

Sunday, July 4, 2021

May I come in...to the Dining Room?

(Message 4; Series: My Heart, Christ's Home)

(Isaiah 55:1-5)

Scripture:

*"Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters;
and you who have no money, come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.*

*²Why spend money on what is not bread,
and your labor on what does not satisfy?*

*Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good,
and you will delight in the richest of fare.*

³Give ear and come to me; listen, that you may live.

*I will make an everlasting covenant with you,
my faithful love promised to David.*

*⁴See, I have made him a witness to the peoples,
a ruler and commander of the peoples.*

*⁵Surely you will summon nations you know not,
and nations you do not know will come running to you,
because of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel,
for he has endowed you with splendor."*

(Isaiah 55:1-5)

Message:

Have you ever heard of Joey Chestnut and Miki Sudo? They are currently the holders of the *Mustard Belt*. They are the current world champion hot dog eaters in *Nathan's* July Four competitive hotdog eating contest.

In 2020, Joey Chestnut won for the 13th time by setting a new world record: eating 75 hot dogs (and buns) in ten minutes. A new record! **(Pics)**. On the women's side, Miki Sudo, a seven-time champion, won last year by eating 48.5 hot dogs in 10 minutes - also a new world record.

The prize is \$10,000, a big belt, bragging rights, and all the free hot dogs you can eat in ten minutes. Joey Chestnut, a former construction manager turned "pro-eater" holds forty eating records from apple pie to burritos. (He won't touch Kale!). As a result of his large appetite, he is now a multi-millionaire.

The 2021 contest is today. You should be able to catch it when you get home from church on ESPN (because obviously it is a major sporting event).

Eating is a major part of our culture and economy (about 34 million workers are involved in the growing, production, distributing, and food-serving industries). Seventy-five percent of us eat out at least once a week; the average American eats one of every four of their meals out; sixty percent of Americans are overweight.

At the same time, almost 60% of the world's population suffers from malnutrition; thousands die every day from the complications and implications of over or under eating.

Well and over-fed people are dying—eternally—from starving souls. We are in a series based on Bob Munger's booklet, *My Heart, Christ's Home*. Jesus says, "*Man does not live—really live—by bread alone.*"

This morning we're moving into the *Dining Room*. While the study is the "control room" of the house (our home), Bob Munger says the dining room is the "center of our appetites and desires;" it is where our wants and our needs are satisfied.

I'm reminded of my grandma and grandpa's huge old dining room table that took up the whole room, piled high with food on Thanksgiving Day. The quality was first rate; the quantity plentiful: turkey, ham, vegetables, mashed potatoes, homemade rolls, and pies for dessert (and leftovers for a week). Maybe Isaiah had his grandmother in mind when he wrote about *not wasting time and effort* (i.e., our desires) *on food that won't satisfy*.

Isaiah invites us to come to a table filled with the finest of fare that will delight, not the palate, but the soul. I don't remember a meal at my grandmother's that didn't delight the soul: the food was always plentiful, the fellowship always pleasant.

Would you prefer this American icon (a Big Mac, [Pic](#)) or a succulent Turkey Dinner at grandmas? ([Pic](#))

Today one of the traditionally most **used** and central places in the home is now one of the most **underutilized**. We have traded in flavor for expediency, savoring for speedy, and **satisfaction** for **convenience**.

Not only have we settled for fast food instead of enjoying a healthy meal, we're also content to make a similar substitution spiritually. We want our spirituality (faith commitment) **comfortable, convenient**, and shallow instead of **transforming, disciplined**, and deep. That's kind of hard to understand. Normally, we like the best of everything: the best schools, the best cars, the best homes, the best clothes, the best vacations and the best retirement; we want to eat in the best restaurants and attend the best church (One out of eight isn't too bad!).

Spiritually we're willing to settle for less - much less; for many, good enough is **good enough**.

ESSENTIALS

Spiritual transformation begins by acknowledging our deep **desire for **God**.**

Desire has gotten a bad rap - especially in religious circles. We tend to think of *desire* in terms of "wants" ("I want a big screen TV") or we associate it with sexuality and lusting (sadly, the world continues to redefine many of our *good* words).

But without healthy desires we cease to exist meaningfully; without desire, we would have no reason to get out of bed in the a.m.; without desire we'd have no reason to study or learn, earn a living, get married, or have children. Without *desire* there would be no medical research, no evangelism, and no justice.

In **Mark 10:46-52**, blind Bartimaeus, sitting at the side of the road, calls out to Jesus: "*Have mercy on me.*" Jesus stops, invites him over and asks him the spiritual transformation question: "*What is it you want me to do for you?*" That is, "*What is your desire, your deepest desire?*"

Bart's desire is to see! (He wants to see physically; he needs to see spiritually).

