**What To Eat?**

**Mark 8:1-9**

Our text for this morning is the Gospel lesson read earlier as recorded for us by the evangelist St. Mark.

Let us pray: Eternal God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, give us your Holy Spirit who writes the preached Word into our hearts. May we receive and believe it and be cheered and comforted by it in eternity. Glorify your Word in our hearts and make it so bright and warm that we may find pleasure in it, through your Holy Spirit think what is right, and by your power fulfill the Word, for the sake of Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. Amen.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

So, what did you have for breakfast this morning? How about for supper last night? Lunch yesterday? Can you remember what you had to eat for your last birthday?

Meals are an important part of our life. Food itself is essential to our health, and what we eat can either be good for us or not. Some people need to be more specific in watching what they eat, while others seem to be able to eat whatever they want without any ill effects.

But how do we make those decisions about what to eat? Did you choose that meal, because it appealed to your eye? Have you ever chosen what to eat because it has tantalized your nose and made your mouth water? How many of you have chosen something to eat because that food brings back memories of “being at grandma’s hous?” Have you ever chosen what to eat because it is supposed to be good for you?

Today, I want us to consider two texts – our Old Testament lesson from Genesis and our Gospel lesson from Mark – both have food involved, but that is where the similarities end. In one, food comes with a threat and promise, the other was a miraculous meal.

First we need to look at the food spoken of in Genesis. God puts Adam in the garden of Eden.

*and out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."*

Can you imagine Adam looking around the garden? Mmmm, that looks good, I think I’ll eat that today. Wow, that looks tasty, I’ll try some of that. He only had one rule – do not eat of that one tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die. Sounds like a simple enough rule. You eat of that and you will die. I think that is an easy rule, I would avoid that one tree, don’t you think?

Can you imagine it, “Do not eat that, it is poisonous and will kill you.” So, when nobody is looking you go back and try a sample?

Of course, you know what happened. God made Eve from Adam’s rib and soon it came about that she was tempted by Satan. She knew the command of God not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but she succumbed to the temptation. She thought the fruit was good for food, a delight to the eyes, and it would make her wise. It all began with Satan’s greatest temptation, “Did God really say?” You can almost hear her talking to herself, “Surely a little piece of fruit won’t kill me.” So she ate, and she gave some to Adam who was with her, and he ate.

Mankind has been in trouble ever since. That one little act of rebellion, her desire to satisfy her eyes and be like God, has been our problem ever since. That rebellious spirit, inborn sinfulness, has been handed down from generation to generation – it is part and parcel of each and every one of us – in our flesh, our hearts corrupt from the moment of conception.

And things haven’t changed all that much. Think about it. Most sins arise from what two issues? Either, we want to make our eyes happy or we want to be like God.

Have you ever walked out of a buffet and said, “Oooo, I shouldn’t have eaten that much, my eyes were bigger than my stomach.” You know what, that’s gluttony, there was no reason we needed to eat that much. Then there is covetousness, where we see something that belongs to another, and we would really like to have it as our own. Of course lust is when our eyes are enticed by the flesh of someone who is not our spouse.

Other sins come from our desire to be like God. Oh no, we would never say it quite like that, but that is exactly what it is. For example, when we are confronted with a clear teaching of Scripture which we do not like, we say, “I don’t know whether that is true, but I know that what I feel in my heart is true.”

Other times we come up with new things to believe because it feels right to us. Or we may look around for “other interpretations” of what the Bible says, something that fits what we already feel.

It does not help that society and our culture entice us to stray from God’s Word and will because they agree with what we “feel” is right than does the Bible. At other times, we want God to do what we want, according to our terms, and by our timetable. Each of these attitudes is our attempt to be like God.

My friends, you and I are sinners who are following closely in the footsteps of our great, great, greatest-grandmother Eve. Our eyes and our hearts betray us, they entice us into sin, and we fail to trust God with our whole heart.

So, we come to Jesus’ encounter with the great crowd that had gathered and followed Him for three days. Jesus has compassion on them and would feed them. The eyes of the disciples failed them, they fell into sin and didn’t trust God. Thousands of people, seven loaves of bread, a few small fish, and the disciples could not grasp the situation, "How can one feed these people with bread here in this desolate place?"

Who is standing in their midst? Don’t they remember what happened with the five thousand, five loaves, and two fish? Before them is a veritable feast in this instance. Two more loaves than the last time. That alone should have been good for another thousand or so, and this crowd was smaller. The disciples could not get past what their eyes saw and what simple logic dictated.

Our eyes get in the way and supposed logic kicks in. Our life and experience lead us to doubt God. “It is just bread and wine pastor… How can that be Christ’s true body and blood, it has to be just a symbol or representation of His body and blood…”

“A meal to forgive sins, you expect me to buy that?”

“We better use individual cups, we might get sick on someone else’s germs.”

We forget what Jesus did – He took ***the*** cup, and when He had given thanks, He gave ***it*** to them saying, “Drink of it, all of you, this cup is my blood of the new testament.” We forget the fact that only the common cup was used by the church for the first nineteen centuries – by Jesus Himself – and by the founding fathers of this congregation for the majority of all the years of existence. Are we so much smarter today? Or are we trying to be like God?

What do your eyes see on the table before you?

On the tree of the cross Jesus allowed Himself to be crucified. He knew what was coming as He knelt in the Garden to pray. He had seen with His own divine eyes, that He was going to bear the sins of the world. He was going to give His life to pay for our selfish pre-occupation with making our flesh happy, either satisfying our eyes or the desires of our hearts. Jesus saw our sinfulness and drew it into Himself. Knowing the will of His Father to have your sin removed in order that you might live with Him eternally, He took your sinfulness into His own flesh. He died to bury your sins in death and to grant to you new life, His life, unto life everlasting.

So, what do you see on the table before you? Do not let your eyes deceive you. It does not look like much, does it? Surely it cannot be all that pastor proclaims? Surely it cannot do all that pastor says that it can. Can it really be Jesus very flesh and blood? Can it really grant me forgiveness of ***ALL*** my sins? I see it there, it is simple bread and wine, how can it be and do all that?

It is food from the Tree of Life – it is Christ crucified for the forgiveness of sins – it is the life of Christ given you to eat and to drink.

Very God of very God makes it so. Jesus took the seven loaves, gave thanks, broke them, and gave them to His disciples to set before the people, and four thousand were fed. Jesus fed thousands in order that believers of every age might know that at His bidding miracles takes place.

Today the same Jesus is present. At the Word of Jesus, a miracle takes place today. He is the word – He took, gave thanks, broke, and has given you Himself to eat and to drink. In this meal are the very things Jesus proclaims are there. It ***is*** His body, it ***is*** His blood, it ***is*** given for you to eat and to drink ***for the forgiveness of your sins***.

Do not doubt but believe that in the eating and the drinking you receive the very benefits purchased by the same body of Christ upon the cross – and that as He lives and rose again from the dead, you too have newness of life. And, on the last day, He will raise your body, this body you live in now He will raise, glorified and perfected for life everlasting. In the name of Jesus. Amen.