

Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

August 15, 2021

Old Testament Reading; Proverbs 9: 1-6

Responsive Reading; Psalm 111

Epistle Reading; Ephesians 5: 15-20

Gospel Reading; John 6: 51-58

Sermon Title:

YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT

By Rev. Jim Gardner

Summary: Consume fattening food--be fat. Consume poison--be dead. Consume alcohol--be drunk. Consume Jesus--you finish it.

“He who eats this bread will live forever.” “The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, “How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?”

Many of the things that Jesus said did not compute with the people who reasoned from a worldly reference. This was not an accident. Christ wanted to shake people up and force them to reason from something deeper than conventional wisdom.

Our four scriptures today each represent a different aspect of the teachings of Jesus. All four demonstrate a different aspect of the wisdom of Jesus. Our Old Testament lesson starts us off by directly referencing wisdom. Proverbs describes real aspects of wise living. Prepare food, prepare beverage, prepare the dwelling place and open that dwelling place to all who are in need. Not only to those who need provisions but to those who also need understanding. “Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine that I have mixed.” And, “Forsake foolishness and live, and go in the way of understanding.”

Psalms 111, says that we should recognize the glory and wisdom of God in everything that we see.

Ephesians says that we should keep on track and not let anything distract us from realizing where our help comes from. “Do not be drunk with wine, ... but be filled with the spirit.” Next, act in the spirit. “speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

This thinking did not compute with the early Jews and does not compute with the non-believers of our age. The conventional wisdom of these two groups says that we should get an education, get a job, look out for number one and don't share what we have earned with our sweat and tears with others, but

let them earn their own rewards. They say, “Don’t be a sap. Those people you help will just use you and leave you high and dry.”

Jesus asks us to be better than that.

John Nelson North, wrote in a poem that my father would often recite;

“Draw in the latchstring, lad, and close the door,
Lest those who faint without from toil and pain
Shall rob thee of thine own too meager store.
Can one poor crust sustain those famished forms?
Can one poor shelter save them from the storms?
And surely those who wait and hope in vain
Shall turn and rend thee when thou hast no more,
So—draw the latchstring in and close the door.
Such is the world’s advice,
But—there was One who flung it open wide,
And He was crucified.”

Jesus, the crucified, gives true insight to true happiness and He does it by saying things geared to get our attention.

When Jesus told Nicodemus that, “You must be born again.” Nicodemus said, “How can a man climb back into his mother’s womb?”

Jesus was trying to point out the difference between God’s kingdom and man’s world. When we are born, we leave the safe, warm womb to enter a totally new existence. We now can see the mountains, hear the birds, smell the flowers, taste food and feel our mother’s touch.

The difference between God’s kingdom and our earthly world is as different as the difference between the womb and the world. When Jesus told Nicodemus that he must be born again He was telling him that he would have to experience a totally new existence from what he presently knew.

When Jesus told the Jews that they must eat His flesh and drink His blood, Jesus was telling them that they would need to establish a totally new relationship with God to be able to experience God in the fullest.

Several years ago, there was a movie titled “Crocodile Dundee.”

Dundee said about Jesus that he believed that he and Jesus would get along great. Jesus was an outdoors man and liked to fish so they would be “mates”.

The problem is that Jesus does not want us to be His mates, or His friends, or His buddies. No, Jesus wants us to be a whole lot

more. Jesus wants to be part of us and wants us to be part of Him.

Jesus wants to establish a relationship with Him that is closer than any human relationship on earth. Jesus says that the only way we can experience a relationship that makes us part of God's kingdom is to make God's Son part of us. When the Jews ask, "How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?" Jesus does not tell them how to do it, Jesus just tells them how important it is that they figure it out and do it. "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

The title of my message today is, "YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT" and this is the theme of today's gospel. When we eat something, it is digested and becomes part of our being. We can't live in our worldly world without food and Christ says that He is our heavenly food and we can not live with Him unless we swallow our pride and swallow His presence into our bodies, minds and souls.

Consume fattening food-- be fat. Consume poison-- be dead. Consume alcohol--be drunk. Consume Jesus--be part of the kingdom of God.

A whole new world waits for you. Give yourself totally to Jesus and let Him pulse through your body with every beat of your

heart and you will be in Christ and Christ will be in you and you will have Heaven now and you will have life eternal.

Hallelujah and Amen!