

Gospel Driven Life - 3: Feasting in a Fast Food Food World

by Michael Horton

The modern worship experience often fails to satisfy because it focuses on personal preference and entertainment, rather than on God and His Word, but the gospel creates a cross-cultural community that is based on the fact that we are all chosen by God.

Duration: 50:20

Scripture: Matthew 26:26, Luke 24:30-32, Luke 24:36, John 20:19, Acts 2:42

Topics: "Gospel Driven"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of objective facts and experiences grounded in historical events and objective states of affairs. He contrasts these with fleeting and superficial experiences, such as watching movies or riding roller coasters. The speaker also highlights the significance of reports based on objective facts in anchoring us outside of ourselves. He references biblical stories, such as Moses and the Israelites, to illustrate the power of real experiences and the consequences of disregarding God's commands. The sermon concludes with a call to seek true satisfaction and fulfillment by turning to God and embracing His everlasting covenant.

Transcript

It's sort of a joke, I'm sure, from one of my students from the seminary. I always come to class and I never get an apple, I get a Diet Coke because I'm sort of addicted to Diet Coke. Thank you very much for that.

I don't know if I can have it in the pulpit. Let me add my thanks, too, for that wonderful meal. That was terrific, and the hospitality that went with it.

And also, add my encouragement to check out Christianity Explored. Rico Teiss, whose brainchild that was, Rico and I were roommates, basically, next door neighbors during Oxford years, and became really good friends, and it's been wonderful to see him over the years develop this program, really, as a wonderful opportunity to share the gospel, but with right doctrine, not just kind of, you know, sometimes with knowledge or zeal. It's nice when that comes together, and he really does that, it's a great way to introduce your neighbors to Christ, and a great program for churches to have.

For this final talk, I want to turn our attention toward the health page, Feasting in a Fast Food World, and I want to begin with Isaiah 55, where God calls through Isaiah, Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters, and he who has no money, come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which is not satisfied? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.

Incline your ear and come to me, here that your soul may live. See there it is, here that your soul may live. And I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David.

Behold, I make him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples. Behold, you shall call a nation that you do not know, and a nation that did not know you shall run to you because of the Lord your God and of the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you. According to Eric Schlosser's best-selling book, Fast Food Nation, only a generation ago, the United States consumed three-quarters of its food expenses on home-cooked meals, while today half is spent on restaurants and most of that fast food.

And this has contributed to the general phenomenon of what some have called the McDonaldization of the world. Malnutrition by choice, where we actually, and I take my family and we go to McDonald's, it's not like it's simple, but it really, our whole culture, it's sort of a symbol though of our whole culture. One big happy meal for everybody that you can drive through, remain anonymous, you don't have to sit down and actually talk to people and so forth.

Very different from places in Europe where you walk into a restaurant and they seat you with people. Very, very feather ruffling. I don't like to be seated with people I don't know, and sometimes the people I do.

And so, you know, we love to control that environment with the air conditioning and the station we're listening to and just have an arm. Two minutes later, up the window goes and we're back home. Yet in spite of our daily habits of consumption, we still know the difference between that and what happens when we sit down to a good meal with family and friends.

David Brooks has pointed out that American boomers, that's the post-war generation, those who were born after World War II, the boomer generation, lords of the suburbs, are part bourgeois and part bohemian. They're part leave it to beaver and part woodstock. And so they crave this sort of nostalgic American values and a little bit of new age, loopy spirituality, and they want to belong to community, have more community, which is why we live in suburbs where you can put your garage door up and down very quickly.

We don't want to actually commit. Which is what you have to have to have community, but we want the idea of community, we want the experience of community without the commitment that community involves. We want really priceless, important, wonderful experiences without the process that it takes to have them.

If you could just bottle the end result, we'd buy it. But a lot of the boomers' children don't even remember the Norman Rockwell moment. A lot of their children can't even create a nostalgic collage.

They don't necessarily want to be endless drifters. You know, the tourists that I've been talking about. They don't necessarily want to transgress every boundary.

