



Last week, as we continue this series on a theology of food and feasting, Ben Jacques preached on the importance of food and feasting within the Old Covenant system of worship. I heard that he brought donuts, and in watching his sermon this last week, I saw he had really cool slides with a lot of information, and he even had a slide with pizza on it. Made me feel like I needed to up my game a little. And, I also want to apologize for no donuts today. I'll just let Ben win. 😊

In all seriousness, though, Ben's message gave us a helpful basis for today's sermon. Last week focused on food and feasting in Old Testament Israel. Ben also showed how these feasts pointed forward to Jesus and even to God's Kingdom to come! In each of those feasts, you see how the physical participation also pointed to spiritual realities. And, **in putting these feasts together, you discover how God intends to grant to his people both physical and spiritual nourishment/life, fellowship, and enjoyment.**

But that's not the end of the story when it comes to food and feasting. The Bible doesn't end at Malachi. We transition into Matthew and we read about a "new covenant." That, by the way, is what "new testament" means. You see, the "old covenant" was a conditional covenant where God covenanted with national Israel to be his special people, and he called them to live in certain ways. If they obeyed, they would continue to be honored. Within this old covenant, God instituted feasts to remind the people of God's faithfulness to them and to call them to trust and obey the Lord.

The new covenant is different than the old, especially in the fact that it's unconditional. Meaning, God simply has made a promise, and it's not dependent on how well we obey or if we disobey. Jesus, the God-Man, came to this earth and fulfilled all of God's demands on humanity. Jesus, in utter perfection, lived the lives we couldn't live, and on the cross, he took the punishment and condemnation, that sinners deserve. Anyone who realizes they can't save themselves and looks to Jesus for forgiveness and reconciliation is forgiven by God – cleansed by him, made righteous, and welcomed into his family forever!

But, what does the new covenant have to do with food? The Old Covenant had food to remind people of God's faithfulness, does the new? I actually believe it does! And so, before I say anything else, the main idea of the sermon today is that **Jesus fulfills the intention of food and feasting, even through his followers.** Do you remember the intention of food and feasting? Answer: Nourishment/Life, Fellowship, and Enjoyment. Remember that Jesus doesn't merely nourish people physically. He nourishes people spiritually. He doesn't only grant physical fellowship, but he grants us fellowship with God, who is spirit. He doesn't only give temporal joy, but eternal joy. But in saying this, I don't want to minimize either the physical or spiritual. We were made for both! Therefore, physical food matters. Through Jesus' redemption, we can glorify God in whatever we do, including eating and drinking! And, in eating and drinking, we get to experience more of God's love. While we also get to express his love. So, let's jump into the New Testament to discover more of the New Testament's teaching on food and feasting.

## 1. Jesus Christ fulfills the intention of food and feasting.

I have the term “Christ” in here purposefully because I want to connect last week’s sermon to this week’s sermon. Christ refers to the Anointed One of the Old Testament. There was One to come who would rescue humanity from sin and reconcile people to God. All the Old Testament was looking forward to this One. Jesus is that One. And, in this first point of the sermon, I want to emphasize the word “fulfills.” Jesus *fulfills* the old covenant. He *fulfills* the food and feasting in the old covenant. How? He himself is the Bread from Heaven.

In John 6, we read Jesus’ own words: **“Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.” Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.”**<sup>1</sup>

What’s Jesus saying here? Manna was miraculous. It was a gift from God, but it was the appetizer. It wasn’t the real thing. Physical manna was pointing to the greater Bread from Heaven: Jesus himself. Jesus comes from Heaven and gives *life* to the world. This is the nourishment humanity needs because human beings are born in sin. We know it and feel our bondage to sin in various ways – desires that we know are wrong and conflict with what is right. And, we know that if we were judged by God, we’d be guilty. We need One who not only can bring forgiveness, but can give us a right standing with God – and can change us so that we begin to want what God delights in. Jesus says he is the One who brings this to us. His nourishment and life actually miraculous takes us from death to life.

