



You may look at the slide and think, “A basic theology of food and feasting? What does that even mean?” This morning, we begin an 8-week series on food and feasting, and that might sound odd to you. Some of you may have wondered if this is a topical New Year’s series on making resolutions to eat better and healthier. Maybe we’ll come up with diet options to help you lose weight and be a better steward of your body? But that’s not my goal in this series.

As some of you know, I’ve been passionate about this topic for years. The topic of food and feasting grew out of my passion for God’s glory. In 1 Corinthians 10:31, the apostle Paul wrote, **“So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”**<sup>1</sup> This has been a great motivating and encouraging verse for me. To live for the glory of God is why humanity was made, and God’s glory is supreme and glorious in all ways. God’s glory is eternal. So, to live for his glory means that our actions can matter for eternity! Have you ever wondered, “What’s the point?” Or, “Does what I do actually matter at all?” Paul says that even our eating and drinking can matter for eternity!

This entralls me because that means even the smallest details of our lives can matter and give honor and praise to God. Instead of hoping that I can find some big, amazing thing to really glorify God with – I’ve seen that eating and drinking can glorify God. This has caused me to be curious and hope-filled as I live life. In addition, I’ve seen that God gifts humanity multiple times every day by not just giving food for nutrition, but food for enjoyment and fellowship. He didn’t just give us flavorless calories, but he’s given spices, plants, animals – all with various flavor profiles! Then there’s this mystery that food draws us closer to people. How does this work?

Studying about food and feasting has actually helped me to love God more and live for his praise. These seeds of thoughts have filled my mind and soul for years and years. As I have shared some of my findings and thoughts with people about food and feasting, I’ve often felt kind of silly. However, when I’ve actually explained my thoughts, people have been increasingly intrigued and encouraged.

I hope this will be the case for all of us here. The reality is that food is such a basic part of our lives, and I think we may have so over-spiritualized life that we have missed the spiritual nature to even the most basic. And, if we learn to glorify God in the small; maybe we’ll glorify him if the “big” happens to us. So, this gives a backdrop to this series. But what about today’s sermon? It’s entitled “Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration?” Notice the subtitle: A Basic Theology of Food and Feasting. This past week, as I created an outline for the sermon, thoughts and ideas from years of pondering started flowing out of me, and I realized this sermon could actually be four sermons. But that would be too much for today. So, I put in “basic theology.” The goal for me today is to explain how food shows up in the overarching storyline of God. Food is actually an integral part of God’s story of creation, redemption,

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<sup>1</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Co 10:31.

and his glory. In other words, “food” is a critical theme in the Bible. And, if it is a critical theme, then we ought to know what God tells us about food and feasting, right?

So, today, we’re going to travel through the entire Bible – from Genesis to Revelation – to see the theme of food through God’s story of salvation. And we will see, in particular, that **Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration reminds us of God’s good and gracious intentions for humanity – providing nourishment, fellowship, and enjoyment.** We’ll see this by looking at creation, fall, redemption, and restoration.

### 1. The creation account reminds us of God’s purpose for food.

Do you know what God’s first recorded words to a human being is? I just learned it this week while studying for the sermon. The words were spoken to Adam, before Eve, was created. They’re found in Genesis 2:16-17: <sup>16</sup> **And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, <sup>17</sup> 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.”** <sup>2</sup> When you read the creation account, you can’t help but be amazed by the beauty and wonder of God’s creation and also the immeasurable privilege he gave to man. Then, while Moses is describing this great creation, we read God’s first recorded words to man. God commanded Adam, “You may sure eat of every tree of the garden.” Stop there. I think what many tend to do is emphasize the negative statement that follows, but why do we do that? Look at God’s first recorded command to Adam. The command is that he’s free to eat from any tree in the garden.

God didn’t create all of this beauty and wonder because he needed it. No. God created all this beauty and wonder and gave man the greatest privilege to rule in this creation and enjoy the fruits of the rule – literally! It’s all God’s, and God (in great generosity) has given it to man. It’d be like if someone took me to Chophouse in Grand Rapids and said, “eat whatever you want.” But with God, this is even greater. Everything belongs to him. Adam hasn’t done anything to earn God’s favor. Yet God has freely given.

In addition, here in Genesis 2:16-17, we have a type of covenant. God gives a command to Adam, and then makes a promise to Adam as well. God’s covenant is centered around *food*. Now, we go into verse 17. The only tree mankind isn’t to eat from is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If they eat from that tree, they will surely die. God is giving Adam a choice. Will Adam trust the good and generous Creator or will he choose to be his own master – trying to live life on his own terms? If Adam trusts himself, not only will he experience the confusion that evil brings, but Adam will die.