They just don't know what the boundaries are. While their parents couldn't wait to leave home, a lot of their children can't wait to find one. And one of the things that we're seeing as a result now is that the number

one thing that young people, for instance, there are a lot of studies that confirm this.

One that illustrates it was a Wall Street Journal study of young people, 20-somethings, coming to Wall Street to work. What, if you went back to church, what would you look for first? What would you want? Now, remember, their parents would have said anonymity, a Starbucks, a, you know, definitely I would want to have good entertainment and I'd want to have a lot of stuff and activities for the kids and so on and so forth. You know, a homeroom and sort of a rec center with a fish.

But these, basically the next generation, the children of those respondents said, number one, number one, theological discussion groups. I didn't invent that. I'm not paraphrasing.

That was as it appeared in the Wall Street Journal, theological discussion groups. Number one. Second.

Serious, somber architecture. With a liturgy that takes God seriously. Now for something completely different, as Monty Python would say.

One characteristic that seems to unite all of our generations today is the way we experience the world as a shopping mall. Everything is sort of a front for something to sell. We become anonymous voyeurs of other people's lives and experiences, looking at other identities we might wish to assume.

Bodies we imagine that we have or don't have but would like to have. Goods that we imagine that we could afford. We long to be transported, even for a moment, from our banal but very real existence to a manufactured pseudo-reality.

Las Vegas, Las Vegas. That has sort of become the homeland for this kind of vagrancy. And your secret stays with us.

Today, this anonymity has taken very extreme forms in, for instance, the situation in George Barna makes that in the coming decades, Christians, even evangelical Christians, will stop coming to church and instead will get all of their spiritual needs met on the Internet. This narcissism, just when you ask, can this narcissism and individualism ever find its limit? Something strange like that pops up and you say, a new frontier we've just broken. Something I never would have thought five minutes ago was a possibility.

And George Barna is arguing for it, is defending it. This is the way we should go from the mega church to the no church. We've been unchurching a whole generation for the last 30 years in the name of mission, in the name of evangelism.

Our local symphony in San Diego advertises a powerful music experience. They usually just tell you when Mendelssohn was playing or Bach or what was happening, what was what was up on the menu. And now they're promising a musical experience.

I'm not saying this is wrong, by the way, in the secular culture. I just think it's horrible in church when it becomes when this moves over to the church. In spite of our rhetoric, our practice proves, I think, that we believe that we are the choosers, not only when it comes to marketing and advertising in the world, but we're the sovereign choosers, choice makers, when it comes even to our relationship with God.

We pick and choose the God we want. We pick and choose the doctrine we like. We pick and choose the experiences we want to have.

We pick and choose the aspects of a lifestyle that we like and spit the rest of it out. We are sovereign choosers. We're American.

We should be able to have our own choice. And here we are walking into a kingdom we didn't create. With a king we didn't who isn't king because we made him king with all these other people we didn't choose, never would have.

But God chose for us because like us. There are sinners who have been snatched from the fires and they have been made our brothers and sisters so we didn't choose them for friends. It's hard to be an American and go to church.

It's hard to be in the kingdom of God when we think as rottenly as we do. When we're as corrupt as we are by our culture of individualism and autonomy and personal choice and preference. And I think that comes out in the way we talk about a worship experience.

What is a worship experience? Well, the focus is no longer on the content. The focus is no longer on God. The focus is on me as a consumer of fun.

The experience itself becomes a form of entertainment, a form of amusement. When God appeared and spoke from the top of Mount Sinai delivering his commands, the Israelites were filled with terror. They said, we read in Exodus chapter 19, when the people saw the thunder and flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet in the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled and they stood far off and said to Moses, you speak to God and we will we will listen, but do not let God speak to us or we will die.

It's a little different than. Hey, Pastor Mo. You know, how you doing, buddy? Hey, isn't God rad? He's my dad, you know, OK, that's 20 years old, but.

See, that's the problem with this. It gets old every you know, by the time you look at your watch, it's old again. Not here, not in this time, not in this place.