Maybe it's not the best request considering all the possibilities, but Jesus responds to his desire and fulfills his request. Maybe his answer isn't the most profound, but it was the obvious choice for Bart - and he had probably been desiring it for a long time.

Jesus gives Bart what he *desires*; and now, with the opportunity (he can see!) to go anywhere he wants, he follows Jesus and embarks on a whole new journey. His desire leads him to follow Jesus.

Scripture says God calls us to himself through our desires. Scripture says God put the desire to seek him in all our hearts. It says we desire **God because **God** desires us.** Once realized, our deep longing for God fuels our **spiritual journey**, deepens our passion for God and helps guide our lives.

Jesus never suggests Bartimaeus should just accept things as they are, he should squash his deepest desires, or he should just accept *things* the way they are. Truth is, we often need to peel through the surface layers of our selfish desires in order to get to our deepest desires - the desires for **love**, community, **meaning**, purpose, **wholeness**.

And if we continue to peel, we'll discover our deepest longing is an intimate fellowship with God (It's there in all of us because God put it there). We need

to acknowledge our *desire* for more of him than we have now; we need a holy discontent with our status quo; we need to join the Psalmist - "*I want you now God or else.*" (cf., **Psalm 42**).

What is the one thing you want God to do for you? Articulating his answer to this question transformed Bart's entire life.

All spiritual transformation begins with *desire* (or desperation). In **Matthew 13:44-46**, Jesus tells the parable of a man who discovered a priceless pearl and sold everything he had to purchase it. What is your **pearl** of great price? What would you sell **everything** to attain? Human desire is essential for getting what we want because the human spirit ultimately seeks and gets what it passionately longs for ("*Seek and you will find...*").

The next question is, "How bad do you want him?" Like a **deer panting** for water.

Finally: "*Are you willing to invite Jesus into your dining room so he can (re-) arrange your life?*"

EXCUSES

We often procrastinate because life is so busy, and we are always in a hurry.

Physically. We rush from one activity to the next with little time to eat. *Hurry* and *busy* are two of our greatest obstacles to dining together on the richest of fare. We get home at 5:30; catch a soccer game at 6; have to be at church at 7 so we hit the drive-through. We have traded the dining room for the car.

Or, for lunch, I'll suggest Culver's; Marilyn will look at the clock and say, "It's already 1 o'clock" So we might go to Arby's.

We're infected with *hurry sickness*. It's a highly **contagious**, spiritually **dangerous**, and life-threatening disease.

We applaud timesaving devices - like drive-throughs - for food, money, medicine; some places even have drive-through funeral viewing.

We rush through life, thinking it makes us productive and important; it doesn't.

Spiritually. We can attend a worship service for an hour - but no more - because we have things to do. Our one-minute devotion book is in the car for red lights; we might toss in a prayer or two between activities; we serve by writing a small check.

We know it's not great, but we tell ourselves it's the best we can do; and in our hurry we miss the **feast**, the finest of fare, God has prepared for us and instead settle for (spiritual) junk food.

Truth is, we're so accustomed to junk food, we have actually learned to "enjoy" it.

Physically. Junk food comes fast (at least it's promised fast), neatly wrapped, and apparently doesn't taste too bad (my son told me he tried the new Burger King chicken sandwich, and it was better than the fourteen-dollar chicken sandwich I bought him last week). It provides instant gratification, there's minimum cleanup, and it's comfortable and convenient – you don't even have to get out of your car, and you can eat it as you drive (it's not recommended, but everyone does it).

Ever seen people order a triple bacon deluxe cheeseburger, large fry, a large blizzard with chocolate and caramel...and a diet coke.

We prefer our junk food disguised: cake with fruit filling; a (fried) spicy chicken sandwich; a low-fat donut...so we can pretend we're eating healthy. McDonalds is the second most visited retail outlet in the county, Starbucks is third, Subway fifth, Dunkin Donuts ninth, and Taco bell is 12th.

Spiritually. Munger notes we fill our lives with our favorite dishes: **money**, influence, **academic** degrees, and titles, with a side of fame and fortune.

We've convinced ourselves this is a healthy diet; that our career is the primary ingredient of life, and high achievement is good for the soul.

We expect our children to score high academically or athletically so they can get into a good college - or we need to find a way to circumvent the system (and hopefully not get caught).

We (many) have convinced ourselves that life is about getting into the right school, landing the right position, making the right amount of money, living in the right neighborhood, wearing the right clothes, taking the right vacations, and enjoying a carefree retirement. We believe these things will delight and nurture our soul.

I've discovered the things that really taste good usually aren't good for you; that's often the way spiritually seems as well. The world's fare looks good on the surface but will upset our **spiritual stomachs**.

Many people are in denial. They believe they're the exception to the rule. They're not. There are no exceptions.

Physically. We know what alcohol, high cholesterol, high-sodium, and lots of sugar can do to the body, but many people don't think it's going to affect them.