And so, Jesus is the true Bread from Heaven, he also fulfills the Old Testament as the Messiah by being the spiritual drink that Hebrews talks about. He fulfills the Old Covenant feasts. In Passover, we recognize Jesus is the lamb who was killed so that anyone would trust Christ’s death on their behalf would not be overcome eternally by death. In Pentecost, instead of repeating an initial physical harvest of food, many people in Jerusalem trust in Jesus and there’s an initial “harvest” of believers. That means people have been reconciled to God and they’re not reconciled to one another as fellow Christians. We then read in Acts 2, **“And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. **And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.**”**<sup>2</sup> Do you see the nourishment, fellowship, and even joy that Jesus grants? And, do you see how physical food is still a part of all of this new covenant. Jesus’ fulfillment doesn’t negate the physical realities. Instead, Jesus brings everything together! So, Jesus’ nourishment and life leads to fellowship and enjoyment!

But when you hear the word “fulfill,” you might think, “Ok, so food doesn’t matter anymore. Jesus has fulfilled it.” This type of thinking seems to be very common among Christians. While they may not admit this kind of thinking, it’s kind of like this: The Old Testament doesn’t apply anymore, and it doesn’t matter anymore because Jesus fulfilled it.

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<sup>1</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Jn 6:32–35.

<sup>2</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ac 2:44–47.

That's not a right understanding of "fulfill." To fulfill means to "fill to the full." And, you even discovered last week in Ben's sermon that the Feast of Trumpets is still awaiting future fulfillment when the Trump will sound and the dead in Christ will rise! Jesus is the fulfillment, but that doesn't mean that he's not still filling up things to the full.

So, when you think about food and feasting in the Old Testament, don't think of God being like, "Well, that old covenant didn't work; so, I'm just going to throw it all away and start fresh." No. Christians, we're part of a bigger story. God's redemptive story began all the way back in the Garden and it continues on. We humans love stories. I firmly believe we all think in stories. We're always trying to figure out the part we play in a given day or in given scenarios. We live and act on the basis of what we think about our story and our place in this world. Then the Bible comes to us. Some people view the Bible simply as tidbits of information on how God can be a part of our individual stories and help us live better lives. But the Bible isn't that. The Bible shows us the storyline of God, and invites people to be a part of his story. If we really learn his storyline, that will shape us to understand our place, our purpose of living, and our privileges of how to live in this world.

The reason I say all of this is because I want to remind us of the storyline again. In doing this, I think we'll be helped in thinking about the New Testament's view of food and feasting. At this point, I'm going to do something that isn't common for me for my sermons. I want to play a video. It's from the Bible Project, and it's on the Tree of Life. I think they do a superb job in connecting the spiritual and physical realities of food in the big storyline of God. If you have trusted in Christ, this is your story. You're a part of this story.

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Jesus fulfills the intention of food and feasting. And someday, we will experience the fulfillment to the full! God is concerned about the redemption of all things. Someday, we will feast from the Tree of Life. And until then, God is concerned that in whatever we do, whether eating or drinking, that we do it to his glory. But what does that look like practically for those of us who are followers of Jesus?

## **2. Jesus fulfills the intention of food and feasting through his followers.**

If you were here during our series through chapter 5 of the Sermon on the Mount, you may remember when we studied Jesus' words in verses 17-20 of that chapter, and we discovered that Jesus was saying that he fulfills the law through those who turn to him. So, that means that as Jesus fulfills the intention of food and feasting, we are called to do so in certain ways. Of course, we don't save people from their sins and give eternal nourishment, but we can point people to the reality of Jesus. In addition, we can encourage fellowship and joy in God by using food.