They stood far off and said, Moses. You talk to us and we will listen, but don't let him talk to us or we'll die. And we read in the New Testament that's because they couldn't bear what was spoken.

So afraid of it, so terrified of it was was Moses himself that he trembled with fear. The people stood far off. While Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was.

Not up close and personal so much for, you know, walking and talking in that garden. This is pretty serious standing at a distance. The God who is outside of you.

The God who comes to you, he isn't domesticated inside of you and your own experience, but he's who knows what he's going to say, who knows what he's going to do. He's alive. He's moving toward us right now.

He's speaking, he's uttering his what will he say? It wasn't something that they choreographed, manufactured, produced or package. It was not under their control. When God spoke, he was in the driver's seat.

And it was a situation they did not like at all. They were uncomfortable when God talked, but it did create them in them a sense for a need for a mediator. You speak to us and we will listen, but don't let God speak

to us or we will die.

They realized they needed a mediator because they were in the presence of the holy God. If people aren't in the presence of the holy God, they don't sense any need for a mediator. And that's why people don't think they need Christ in our culture, because they don't think there's any danger.

God's not dangerous. God, the God spirit, whatever it is, is there to make me happy. Couldn't possibly have any other intention than to make me happy.

Contrast all of this. This worship experience that they did manufacture. And in which they were in control with this episode that I've just mentioned, while Moses was up on the top of the mountain, it came in handy that God had a mediator and they knew who that mediator was because they needed it.

They were already sinning, breaking the commandments at the bottom of the mountain that God was giving Moses at the top of the mountain. And we read and the people sat down to eat and drink and they rose up to play. They sat down to eat and drink and they rose up to play.

Not much time for eating and drinking. We just sit down and get drunk and get up and just have a whirl at it and have a lot of fun. Now that this talking God isn't bothering.

Let's make a golden calf that we can see and control. Well, it's still Yahweh. We're not making we're not violating the first commandment.

Another God. We're just making a physical representation. So we can have the Yahweh experience.

We're not having the Yahweh experience in our worship here right now because Moses is gone. We have no experience palpable experience of God like the nation. They see their God.

They have they have visual representations of their God. Why don't we just create a worship experience here? God tells Moses. Moses, now leave me alone that my wrath may burn hot against these people and I may consume them in order that I may make a great nation out of you.

Wow. God takes worship very seriously. But Moses was a good mediator.

He reminded God that he was the one who brought them up out of Egypt. But in those in those that narrative from chapter 30 to 33 says, you know what your people are doing down there below? Moses. Well, tell me.

And he tells him, he says, yeah, these are your people are breaking my law. I'm going to have to consume them in my wrath. And that's when Moses says, my people, they're your people.

You know, I hear this all the time throughout the week. Go tell your son. Why is he always my son? Oh, but he's your son when he's when he's acting splendidly.

And that kind of play goes back and forth between God and Moses. Not my children. They're your children.

You brought them up out of Egypt. Don't make me bear this responsibility. You're the one who brought them up out of Egypt.

You do something about it. And the Lord relented from the disaster he had spoken of bringing upon his people. Do we need a mediator as Moses caught up with Joshua on his way down the hill? Joshua thought he heard the sound of war in the camp.

It was crazy. People are attacking the camp. Moses.

Said not the sound of shouting for victory or the sound of the cry of defeat. But the sound of singing that I hear. And as soon as he came near the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, Moses anger burned hot and he threw the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain.

He took the calf that he had made that they had made and burned it with fire and grounded in the powder and scattered it in the water and made the people of Israel drink it. All that his derelict Lieutenant Aaron could say to him. Was, you know how the people are.

He'd read all the surveys, all the studies. He'd been door to door asking people what kind of church they'd like to have. They went back to church.

He knew how the people are. He didn't know how God is. Moses was just God's servant and he kept God from destroying Israel.

Jesus is God's son. The one who pleads for us. Pleads for us, not at the foot of Mount Sinai, but at the top of Mount Zion.

Bringing us peace and favor. But we find ourselves sort of in an analogous situation where our mediator has gone up the mountain. He has ascended to the right hand of the father and much mischief is happening in the meantime.

