

You Are What You Eat

Luke 22:7-21

Brothers and sisters, we're all familiar with the saying "You are what you eat!" And I don't think it would be overstating the case to say that as a society, we have become obsessed with the food that we are eating – or not eating... because of how it affects who we are.

The dietary concerns which used to be the exclusive territory of supermodels, body builders, and Cosmopolitan Magazine have expanded far beyond personal vanity, and have now become public health issues.

Our news feeds feature frequent reports about North America's obesity epidemic, the increase in deadly food allergies, studies about the benefits or detriments of particular foods in relation to our health and so on...

Film-makers have been churning out documentaries about the food industry - like Food Inc, Food Matters, King Corn, Forks over Knives, The Future of Food, and of course the original fast food expose "Supersize Me."

And you can find any and every opinion, theory, and conspiracy theory about the food industry and the food we eat circulating on social media.

So, as a result of this increased public awareness and concern, everyone knows about GMO's, Monsanto is a dirty word, upscale restaurants draw clientele by featuring locally grown, organic, sustainably farmed ingredients, and grocery stores have figured out that if label something as "gluten-free", then food-conscious consumers are much more likely to buy it - even if it never had gluten in it to begin with...

So friends the point is, if we are not obsessed with what we eat or do not eat, then at the very least we are extremely concerned about it because instinctively we know that what we eat has the power to shape us and form our identity doesn't it.

We identify as vegetarian or vegan or meat-atarian, we may be labeled as overweight or ideal weight, we can feel lethargic or energetic, healthy or unhealthy, and so on.

In so many ways we are defined by what we eat... or don't eat.

And brothers and sisters, nobody understood this better than God's chosen people, the Israelites, because in so many ways their identity was formed by what they ate or didn't eat.

In fact if we did some word association, and I said "Jewish" - someone would respond with "Kosher" - which is the term used to describe what is ok or not ok for Jews to eat.

And those dietary restrictions go back to all the way to Old Testament times, to the Law of Moses in which God set out what His people could and could not eat.

In Leviticus 11:2 God says to Moses and Aaron *"Say to the Israelites: 'Of all the animals that live on land, these are the ones you may eat: You may eat any animal that has a divided hoof and that chews the cud.'"*

And after giving further specifications on what makes something edible or not God commands Moses and Aaron to

use this distinctions saying *"you must distinguish between the unclean and the clean, between living creatures that may be eaten and those that may not be eaten."* (vs. 47)

And not only did God give Israel commands about what to eat and what not eat, in Leviticus 23 He also instructed Israel to observe and celebrate other feasts throughout the year.

There was the festival of Booths, the Day of Atonement, the festival of Trumpets, the festival of Weeks, the festival of Unleavened Bread, and... the festival which started it all – the Passover.

This festival specifically commemorated how God delivered Israel from slavery in Egypt so that instead of belonging to the Pharaoh they would belong to God, and it reflected the events of how that deliverance took place.

In Exodus 12 God said to Moses: ¹³ *Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household.* ⁴ *If any*

household is too small for a whole lamb, they must share one with their nearest neighbor, having taken into account the number of people there are. You are to determine the amount of lamb needed in accordance with what each person will eat.

⁵ *The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats.*

⁶ *Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the members of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight.* ⁷ *Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs.*

⁸ *That same night they are to eat the meat roasted over the fire, along with bitter herbs, and bread made without yeast.*

⁹ *Do not eat the meat raw or boiled in water, but roast it over a fire—with the head, legs and internal organs.* ¹⁰ *Do not leave any of it till morning; if some is left till morning, you must burn it.* ¹¹ *This is how you are to eat it: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste; it is the Lord's Passover.*

¹² *"On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn of both people and animals, and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the Lord.* ¹³ *The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.*

¹⁴ *"This is a day you are to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord—a lasting ordinance.*

So friends, you can see why the Passover was so important for Israel, this was their liberation, the beginning of their nation, of becoming God's Chosen people, of God keeping His promise to their father Abraham, and celebrating the Passover meal was central to remembering those events which made them who they were and gave them their identity.

And God's additional commands in His Law about what Israel could and could not eat, served to reinforce this identity for them and their children and their children's children.

It would help them remain distinct as God's Chosen people while living amongst the nations who did not know or obey God.

Because brothers and sisters - you are what you eat! So if you were God's Chosen - you ate like God's Chosen...

And as the Passover was central to the identity of God's people – it was the sacrifice of the lamb that was central to the celebration of the Passover.

From what we just read about the Passover if there was no sacrificed lamb, there would be no blood on the doorframes and thus no protection against the judgement of the Lord...

And it's with this central fact about the Passover that Luke begins his account of Jesus celebrating the Passover with his disciples – he says in vs. 7 ***“Then came the day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed.”***

And it was this verse which stood out as the one that God wants us to pay attention to on this Good Friday; *“the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed.”*

Think about that for a moment – think about how it emphasizes the necessity of “sacrifice” as part of this identity shaping meal.

