.... Have a glass of wine... then don't have a glass of wine... we should take vitamins and supplements... then we shouldn't... and on and on it goes.

What we thought was ok to eat seems to end up contributing in some way to our ultimate demise. It reminds me of a Latin saying made famous because Angelina Jolie has it tattooed on herself...

“Quod me nutrit me destruit”

What nourishes me destroys me...

You see friends, this is why the scriptures teach us *“man does not live on bread alone...”* (Deut 8:3) Because “bread” alone - the earthly things which God gave us to experience the pleasure of satisfying our appetites, they are not the source of life. Only God is.

That is why Jesus Christ said *“I am the bread of life... I can give you living water...so that you will thirst no more.”* (John 6:35, John 4:10)

Feeding our appetites with only earthly things in excess or even in moderation will not bring life that lasts – at its best it only will only bring a better quality at its worst it only speeds up the inevitable end of our life – death.

This is why the scripture says the *“wages of sin is death”* (Rom 6:23)

So friends – here is what Gluttony is really all about... it is feeding your physical body in an attempt to live spiritually -

either by hedonistic excess or being extreme – what people call “really living” or by pursuing “wellness and vitality” through a disciplined lifestyle of eating right, exercise and mental rigor.

They are really two sides of the same coin of gluttony.

Gluttony is attempting to truly “live” spiritually through we how deal with our physical body; and that friends... makes us an enemy of the cross of Jesus Christ.

Why? Because it was only on the cross where Sin was put to death in the sacrifice of Jesus’ **physical** body, and this resulted in **spiritual** life for us.

So to try to get “spiritual life” from how we deal with our own physical bodies is really an act of unbelief, an act of denial about what was accomplished on the cross; it makes us an enemy of the cross.

Friends, spiritual life comes from Jesus body. That’s why Jesus himself said *“Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”* (John 6:54)

That promise is what Paul speaks of in our passage this morning when he declares the good news that Jesus Christ

“will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.”

In other words our physical bodies will one day pulse with the fullness of the spiritual life that Jesus’ body achieved through his death and resurrection. (And we think a pregnant woman has a bit of a glow...)

No amount of excessive partying, drinking, bunging jumping, or extreme sports can produce it in us... neither will any amount of healthy living and exercise and supplements.

This life is the gift of salvation from Jesus Christ, put into effect in our lives by the Holy Spirit now and brought into its fullness when Jesus returns.

So until that glorious day arrives – and rest assured it will friends... until then how do we recycle the gluttony that is so prevalent in us and around us?

How do we enjoy the pleasures of satisfying our body's appetites and desires without allowing sin to twist it into gluttony?

Well Paul invites us to *"Join with others in following my example and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you."*

In other words we do this together... there is this communal aspect that we need to recover in terms of dealing with sin, with recycling sin... and together as a group we adopt a certain pattern of living, call it a Christian lifestyle if you want to – it helps to build Christian community in our church.

God's people have always had a pattern for life – *"six days a week you shall work but the seventh day is a Sabbath – set apart for the Lord..."* (Ex 35:2) and *"Be sure to set aside a tenth of all that your fields produce each year."* (Deut 14:22)

So worshipping regularly together, giving regularly from what we earn together.... these kinds of patterns help to keep our work and our possessions from becoming god things,

And getting into the habit of thanking God for the food and asking Him to bless it each time you eat also helps us to continue to acknowledge the creator, the giver and the source of life.

Developing spiritual disciplines and self-control will help to prevent good things from becoming god things as well.

And remember friends the goal is not to try to impress God or earn his approval through spending time fasting, praying, reading scripture and meditating upon it.

Instead we pursue these spiritual disciplines together so that through the power of the Holy Spirit, Sin's influence on our relationship with our bodies is lessened, it becomes undone so that we are in control of our desires and appetites and they are not in control of us.

And it gives us time to examine our minds, our hearts and seek out our motives to see if we are somehow attempting to gain spiritual life in what we do with our bodies.

It gives us space to confess this to Christ and to each other and to think about how we might turn away from what we are doing, even if it only be changing our motives as to why we are going to the gym.

However... it's just as important to remember that God's pattern for living also calls for times of celebration and joy and feasting. We need to party together! We should enjoy the good gifts that God gives us and thank him for that.

So... we're going Snow tubing this afternoon and we're going to enjoy the speed and the thrills and the cold and how good it feels to warm up in the lodge afterwards and joke around and laugh together – and we'll know it's a good gift from God and we'll thank him for it.

So friends until Jesus returns.... living by a pattern where there are times for spiritual disciplines and times for spiritual celebrations, together as a Christian community- that can help us recycle gluttony, and enjoy the gift of pleasure that God wants us to experience from His creation.

And the essence of how we live together as Christians is summed up in what the Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:31

“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”

So friends, what is the Holy Spirit speaking to you about this morning with regards to gluttony?

How can you begin to recycle it?

Let's Pray.