We can't wait for him to return and so we make our golden calves. We manufacture our worship experiences instead of living in the tension of all of the already that has happened and the not yet that is still in the future. Living in that tension is the most difficult thing for us, especially in our culture where living intention, living in the lack of resolution is not something that we enjoy at all.

But we know not only do these experiences for the moment generate the wrath of God. If they are, in fact, idolatrous, if we are projecting our images of God, but they don't even last, they don't even do what they are promised. I can't remember most of the movies that I've seen, even a lot of them that I really like.

Some of the roller coasters that I really like being on are really, really fun for about a minute and a half. And that experience is over and I walk away and I'm just as exactly bored as I was before. But reports about objective facts that don't change with my experience, anchor me outside of myself.

Reports grounded in objective facts are the most significant experience generators in our lives. Real experience, real experience can't be taken off of the surface like cream. Real experience comes from the depth of historical events, of occurrences of objective states of affairs.

I'll never forget hearing the minister say, I now pronounce you husband and wife. If you've had cancer, you'll never forget the doctor saying two things. You have cancer.

And you're clean. No sign of cancer. Or do you remember when the doctor or a nurse came in to the room? If your husband and said, it's a boy.

Or if the girl started started bawling. Remember, we had triplets who barely made it, especially one of them in delivery. And I was there in the delivery delivery room watching them take out each of the kids.

And we didn't know if the last one they were going to take out was actually still alive. And when the doctors all said in unison and then the nurses started chiming in, he's fine. He's alive.

He's fine. I nearly fainted. I didn't faint watching all the blood, everything.

I nearly fainted when when she told me that my whole life changed. Maybe you've seen a picture of that Life magazine cover where you have the announcement of victory in Europe. They have total strangers in Times Square embracing each other and dancing in the street.

Nobody said you want to dance. It has happened. They became uninhibited.

They embraced each other because the news was so good. And it concerns them both, even though they didn't know each other. That is the cross cultural community that Christ's gospel creates.

And it creates it around him, not around me and my choices, whether I like country or I like rock, whether I like classical or I like jazz, whether I like this particular niche demographic and I'm going to build my church around that. Or a different kind of niche demographic, the only niche demographic there is in the world that are two in Adam and in Christ. From the perspective of the kingdom of God, those are the two niche demographics.

And Christ is creating his cross cultural community around himself. News can do that. News can pull total strangers into a family and make them embrace because, again, this is not the family that you chose.

You didn't choose. You're not saved because you chose Christ. You're saved because he chose you.

That's what he says in John 15. You didn't choose me. I chose you and I appointed you to go out and bear fruit that would remain.

And if that's true, brothers and sisters, you didn't choose the people sitting next to you in church. You can't go to a church with people who are just like you don't have a right to that choice. God elected the others just as he elected you to be your brothers and sisters, regardless of their race, regardless of their heritage, regardless of their age.

Regardless of their breath, regardless of whether they sing off key, regardless of whether they're nerdy or they're slick in Christ, there is neither male nor female Greek. Nor do bond servants nor free for all are one in Christ. It's easy for us to settle for a drive-thru meal because we can choose it.

We can be in control of the environment. We can be in control of the experience that we have. We can settle for a drive-thru meal because the autonomy that that experience gives us is more important than the satisfaction derived from a meal that took a long time to prepare with a lot of friends and family.

I'm not saying, I mean, we live in a busier culture. I'm not saying let's go back to let's all live on the farm. What I am saying is these cultural patterns have changed the way we come to church.

Maybe some of you have seen Babettes Feast. It's a great movie. I highly recommend it.

These are very pietistic. It's a pietistic Lutheran enclave on a Danish island, and their father has died, and their father was the leader of this sect on this island. Very closed sect.

They have their own community, and everyone talked about Papa as though he were this great messianic figure, and they just repeated his sermons, and there was sadness. People knew each other but didn't really know each other. They didn't really talk and interact, and Babette was a woman who had arrived on the island from Paris.