The Passover Lamb had to be sacrificed, its life had to be taken, its blood had to be spilled, so that each generation of Israelites could experience in some way the events which had occurred on that first Passover so they would be reminded and shaped by the knowledge of what had protected them from God's judgement which delivered them from slavery.

The lamb's life was taken so that their life could be spared from the judgement on Egypt and be set free instead!

And friends, very soon after eating this last Passover meal with his disciples - Jesus was going to sacrifice His life so that

anyone who trusts in Him would be spared from God's judgement on Sin and be set free from its power in their life.

Just as the The Lord passed over the homes where the blood of the lamb was painted on the door frames – God's ultimate judgement for Sin will pass over those who trust in the blood of Jesus Christ, this is the point that Jesus wanted to teach His disciples as they celebrated the Passover together.

So now we do not celebrate the Passover – we celebrate our Lord's Supper instead, and we put our trust in the blood of Jesus by obeying his command to eat and drink the bread and the cup, of which he said: *"This is my body given (broken) for you; do this in remembrance of me."* And *"this cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you."*

There are many aspects which Jesus changed and fulfilled in the Passover meal so that it becomes what we now call "The Lord's Supper," but one thing is still the same – the Lamb had to be sacrificed!

As John the Baptist said *"Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world"* (John 1:29)

So the Lord's Supper is still a sacrificial meal.

And it is meant to give you the experience that Christ sacrificed **His** life so that **your** life could be spared, and by eating it – through the power of the Holy Spirit – it changes your identity from being enslaved by sin and being captive to the devil to belonging to God through Jesus and being changed into a new human being, by the Holy Spirit.

So... we are what we eat, and when we eat this sacrificial meal it changes us to see ourselves, and our lives as sacrifices that we give back to Christ, not to pay Him back – but to show our gratitude and love for Him.

As the Apostle Paul writes in Romans 12:1 *"Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship."*

Brothers and sister, this past Sunday we heard that this is not going to be just another Easter... but that God wants to visit you, to come to you, and do something significant in your life this year – and part of that is going to be changing our identity, changing who are becoming.

Let me explain it this way.

This Easter, the Holy Spirit wants us to realize that Christ was sacrificed for us... so now as we eat his sacrificial meal, we will start to see ourselves as sacrifices for Christ.

Because we are what we eat.

So what will that mean, that we are sacrifices for Christ?

Well for starters it changes how we come to Christ and His church – perhaps we started coming because of what we need, what we desire, what Christ or His church can offer us – eg. Inspiration, positivity, hope, fellowship etc...

But the Holy Spirit wants to change us and grow us so that be start to come to Christ and His Church and we offer our lives and say “use me for your Kingdom Lord – however you can!”

It’s the same sort of transformation that the disciples and the crowds experienced. They started to follow Jesus looking for political freedom, miracles, healings, deliverance and so on – but through the events of Easter, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit they were transformed into a group of people who would sacrifice their lives to “*go and make disciples of all nations...*” and spread the Kingdom of God across the world.

Now friends, there isn’t anything wrong with coming to Jesus because of what He offers us – in fact we often really need it! And truly it wouldn’t really be a sacrifice if we were giving up something that was wrong - that would be repentance...

So we’re not being asked to repent of why we have thus far come to Jesus – instead we’re being asked to consider if Jesus is asking us to sacrifice that (*sacrifice is giving up something that is good...*)

Much like what the American President John F. Kennedy once said *“Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country...”*

Friends – Jesus freely and knowingly sacrificed his own life, *(his life was something good)* so that our lives might be spared and we can be transformed and be able to freely and knowingly sacrifice something good back to Christ, as evidence that our hearts are in a place where we say *“we’re not asking “what is in it for us?” but “what are we in it for?”*

The Passover Lamb had to be sacrificed... The Supper of our Lord is a sacrificial meal... We are what we eat... Brothers and sisters *“offer your bodies as living sacrifices...”*

Now if this sounds a bit radical - let me suggest that we’re not unfamiliar with sacrifice, despite what we may think... it’s just that it’s not really a part of our faith life anymore.

We make sacrifices in the other areas of our life all the time don’t we.

We make sacrifices for our families, for our work, for our education, for our financial goals... right??

What are you willing to give up so that your kids have opportunities you never had? What are you willing to do without in order to get to where you want to be in life?

So you see brothers and sisters – we know all about sacrifice and what it means. We understand when something is a greater priority so that we are committed and willing to give up and go without other things for it – but somehow, for many of us, that is no longer a part of our relationship with Jesus.

Friends the good news is that God wants to change that, not through guilt – but through the grace and mercy that are present in the Lord’s Supper – that sacrificial meal that forms our identity, because we are what we eat...

So let us then remember, commemorate and reflect upon the events of Good Friday in preparation to celebrate and eat our Lord’s Supper - a sacrificial meal...