Now, let’s just stop here for a moment and discuss what we discover about food. First, we see that **food is basic for nourishment and life.** Second, we see that **food is basic for fellowship.** The covenant with God revolves around food, and so we can say that God gave us food to nourish us relationally. Third, we see that **food is given for enjoyment.** The way that the text is written, you clearly can read the generous nature of God. You can read the enjoyment of being able to eat from any of the trees. And, this is God’s command! God delights in giving good gifts to his children! Truly, his commandments aren’t burdensome. So, God gave us food to nourish us emotionally. As I give these three points, that doesn’t mean that when we eat, we always should be eating with other people or that we can only eat food that are always the most optimally nourishing. Nor, am I saying that all food must always be enjoyable. But these are basic and overriding principles. In addition, I think that we ought to have all these in view in

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<sup>2</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 2:16–17.

our lives. If we're missing one of these categories or we drastically minimize a category, I think we're missing God's glory.

As I read these two verses, I'm compelled to praise God. Food itself ought to encourage us to trust in God – and to trust that he is good and generous. Every basic and pervasive need we have can be filled by God, and eating food can remind us of that. Now, let's move into the Fall.

## 2. The fall of creation reminds us of God's purpose for food.

In Genesis 3:1, we read of a very deceptive question from Satan: "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?"<sup>3</sup> Then, in verse 5, Satan directly contradicts God by saying, "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."<sup>4</sup> Satan essentially leads Adam and Eve to believe two things about God. First, God is a miser. He's a scrooge. God hinders us! The first question wonders if God has restricted them to all trees. Is God really generous or not? Of course, God has given them all trees except one. But Satan wants them to wonder if God is holding something back because he really isn't loving. Second, Satan suggests that God is a liar. He says they won't die! He then says they'll be like God, knowing good and evil. Of course, Satan changes the meaning of those phrases. God knows good and evil, but God is separate from it. Adam and Eve will *know* it through embracing it and experiencing the consequences – thus being utterly confused.

Instead of refuting the lies of Satan, Eve and Adam take the fruit and eat. Isn't it so ironic, though? Satan began with, "Did God say you couldn't eat from any tree?" But God was generous. It is Satan who limits to one. Just eat the *one* tree. Only eat the *one* tree. Remember this always, Ventura. God's generous. Satan's a miser and a liar.

After Adam and Eve take the fruit, we read of immediate shame, confusion, and we also see death creep in. The whole creation shatters. Sinfulness has entered the beautiful temple-garden of God. So, we can see a contrast between God's covenant with Adam in Genesis 2, and Satan's deception with Adam and Eve. **God's covenant, involving food, speaks of nourishment and life. Satan's way points to death. God's covenant speaks of fellowship. Satan's way brings shame in relationships. God's covenant speaks of enjoyment. Satan's way brings confusion.**

Right here, in the creation and fall accounts, we see food plays a role. However, I think we often think it's just a background role. You may still be thinking that this morning, but if we travel through the entirety of Scriptures, we can't help but admit food plays a much more important role. I can't go through everything, but I can go through some things this morning.

Think for example of the story of Noah and the ark. In Genesis 6:21, when God tells Noah to bring animals on the ark, he also says in 6:21, "<sup>21</sup> **Also take with you every sort of food that is eaten, and store it up. It shall serve as food for you and for them.**" <sup>22</sup> **Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him.**"<sup>5</sup> It's intriguing to me that the phrase "command" is listed here again even regarding food. It's like Noah is a new Adam and will be tested in a type of new creation. And, I think this is what we're to think about this. After the flood, in Genesis 9:1, God speaks similar words to Noah and his family as he spoke to Adam and Eve: And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful

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<sup>3</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 3:1.

<sup>4</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 3:5.

<sup>5</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 6:21–22.

and multiply and fill the earth.”<sup>6</sup> Then, in 9:3, God says, “**3 Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything.**”<sup>7</sup> God says that he gave the plants for food to humanity, but now he gives animals! God moves on in speaking a covenant to Noah, in similar ways as he spoke a covenant with Adam. But this covenant is a promise to not flood the earth anymore. But, God’s not going to flood the earth *not* because Noah and his family are morally perfect. They’re not. Immediately after the covenant, we read of Noah’s failure. And his failure is seen in his relationship not to fruit, but to drink: **20 Noah began to be a man of the soil, and he planted a vineyard. 21 He drank of the wine and became drunk and lay uncovered in his tent.**<sup>8</sup> What is intended to speak to nourishment, fellowship and enjoyment; Noah abused by simply emphasizing enjoyment. And what we see after this covenant is shame, confusion and death result.