Nobody knew Babette very much. All they knew was that she wanted to work for the two daughters of Papa. These two spinsters who sat at home talking about Papa's work and labors.

They said, oh no, we can't have a servant. She said, I won't be your servant. I'll just be your cook.

I just want to live here and prepare food for you. And one day, to make a long story short, she made this beautiful meal because she won a lottery in Paris. A ticket that she had forgotten about.

Everything came through, and what she wanted to do for it was have all of this food shipped from Paris because it turned out she was a great chef in Paris and had left for personal reasons. So all of this great food came across in a boat, and she prepared this enormous meal to the great displeasure of the people because they said, we'll enjoy it too much. Well, let's just tell her we won't enjoy it.

The Lord doesn't want us to indulge our senses like that. And they couldn't help themselves. They started eating each course with greater and greater relish, drinking the fine wine with greater and greater delight.

And then they started taking delight in each other. By the time it was over, they all were laughing and crying and holding each other, embracing each other, hearing each other's stories that they'd never heard for 40, 50 years of living together. It's a great meal.

It was a great feast that brought them together. If things can happen like that simply in the realm of creation and common grace, how about the feast that God prepares when he spreads open his word and gives a morsel from his heavenly table to the Lord's supper? Snacking is for tourists. It's not because we're fundamentalists and we just want to batten down the hatches and not let our emotions have any place and not be touched at all by anything sensual or worldly.

It's because we want the feast. We want the real deal, not the happy meal. We're not going to settle for the things that this present evil age is willing to settle for.

We want to go to the feast. And at this feast, God is the one who prepares the table. God is the one who comes up with the menu.

We don't order a la carte. We are neither masters nor tourists, but those whom God has chosen, whom the Son has redeemed, whom the Spirit has called to this festive banquet by his marvelous grace, transferring us from death to life. Psalm 78 recounts the whole history of God's relationship with Israel.

I'm not going to read the whole passage, but we read about the rebellion of the people in the wilderness. They tested God in their hearts by demanding the food they crave. They spoke against God, saying, Can he spread a table in the wilderness? Indeed, he can.

And he did. But they're asking, Can he spread a table in the wilderness? He struck the rock, so the water gushed out and streams overflowed. Can he also give us bread or provide meat for his people? Kept

pushing.

Yeah, OK, this is fine. But what about the garlic butter? He even gave these gifts to sustain them, gave them the meat, gave them the bread. Like God keeps.

Here you go. Here you go. But his anger rose against Israel because they did not believe in God and did not trust his saving power.

Yet he commanded the skies above and opened the doors of heaven and rained down on them manna to eat and gave them the grain of heaven. Men ate of the bread of angels. He sent them food in abundance, even when they refused to trust in him and in his provision.

And in John six, Jesus says, basically, we're back in the same spot right now. I am the bread from heaven. Your fathers ate that manna in the wilderness and they died.

But if you eat me, if you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you have eternal life. I am the bread that came down out of heaven. Now you better believe in me.

You better trust in this provision. And Paul said that the Israelites in the wilderness drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ. What Paul says about that rock in the wilderness, that rock that was gushing out with life, giving something as Jesus taught.

There's a time for fasting and there's a time for feasting. John the Baptist came. We read neither eating nor drinking.

And they said, behold, a crazy man. He must have a demon because John the Baptist ministry was one of judgment, warning them of imminent disaster. The king was coming to his house to divide brother against brother and sister against sister, and that moment is just around the corner.

Repent. And so he was in a phase of fasting. And he exhibited that in his whole demeanor.

But Jesus came and when Jesus came, it was time for feasting, not a time for fasting. He said, when the bridegroom is here, can the guests fast? Fast. The son of man came eating and drinking and they call him a glutton and a drunkard, friend of tax gatherers and sinners.

There are some great stories of this eating and drinking that we find in Scripture, and I'm going to focus on one as I close here. The main event, eating and drinking with God. You can find all kinds of examples of eating and drinking with God as a theme in the Bible.

