**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes from 7-26-2020 – What To Eat?**

Now I don’t know about you, but I really enjoy eating. In fact, a day rarely goes by when I don’t eat several times.

And I hope you do as well. Eating is truly a gift from God and meant to be enjoyed.

And like most everyone, I have some favorite foods. One that’s kind of unusual is cereal. An evening rarely goes by when I don’t enjoy a nice cold bowl of cereal. In fact, my daughter Kayla recently challenged me to go a day without eating cereal.

Seriously though, our lives are very centered around food. And that is not a bad thing. The Lord made our bodies and the physical is not evil. Caring for our bodies and enjoying food are good and godly things.

And food and drink not only sustain us physically, but they can often be opportunities to enjoy others’ company and strengthen relationships.

That’s way it was considered so scandalous that Jesus ate meals with people that would be considered outcasts.

Some of the religious leaders considered themselves too pure to do this. But Jesus would eat with anyone. He knew that all people were called to be a part of God’s family and find a place at God’s table.

Now sometimes today there are times when people can get very vocal about what should or should not be eaten. There are those that argue that vegetarian or vegan is the only way to go and others that happily eat all kinds of meat. And there are people all in between.

This is something that is not new. In fact, this was a big question in the early church. What is the Lord calling us to do when it comes to eating?

Are God’s people expected to eat kosher, as in the Old Testament? Is eating only vegetables best?

But thankfully the Lord gives clarity in His Word on His will for us in this matter.

In essence, He says that everything is clean to eat now, but eat what you would prefer to eat and do not condemn others for their freedom to make that choice as well.

In fact, through the Apostle Paul, God gives more clarity on this to say that the Kingdom is not really about what you eat and drink, but about whom you eat and drink of.

To help illustrate this, please turn with me to Romans 14:17-18

**17For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, 18because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and receives human approval.**

Paul is speaking to this Christian community in Rome and instructing them that God’s Kingdom is not built on the dietary choices of people. It is about experiencing new life in and through Jesus Christ.

In other words, the kingdom of God is not about what we eat, *it is about who we eat, who we consume.*

**Jesus said, “Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood you have no life in you.”** Some of the early Christians were accused of being cannibals because of statements like this.

Thankfully, Jesus is not calling us to be cannibals. But Jesus is saying that He is to be the main source of our nourishment. It is not our diet of choice that is to be our main source of nourishment.

Jesus said, “Come to me all who are thirsty.” And He said “I am the bread of life.”

The kingdom of God is all about coming to Christ for spiritual life and sustenance. We continue to eat and drink Jesus every day. If we only ate or drank on Sunday mornings, we would be in really poor shape. Likewise, we must be spiritually eating and drinking of Christ each day if we are to be spiritually healthy and strong in the Lord.

If we only ate one meal we would be in very poor health. We need to eat daily or at least every few days. And we should drink daily, especially in this heat.

But far more than this we need to come to Christ each day for our daily bread. He is our daily bread more than the physical bread that we eat. He is our thirst-quenching water far more than any water we drink.

The kingdom of God is established in us in powerfully ways as we come to eat and drink of Christ and his life.

When we eat certain foods, there are often health benefits. My daughter Anna in particular often askes us “what are the health benefits of this vegetable.” And it is fascinating what you find.

But as we come to Christ and spiritually eat and drink of His life (for He is the life. He is the way and the truth and **the life**).

As we eat of Him, there are spiritual benefits.

In particular, the kingdom of God is established within us in 3 important ways. Righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

This morning we will unpack each of these gifts of Christ to us.

The first is righteousness. Many people in the world are pursuing trying to get right with God through their efforts. But Christ is the only One that can make us right with God.

We must come to Him by faith and allow Him to clothe us with His righteousness.

 **One of my friends calls it the great exchange. We give him our sin, we give him our struggles, we give him our striving fears, and He gives us his righteousness.**

We are supposed to wear his righteousness as a breastplate for our spiritual protection.

And not only this, as we eat and drink of Christ, He fills us with peace. We can have peace. True peace only comes from knowing Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace.

As Christians we are called to be carriers of his peace everywhere that we go.

The world, friends, is looking for peace. Sometimes is it sought after through (the symbol of peace). But true peace is not a lack of conflict, it is a consequence of eating and drinking of the life of Jesus Christ.

And we are called to be peacemakers because we carry his peace in us.

And finally, we can have joy in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the source of all joy. Joy is different than happiness. Happiness depends on outward circumstances, while joy depends on inward circumstances.

Joy is meant to be our baseline emotion. We are called to be people that overflow with joy. There is no one more joyful than Jesus. This doesn’t mean that Jesus doesn’t hate sin and evil and its effects. But joy is a state of satisfaction and celebration.

Jesus has this and gives His joy to those who come to him.

Again, the world is searching for these things, but we have the answer because Christ is the answer and He lives in us. Amen!!

Friends, righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit are huge foundations in the kingdom of God.

We need to be established in these things by eating and drinking of Christ.

This is true not only when it comes to becoming a Christian, but also in growing in Christ.

If people only ate and drank once a week, we would call them malnourished. We are called to make Jesus our daily bread, far more than the physical bread.

As we eat and drink of Christ daily through prayer and Scripture and simply living for Jesus in all we do, we will overflow with these things.

People will recognize us as righteous by the grace of God. People will see that we carry the peace and joy of the Holy Spirit of God in us. And many people will be drawn to Christ through us. Amen.

So if you are here today and have not ever really eaten of Christ and received his life in us, today is meant to be the day!

But for all of us, please never stop eating and drinking of Him. Keep coming to Jesus. Keep eating and drinking Christ each day through prayer and Scripture and thanksgiving. He is our life. He sustains us, Amen.

Transition - Today, we will shortly have the opportunity to come to Him once again through the great joyful mystery of Holy Communion. That as we receive this bread and juice, He promises that His presence will be with us and will be spiritually nourished through His life. That’s amazing.

Each day we should be able to wake up and thank God for his gift of righteousness. Each morning is an opportunity to thank God for His peace and choose to let his peace guide your every step.

Jesus said “peace I give you, not as the world gives.” True peace comes through trusting in Jesus Christ.

And every day is another invitation to choose joy.

So let us all choose to make Jesus our daily bread and allow Him to establish his kingdom within us in stronger foundations than we’ve ever experienced, for the kingdom of God is not about what we eat, but about Whom we eat. Amen.