As we move along in Genesis, food shows up in multiple occasions when it comes to covenants. Read about Melchizedek in Genesis 14:18. You see fellowship, enjoyment, and life as Abraham eats with the Prince of Peace, Melchizedek. Go to Genesis 18 when Abraham is hospitable to the angels, one of whom was the Lord. In this meal, God affirms his covenant promise to Abraham and Abraham fellowships with the Lord, praying for the righteous in Sodom. Move to the story of Joseph and his brothers. In Genesis 43, as Joseph is testing his brothers, he tests them at a feast. There’s unique fellowship because an Egyptian wasn’t to eat with a Hebrew (and they think Joseph is actually Egyptian). There’s life taking place in this meal because in their land there was a famine. And there’s enjoyment – especially for Benjamin. After this meal, Joseph reveals himself and makes promises to his brothers of forgiveness and welcome and care. He promises to care for them wholly! And, of course, all of these stories, in unique ways point to God himself.

We are all born sinners, and we all have sinned and spurned God’s glory from birth. But God is calling us to see his generosity and grace. He’s calling us to life, fellowship, and enjoyment in him. Will there be a greater Joseph to welcome us to God’s table? Will there be a greater Melchizedek who will be the Prince of Peace? Will the Lord spare us from this world even though we live in it, if we cry out to him? Will we be able to enter a world of eternal generosity and grace in God? Will God nourish us?

This, I believe, is a major theme as God gathers a people for himself. The nation of Israel was set apart to speak to the world of God’s holiness and also God’s grace. All through Genesis, as soon as Adam and Eve sin, we’re told people head east. They keep going *away* from the garden-temple. But when we get to the building of a tabernacle, do you know which way it faces? It faces east. Why east? To symbolize that God is opening his door to sinful humans. He will welcome them to his garden temple. That’s why, in the tabernacle (and the future Temple), the decorations are full of pictures from the Garden of Eden.

It’s at this point, that things might click for many. This is actually what happened to me when I studied the Temple and Tabernacle years ago. But have you ever wondered why there were holy utensils in Israel’s worship? Who cares about bowls and other eating utensils? That’s so weird. Why is that included in sacred worship? But when you read about the different sacrifices (which we will get into in a couple weeks), you realize that many of the sacrifices were specifically food-related! When you put the sacrifices together, along with the holy utensils. And, when you realize this was to be celebrated inside a tabernacle decorated like the garden-temple, you realize that God is welcoming people back to feast with him.

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<sup>6</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 9:1.

<sup>7</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 9:3.

<sup>8</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 9:20–21.

Where Adam and Eve sinned with food and forfeited fellowship, life, and enjoyment in God; God has created a tabernacle to summon Adam's descendants back to him. But how can people actually come into God's presence? Through sacrifice. In the Old Testament system, not everyone could come close to God's manifested earthly presence. The High Priest alone could go to the Holy of Holies. The chosen priests could go into the holy place in the tabernacle. But not everyone could enter in. So, while in the Old Testament, we saw God calling people to himself; there was still an understanding that something greater needed to take place. By the way, this doesn't mean that only priests were going to Heaven. God even assured Israel of his care through giving them manna! Food to nourish them and sustain them and to speak of God's special relationship with them.

In addition, God granted the nation celebration feasts. I think of the Feast of Booths or the Passover Meal. The Passover meal was to continue to be celebrated to remind the people that God would save people from enslavement not only to an oppression nation, but to sin itself. In each of these celebrations and meals, God is pointing his people to a greater restoration to come – a covenant that will reign supreme! Do you see this? Meals matter. Meals speak to us. Meals remind us of a good and gracious, covenant-keeping God. And God wants us to celebrate this! I'm reminded of Deuteronomy 14, which God says to the nation, <sup>22</sup> **"You shall tithe all the yield of your seed that comes from the field year by year. <sup>23</sup> And before the Lord your God, in the place that he will choose, to make his name dwell there, you shall eat the tithe of your grain, of your wine, and of your oil, and the firstborn of your herd and flock, that you may learn to fear the Lord your God always."**<sup>9</sup> The kindness of God is to lead them to honor and praise the Lord always! God goes on to say that if they sell their tithe, they can purchase other items with it for food. He says, <sup>26</sup> **and spend the money for whatever you desire—oxen or sheep or wine or strong drink, whatever your appetite craves. And you shall eat there before the Lord your God and rejoice, you and your household."**<sup>10</sup> Side note, God is not opposed to food being enjoyable! Eat whatever your appetite craves. This isn't a command for every day, but this is a command of God that should remind us of his words to Adam, and even to Noah. God is generous and gracious. Wants is promising fellowship with us. He promises to give life. There should be enjoyment in knowing we could feast with him – our Creator!

