

Come and Dine

I hope everyone had a most enjoyable Thanksgiving. How thankful all of us should be, not only at this time of the year, but throughout the entire year. The apostle said, *“Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice”* (Philippians 4:4). We often associate Thanksgiving with a special meal. Turkey and the trimmings, cranberry sauce, ham, yams, green beans and pumpkin pie are common fare. When you begin to search the Scriptures it is amazing how much is said and done around eating. Genesis 2:16 and 17 says, *“And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”* Eve ate of the forbidden fruit and shared the transgression with Adam and man fell. It has been humorously said, “Adam and Eve ate us out of house and home.”

The Bible says, *“And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison...”* (Genesis 25:28). Isaac was very dominated by his appetite and in his dying request he asked, *“Now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me some venison; And make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die.”* (Genesis 27:3,4). Rebekah intercepted the request and cooked up some goat meat and flavored it to taste like deer and then Jacob fooled his father and received the blessing. The proverbial apple did not fall far from the tree because even before this took place, we find that Esau was so hungry and driven by the cravings of his own flesh, that he sold his birthright for a bowl of stew! *“Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised his birthright”* (Genesis 25:34).

When God led the children of Israel out of Egypt into the Promised Land, He did so with the initiation of the Passover Meal: Exodus 12:7 and 8 record the event: *“And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it. And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it.”* We find when the Israelites were in the wilderness God, fed them with manna for forty years. The Bible records, *“Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you...”* (Leviticus 16:4). *“And the house of Israel called the name thereof Manna: and it was like coriander seed, white; and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey”* (Exodus 16:31).

We have not nearly exhausted the number of times food is mentioned in some form in the Bible. I would like to list a few parallels and lessons we see from food.

I. Food is used to encourage.

Under the command of God, Elijah was told to go to the Brook Cherith,

“And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there” (I Kings 17:4). Imagine! God used ravens to deliver encouragement to his weary prophet Elijah! After the great victory on Mount Carmel, Elijah became depressed, so depressed that he longed for God to take his life. Please notice how gently God dealt with His distraught servant: *“And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat. And he looked, and, behold, there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again. And the angel of the LORD came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee”* (I Kings 19:5-7).

God was saying to Elijah, I will take care of you; I am not finished with you. Get a bite to eat and get some rest. Sometimes when we have a friend that is at his or her wits' end, it is not a time to go in the lecture mode -- it may be time to just pull them aside and do lunch.

II. Food is used to stir the memories.

As I write these words in Missouri, my wife and her mother have started making the pumpkin pie and chocolate eclairs. Isn't it amazing how certain get-togethers with families stir memories of days and years gone by? When my mother makes chicken and dumplings my mind goes back to my grandmother who taught her to cook this old family recipe. Now my sister Judy is trying to perfect this delectable dish. Food, family and tradition not only keep memories alive, but serve to establish memories that can last a lifetime.

Referring to the last supper, which became the initiation of the Lord's Supper, the Bible says, *“And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me”* (I Corinthians 11:24,25). Our Lord was saying, don't ever forget me. Don't “brown bag” the Lord's Supper. The rebuke was given by Paul to the church at Corinth when he said, *“What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in?...”* (I Corinthians 11:22). The Lord's Supper was not intended to be pot luck dinner or party time with each other -- this is time to think about Jesus, His death burial, resurrection and return. *“For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come”* (I Corinthians 11:26). Our Lord Jesus took the remaining elements of the Passover that He had just observed with His disciples and said, Here's the bread, remember me! *“I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world”* (John 6:51). Here's the cup, always remember my blood shed for you! *“...And I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul”* (Leviticus 17:11).

III. Food is used to set the palate and whet the appetite.

The Bible says, *“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is*

old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6). The phrase "train up" implies putting something in the mouth to be tasted. It means literally to touch the palate. When a mother touches the palate of her baby, it makes the little one want to swallow. I remember well my wife placing puréed green beans or carrots in our children's mouth to activate their eating. Proverbs is telling parents that we need to create a hunger and thirst in their children for the Word of God and things of God.

Jesus said, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Romans 3:20). Our Lord was telling the wayward church of Laodoea, open the door of your heart, let me have supper with you. The Lord was saying, if you just knew me better, you would enter into the more abundant life. "O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him" (Psalm 34:8).

After Jesus rose from the dead, he called the disciples from their diversionary fishing expedition by preparing fish and bread and issuing a call. John 21:12 reads, *"Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine...."* I believe all of us should "dine" with Jesus. We would find the Lord would encourage us, stir our memories and set our palate for the things of God.

-Pastor Pope-