You can trace it all the way from the Garden of Eden, where. The great feast was promised at the end. And instead, Adam and Eve decided to do a drive through meal.

Have it their way. Eat before go ahead and eat before their host showed up. And then you have it at Mount Sinai, where the elders go up to mediate and Moses and the elders eat and drink with the Lord.

And then you also have it in the promise throughout Deuteronomy of entering into the land of Canaan, the land flowing with milk and honey to eat and drink in the presence of the Lord. So this theme is really large throughout the Old Testament and especially the book of Deuteronomy. And especially in Luke's Gospel, there is an explicit intention to take the eating and drinking in the presence of the Lord theme from Deuteronomy and apply it to Christ in the New Testament.

In fact, he explicitly uses that phrase in Luke 13, 25, eating and drinking in the presence of the Lord as invoking the covenant meals of the Old Testament. Jesus came so that his alienated enemy, the offenders of his father's glory, could join him at the feast and eat and drink in the presence of the Lord. Only now it's the insiders who refusing the invitation are made outsiders and the outsiders who embracing the invitation are made inside.

Another reversal in this unfolding plot, John the Baptist, neither eating nor drinking, Jesus comes and it's a party. Why? Because it is the new wine of the kingdom. It is a time for joy.

It is a time for exultation. Jesus moves toward Jerusalem, and as he does so, he teaches the disciples to invite to the banquet those who cannot repay them. Isn't that amazing? The one thing that you have to be sure of when you're writing up the invitation list, when you're going out and you're talking to people and bringing them to this feast, just make sure that it's people who can't repay you.

People were, as today, very willing to invite people to feasts, hoping that they would invite you to a bigger one. Now, invite people to a feast who cannot invite you to one, who can't return the favor because that's what I do to you. The disciples think that it's a victory celebration when they get to Jerusalem.

A feast. Oh, that'll be great. An inaugural ball.

Sounds wonderful. I'm there. Count me in.

In fact, James and John say to Jesus, how about one of us being on your right hand, the other being on your left hand? When you come in your glory, can we be seated next to you? Be really great. And their mother chimes in being a good good mother. You know, how about my boy? And Jesus says, ma'am, you do not know what you're asking.

Do you really do you really want them to be seated and thrown next to me? One on my right and one on my left. Oh, yes, I would like that very much in terms of James and John. How about you guys? Oh, yes.

Can you bear that? Are you sure you can bear that? Oh, yes, of course we can bear that. Now, it's going to be hard. I realize we've got a lot to do to transform the empire.

You know, Caesar is still in charge. We've got to throw him out. And then we've got to start with Palestine and then move out from there.

We have a big job. Even the Herod and the high priests are corrupt. Everybody's corrupt.

We're just going to have to start from the bottom up. But I think that we can do it. Yeah, I'm in it for the long haul.

And Jesus was thinking one crucified on his right and one crucified on his left. And he told him, no, neither one of you are going to have to do that. He knew he wasn't going to a victory celebration.

He knew he was going to his death. He knew that he was going to have to fast his whole life so that we could be. And so finally, Jesus appears after his resurrection in Luke 24.

He appears in his resurrection to the women who now go ecstatic, having met Jesus and heard of his resurrection, go to tell the men. The men didn't believe the women. And that very day, we read two disciples were on their way to Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, discussing the momentous

events that had just transpired over the weekend.

And this time it's not an angel, but Jesus himself who appears on the road. But their eyes were kept from recognizing him, we read. And they stood still, Luke says, looking sad.

Then one of them named Cleopas answered him. Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who doesn't know what has happened in these days? What thing, Jesus asked. There's a little comedy here.

What thing? And they said to him concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet, mighty indeed and word before God and all the people. And how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem us.

Besides all this, it's now the third day since all these things happened. Some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning and when they didn't find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels that said that he was alive.

Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they didn't see. Night is falling and in good ancient Near Eastern custom, the strangers invite or the two disciples invite the stranger to come home to dinner with them. Getting dark, no need to be on the road.

Find some refreshment. Come to our house. It's just over here and join us for dinner.