And so, as we move to King David's words in Psalm 23:5, his great joy is this: <sup>5</sup>**You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. <sup>6</sup> Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.**<sup>11</sup> David is not considered God's enemy. And God prepares the table for David (like Joseph did for Benjamin – and his brothers. Because God will feed him, David believes God's good and mercy is with him always!

This is a basic Old Testament theology of food and feasting. However, I do need to add that in the Old Testament, there are also more negative examples of food and feasts. From drunkenness to orgies to complete abuse of food. And we always see aspects of death, shame and confusion with those. Is there hope for the death, shame, and confusion to be destroyed? Yes. Emphatically yes! Let's now see how

### 3. Redemption in Jesus reminds us of God's purpose for food.

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<sup>9</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Dt 14:22–23.

<sup>10</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Dt 14:26.

<sup>11</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 23:5–6.

When Jesus arrives, he's referred to as the Bread from Heaven. He's Manna. He's also referred to by John the Baptist as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. He's the Passover Lamb. Jesus says shocking statements like, "unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you."<sup>12</sup>

What does all of this mean? I think most, if not all of us here, know. Jesus is the Greater Melchizedek. He's the greater Joseph. He's the greater Moses. He's the greater Passover Lamb. He's the sacrifice that welcomes people into the garden-temple of God. How? Jesus himself took the punishment that all in Adam deserved. We deserve God's just punishment for our sins. **We deserve shame. We deserve death. We deserve confusion. Yet, Jesus endured the shame of the cross. And on the cross, he took eternal death, which is God's just and eternal punishment for sin. Jesus also took the "confusion," by experiencing the torment of good and evil on the cross as he became sin and endured God's just and good decree to punish.** Jesus became a new representative for humans. We're born associated with Adam. If he's your representative, you're still in sin. But if Jesus is your representative, he took your punishment so that you could receive his life, nourishment, joy, and fellowship with God and others!

Ventura, what a Savior! Behold our God. The one who is the generous and merciful Creator is also the gracious and loving Savior. He didn't have to give us physical food. He most definitely didn't need to give us spiritual food. But he has. Have you trusted in Jesus? Have you turned from your sins and turned to God, trusting his goodness and grace in Jesus alone? Or, are you still like Adam and Eve – trusting your own ways? I pray you'd trust him, and if you have any questions on what it means to trust Jesus, please talk to me or another Christian here today.

Now, if you have trusted in Christ, how does this affect our view and practice relating to physical food? Well, it shouldn't surprise us when Jesus speaks of the new covenant being enacted, he does it over a meal. The disciples are gathered, and they're eating with God the Son in the flesh. And Jesus states they are forgiven and accepted all because of him. The bread signifies his body. The wine signifies his blood. God nourishes and gives life. God gives fellowship. God gives enjoyment. Food points us to the greater Food of Jesus who points us to our Great Triune God.

This connection of food with the new covenant should help shape our understanding of food in even greater ways. It's intriguing to me that in Matthew 6, in the Lord's model prayer for his disciples, he calls us to pray for our daily bread. And, look at the structure. Asking for food comes before asking for forgiveness and even for asking for help to resist sin. Food is basic to our physical and spiritual nourishment, fellowship and enjoyment. What would happen if we reminded ourselves everyday, every time we eat, that God cares for us in these profound ways? What if every bite of food caused us to see Jesus' grace and mercy in the cross?

Therefore, this is why I think even Paul argues in 1 Corinthians 10:31 that we can glorify God in whatever we eat or drink. Everything we do matters, and we can praise and glory in our God in what we eat. Where Adam and Eve didn't glorify God even in the mundane task of eating, Jesus restores us so that even in this most small of actions, we can praise the Lord! But our relationship with food doesn't end here in this world.

#### **4. The restoration of all things reminds us of God's purpose for food.**

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<sup>12</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Jn 6:53.

Be reminded of some of Jesus' parables, like the parable of the wedding feast or the parables of the midnight oil for the bridegroom coming. These parables point us to a day when God will bring about all of his promises. Everything will be renewed. There will not merely be a restoration of Eden. No. It will be greater than this. God's dwelling place will be with mankind, and we will dwell on a New Heaven and New Earth where the glory of God covers everything, and every person will be without sin and confusion and death. There will be a day of full fellowship, life, and joy!

This is even what Jesus reminds us of at communion. I believe he is literal. There will be a day when we will feast with Jesus. He is waiting to raise the fourth chalice is the Passover meal. That's the cup of consummation. That day, the covenant is fulfilled completely. And we will feast as a sign and seal of that covenant.

So, Ventura, **whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Revel in him and his goodness. Let the accounts of food's presence in creation, fall, redemption, and restoration point you to the goodness and grace found in Jesus. And, let food (even today) cause you to revel in the God of all grace.**