

You Are What You Eat
Luke 22:7-23

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.

The evening news features 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 are 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 on the internet, it's all there available to you at the click of a mouse.

So, as a result of this increased public awareness and concern, everybody knows what GMO's are, Monsanto is a dirty word, upscale restaurants draw clientele because they feature locally grown, organic, sustainably farmed ingredients, and the Real Canadian Superstore has introduced and expanded its Blue Menu product line...

(Which is in no way related to Blue Worship or the Three Colors of Spirituality ☺)

And Advertisers 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 brothers and sisters 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 we know that what we eat has the power to shape us and form our identity – vegan or meat-atarian, overweight or ideal weight, lethargic or energetic, healthy or unhealthy, and so on.

So educating ourselves, and making informed choices about we eat or do not eat has become a huge part of our self-development, self-determination and our self-identity.

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

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

In fact if we were to do some word association, I have no doubt that if 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 then God goes on to list some specific animals, birds, rodents, lizards and insects and finishes off this session of instruction with by 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 of course, Moses and Aaron and the nation of Israel are able to receive all these instructions on how to live and what

to eat and such because God had just delivered them from slavery in Egypt.

So not only did God give Israel commands about what to eat and what not eat – in Leviticus 23 He also instructed that Israel observe seven feasts throughout the year.

The Festival of Booths (temporary shelters), The Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), The Festival of Trumpets, the Festivals of Weeks, the Festival of Unleavened Bread, and the Festival which started the whole year of Feasts – the Passover.

And I want to read the Passover instructions that God gave to Moses when he was about to deliver them from slavery in Egypt, so that you are familiar with what the Passover was all about and why it was so important.

In Exodus 12 God says to Moses:

“³ 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 brothers and sisters, 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 later, when God gave Israel further instructions about what they could and could not eat, it was to help them and their children and their children’s children retain that identity. To help them remain distinct as God’s Chosen people while living amongst the nations who did not know God.

Brothers and sisters you are what you eat! So if you were God’s Chosen - you ate like God’s Chosen...

And celebrating the Passover meal was central to remembering those events which made them who they were and gave them their identity.

And so, just as the Passover was central to their identity – the sacrifice of a lamb was central to the celebration of Passover.

I meant that’s quite plain to see from what we read about the Passover, no sacrificed lamb, 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 in mind that Luke tells the story of Jesus celebrating the last supper with his disciples – when Luke says in vs. 7 *“Then came the day of Unleavened Bread **on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed.**”*

And brothers and sisters it's this verse which stood out to me as the one that God wants us to pay attention to this morning; "the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed."

Think about that for a moment – think about how it emphasizes the necessity of "the 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 what had happened on that first Passover so they would be reminded and shaped by the knowledge of what had protected them from God's judgement.

The lamb's life was taken so that their life could be spared from the judgement on Egypt.

And brothers and sisters, 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.

Just as 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.

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.*"

So while there are many things that Jesus changed about the Passover meal in order for it to become what we now call "The Lord's Supper," 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)

The Lord's Supper is still a sacrificial meal.

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 – your identity and who you are becoming, is shaped by this.

Brothers and sisters we are what we eat... and when we eat a sacrificial meal it shapes our identity so that we see ourselves, we see our lives, as sacrifices that we give back to Christ, not to pay Him back – but to show our gratitude.

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 sisters, right now the Holy Spirit has us focusing on learning and revisiting a lot of the basics that we need to know and learn to grow as disciples of Jesus Christ, to help make more disciples of Jesus Christ.

And we're learning about the Lord's Supper this morning so that when we gather every other week and we take the bread and the cup – eating and drinking together at the Lord's table – we not just aware that this helps us remember the crucifixion and Christ's sacrifice... but since we are what we eat, this is part of how the Holy Spirit brings about His transformation in our lives and changes our identity.

Let me explain it this way.

As we grow from baby believers, new Christians and become dedicated followers and committed disciples, the Holy Spirit is going to bring it home to you that Christ was sacrificed for us and so now as we eat his sacrificial meal, we will start to see ourselves as sacrifices for Christ.

And even as mature disciples, we need to be reminded of this – which is why Jesus said “do this in remembrance of me!”

Because we are what we eat.

So what will that mean, that we come to see our identity as being a sacrifice for Christ?

Well for starters we are going to be changed in terms of coming to Christ and His church because of what we need, what we desire, what Christ or His church can offer us – eg. Inspiration, positivity, hope, fellowship etc...

And instead, we come to Christ and His Church and we offer our lives and say “whatever you can do with me for your Kingdom Lord – do it!”

Much in the same way that the disciples and the crowds first followed Jesus as the Messiah looking for political freedom, miracles, healings, deliverance and so on...

But through the events of Easter, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost they were transformed into a group of people who would sacrifice their lives to “*go and make disciples of all nations...*”

Brothers and sisters there isn't anything wrong with coming to Jesus because of what He offers us – in fact our sign out front says “weary and burdened? He will give you rest!” We often really need the day to day help that Jesus offers us.

Besides, it's not really a sacrifice if we are giving up something bad, right? That would be repentance...

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 – in a way that is something 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...”

Brothers and sisters – Jesus freely and knowingly sacrificed his own life, which 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...”*

Brothers and sisters – we’re not unfamiliar with sacrifice, despite what you may think... it’s just that it’s not really a part of our faith life anymore.

So if you are wondering what does it mean to become a sacrifice back to Christ? Just look at how you make sacrifices in your life for other things or people.

What sacrifices do you make for your family? What sacrifices do you make for your work? What sacrifices do you make to reach your financial goals?

What are you willing to give up so that your kids have opportunities you never had? What are you willing to do in order to get to where you want to be in life?

You see brothers and sisters – we all know about sacrifice and what it means... that something else is a greater priority and you are so committed to it that you are willing to give up and go without other things for it – but somehow, for many of us, that’s not really been a big part of our discipleship - so far....

But Brothers and sisters, the good news is that God wants to change that, not through guilt – but through the grace and mercy that come in the Lord’s Supper – that sacrificial meal that embodies what Easter is all about.

We are what we eat...

So, as we partake in Christ’s Supper and as we are confronted with Christ’s sacrifice – the Holy Spirit will empower us to respond back with sacrifice.

So Brothers and sisters – take that word with you this week... sacrifice, because the Passover Lamb had to be... sacrificed.
Amen.

Let's pray;

Holy Spirit, we ask that you would reveal to each of us here this morning, and to those who are part of your church who are not here – what you are calling us to that requires a sacrifice that we can give to Christ.

Whether it be taking up our cross to follow you in our families, or in our school or in our workplace, or whether it means that we need to give up something in order to commit to a ministry that you are calling us to...

Lord Jesus may we grow us deeper in our relationship with you so that we are not asking “what's in it for us, but what are we in it for! In your name we pray, Amen.