One thing that was a little odd, though, was that the guest started taking over the meal. He got behind the table and he took the bread and broke it and gave thanks. Do those verbs sound familiar? They're the exact verbs that are used in the institution of the Lord's Supper on the night he was betrayed.

And they said, did not our hearts burn within us as he opened up the scriptures to us? But now they recognized him in the breaking of the bread as Jesus and their eyes were open. Now everybody was on the road back to Jerusalem, back to the upper room where they were waiting since the crucifixion. But this time to get everybody on board to go spread the word to the world.

The preacher became the content of what is preached, the stranger became the host, and now the hosts are the strangers. And yet they too become recognized as witnesses and friends of the host. These two disciples run and tell the others.

And then we don't see Jesus in the picture again until everyone is gathered in the upper room. And we read that Jesus appeared in the midst of them saying, peace be unto you. Wow.

The hopes and fears of all the years in that room. God finally can dwell not on the outskirts to keep from singeing us with his holy power and his fierce anger, but he can dwell in the midst of us and say, peace be unto you with his nail scarred wrists. And they too see and recognize.

We read in the breaking of the bread here. Jesus goes preaching himself. He showed them how all this had to be true from all the scriptures.

And then there's the breaking of the bread, the preaching of the gospel and ratifying it. With a sacrament, that's how God works, as we saw with Abram in his vision. He not only provided our redemption, he gives us the faith and he confirms and he seals that weak faith so that it grows and grows and clings more and more to his promise.

The proclamation of Christ in scripture in terms of promise and fulfillment becomes the substance of apostolic preaching in Acts, as Jesus Christ stood in the midst of his people every time the word was preached in the sacraments were administered. And that's why we read in Acts 2, 42, that they gathered regularly for the apostles teaching, for the fellowship, for the breaking of the bread and for the prayers. Not for a worship experience, but where God is in the midst of us saying, Peace be unto you.

That, brothers and sisters, can't be packaged. It can't be manufactured. It can't be handled.

It can't be put in a crate. It can't be skimmed off the top. It can't be bottled.

And even now, a great feast is being prepared. This is the developing story right now. Not the swine flu.

Not all the other stuff that we keep seeing as developing stories. Those are important. Those are not unimportant stories.

But the developing story right now, more important than all those other stories, is that guests are now arriving from all over the world for the feast that never ends. For now, Christ is the meal. I'm not going to eat and drink with you of this feast until I come again in my father's kingdom, which I take to be a reference to his second coming.

But this is my body and this is my blood shed for you. Paul says the bread that we break is a participation in the body of Christ. The cup that we bless is a participation in the blood of Christ.

For now, Jesus is the meal. Through word and sacrament, Jesus is the meal. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life.

On that day, he will join us at the table for the feast. We close with a great line from Frederick Buechner, who nicely summarizes. There is little that we can point to in our lives as deserving anything but God's wrath.

Our best moments have been mostly grotesque parodies. Our best loves have been almost always blurred with selfishness and deceit. But there is something to which we can point.

Not anything that we ever did or were, but something that was done for us by someone else. Not our own lives, but the life of one who died in our behalf and yet is still alive. And that is our only glory and our only hope.

And the sound that it makes is the sound of excitement and gladness and laughter that floats through the night air from a great thing. Dear Heavenly Father, we thank You that even now there is a sense of the full wedding supper of the Lamb from the age to come invading this present evil age. People may not know where it comes from.

They might not be able to place it. They may not be able to find analogies for what it might be. And yet, Father, we're able to come to them and tell them what it is.

To identify what this feast is and to call them to it. Help us, Father, to set that table. Help us to invite the outsiders who cannot repay us to join us, even as we were outsiders who could not repay You.

Help us, Father, to go into the highways and the byways. Help us during this interim period, in this day of grace, to call people to the festival and help us, Father, never ever to settle anymore for our own taste, our

own convenience, our own delight, our own happy meal and our own experience that do not really mediate the Kingdom to come. In Jesus' name, amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/22/SID22331.mp3>

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