Spiritually. "Our food is to do the will of him who sent us; if we really want food that satisfies, we need to do the will of our heavenly Father and stop pursuing our own ambition and satisfaction."

And yet, we try to convince ourselves we're the exception; we can "eat" what we want, and it won't affect us. After all, it tastes great and it's not hurting anyone – right?! So, what's the harm?

EATING DISORDERS

Meanwhile, our souls are malnourished and **starving**. We've spent our money, Isaiah says, on what isn't bread (**nourishing**), and our labor (including our time and **attention**) on what has not provided satisfaction (meaning).

We have been so preoccupied with feeding our egos, our bank accounts, and our appetite for happiness, we are starving spiritually. The word Isaiah chooses here in Hebrew actually describes the gratification of our own selfish desires.

Isaiah warns about settling for **less** than God's **best** and says if we spend our life and labor seeking only perishable food, we'll wind up hungry, thirsty, and unsatisfied. Isaiah says that's foolishness, especially when there's a better alternative right in front of us.

John 6:27 [Jesus:] – *“Don't work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you.”*

Jesus provides richest of fare (food). He offers:

- Food that brings inner **peace** whenever you face troubles and difficulties...
- Food that brings inner satisfaction about who you are; a sense of belonging to a community where you are loved; the knowledge you are being transformed.
- Food that offers **hope**, joy, **significance**, healing, value and the confidence that no matter what we might face in life, God will always be right there with you.

The bottom line: Jesus, and only Jesus, offers us the food our soul deeply hungers for.

The principle is, *“What goes in is what comes out.”* It applies to trees, plants, computers, stomachs, minds...and also to our **souls**.

Choose **carefully** what you desire and what you digest; your life and eternity depend on it.

ENCOURAGEMENT

First: If you give Jesus control of your Dining Room, he'll do a **menu audit. He'll ask, “What are you choosing to feed your **soul**, your appetites, your deepest desire?” “What are you spending your money on?” “What websites are**

you visiting?" "What music do you listen to?" "How much time do you spend in front of a screen?" "What movies do you watch?" "How much do you focus on being entertained?" "What philosophies and world views do you embrace?"

Jesus will ask: "How much time do you spend reading **God's Word**, in worship, in prayer, in loving and serving others?" What are you feeding your soul?

Second: If you give Jesus control, he'll require you eat a **balanced meal.** What "food groups" you are lacking? What are you doing about it? Don't just decide to do something, actually do it! Don't settle for less. If you lack serving, talk to a deacon; if you need to pray more, check the prayer line; if you lack God-worship, come to the prayer meeting tonight; if you lack fellowship, join a small group...

Decide you're tired of settling for less of God and actually do something about it. Peder Eide sings it: *Eat right! Grow strong. Face to the son; got my feet on the Rock. Got a clean heart, pure mind; Standing on the promises...*

Third: If you give Jesus control, he'll ask you to especially watch your **morning and evening intake.** Experts say the two most important times to watch your eating are **breakfast** (the most important meal of the day) and after **8:00p.m.** - the worst time to eat.

Take a very practical step: Put a **Bible** next to your **bed** - start and finish your day with it; start and finish your day in prayer. Get the best food onto your heart's dining room table first thing...and last thing...and the "in-between" will eventually take care of itself.

Let the first food to enter your heart be what God has prepared; Let the last food that will enter your "home" be food that God has prepared, food that delights the soul.

*"Whatsoever you ask He will do
Abide in Him, He abides in you
That's a promise that's been given to you
I gotta do what I gotta do
Believe deceivers or believe the Lord
I've grounded myself in the Holy Word.
Eat right; grow strong..."
(Peter Eide)*

Fourth: If you give Jesus control, you'll develop a **taste for the richest of fare (food).**

--How much do you really want to **know** God? (Psalm 73:25; 42:1-2; 143:6; Isaiah 26:9)

- How much do you really want God to do His **work** in you? (**Ephesians 2:10**)
- How much do you really want **righteousness** and holiness? (**Matt. 5:6; 1 Peter 1:14-16**)
- How much do you really want **wisdom**? (**Proverbs 2:2-5; James 1:5; Proverbs 3:13-18**)
- How much do you really want God to **heal** you? (**John 5:1-15**)
- How much do you really want to be **blessed** and bear fruit? (**John 15:7-8; Genesis 39:2-3**)
- How much do you really want to **follow Jesus** - enough to let Jesus into your dining room? Enough to change your daily routine? Enough to take up your cross and follow Him? (**Luke 9:23**)

Listen again to his invitation. It is directed especially to you: “Come, all you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not **bread and your **labor** on what does not satisfy? But listen...eat what is good and your soul will delight in the **richest** of fare. Hear me so your **soul** may live.” (Isaiah 55:1-5)**

Let us pray...

Prayer/Song: “Into my heart, into my Heart, come into my heart...”

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