So, let's look into some New Testament texts to see the usage of food among the believers. Each of these usages reveal one of the three intentions of food that I've brought up over the last few weeks. Before we get into each, I want you to see all of the ways Christians are called to utilize food. As ones who are branches of the Vine – branches of THE Tree of Life – we can to share Jesus' life with others. And food, is a great means by which we reveal the nature of Jesus to others. So, here are some ways God calls his new covenant children to utilize the privilege of food. By the way, this is by no means is an exhaustive list:

**To grow relationships with Christians (fellowship, joy), To provide for needs through hospitality (nourish), To receive with thanksgiving (joy), To remember God's storyline (nourishment/life, fellowship, joy), To remember who our Savior is (nourishment/life, fellowship, joy)**

Let's start with the first one: **To grow relationally with Christians (fellowship, joy)**. We already read this passage, but we should go back to Acts 2. After many come to faith in Christ, we read this: <sup>42</sup> And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.<sup>3</sup> I think some people try to hyper-spiritualize this text and they say that "breaking of bread" only refers to communion. Actually, you may or may not be surprised that Bible scholars are divided on this. Is it communion or just a meal? Or, is it communion within a meal? Personally, I think it could mean either. But I definitely think this term means they literally ate meals together – whether or not they celebrated communion as a part of it. In verse 46, Luke wrote, "And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts,<sup>47</sup> praising God. . ."<sup>4</sup> They worshipped together daily and then went to various homes (because there were 3,000 plus new Christians in Jerusalem. You couldn't house them in one building. Then they received their food with glad and generous hearts.

I can imagine that not all of these Jews knew each other well, but now they're invading each other's spaces in their homes. They're eating food together. They're sharing food. They're welcome at one another's tables. And they have glad and generous hearts, praising God! They're not simply sitting in an auditorium together. They're eating and feasting together. The New Covenant brings people together. It brings unity. Since Jesus has given us life, we share that life with one another. And, this is a joy! So, Ventura, we should recognize the value of inviting people to our tables and eating together. We grow in fellowship. We grow relationally. Oh, and by the way, this can be a witness to the world, too. Those who don't trust Christ can see how Christians actually care and love one another like family!

**To provide for needs through hospitality (nourish)**. I spoke on hospitality a few weeks ago, but keep in mind that hospitality doesn't *only* mean having someone in your house. It can range from welcoming someone in kindness and caring for them to taking them into your house for a long period of time. And, actually, if my studies are correct, much of 1<sup>st</sup> century hospitality was welcoming needy strangers into your home. I remember reading about a church in the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> century where one church contacted a church leader in another area. They were wondering about a new believer in their midst. He had a questionable occupation and they were looking for advice on whether they should tell him he needs to quit or if he could glorify God in continuing. The advice came back that he should quit his job, but then that church leader said something like, "But if that man has no other expertise, and you don't have the funds to care for him, send him here and we will take care of the man." That's hospitality! Providing for real needs.

But we do this because Jesus has provided our needs, right? All our needs are met in Christ Jesus. We have all riches in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Jesus entered into this world and tore the veil in the temple, opening the access for us who were enemies of God, to come and sit at God's table. And we will feast with God forever!

When we realize God's story, we can see how hospitality is so valuable, can't we? We can understand why Paul puts hospitality on his lists for Christians, and why elders are called to be examples of hospitality. We show people the kindness of God who sought us out and fed us with the bread of Heaven.

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<sup>3</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ac 2:42.

<sup>4</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ac 2:46–47.

**To receive with thanksgiving (joy).** In 1 Timothy 4:4, Paul is talking about marriage and food, and says, “<sup>4</sup>For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving. . . .”<sup>5</sup> If God has given you food, it is not sinful to thank the Lord for it! Seriously. This actually needs to be heard by people in a culture that is so overly concerned about what food can do to you. I remember years ago, when Tracy posted someone on-line and said something about how good she was feeling that day, and how she ate a banana and was satisfied. All of a sudden, it was like the banana police came out: Don’t eat Bananas! They’re not as good as other things. What in the world? Seriously? I think there are a lot of legalists when it comes to food. God gave it to you to enjoy, and you’ve used it as a tool for other purposes. When we express gratitude, we are reminded that the God who saved us is the God who provides for us. As we eat the food, we can be reminded of the day we’ll have the table set before us and we will eat all that God gives to us. So, receive the food with gratitude. Don’t forget to thank God for his continuous love and care for you.

**To remember God’s storyline (nourish/life, fellowship, joy).** I may not need to bring this up because the previous points emphasize this, but I think that having special feasts can help us to remember God’s story. And, while the New Testament doesn’t command them, it doesn’t condemn them. Instead, it’s assumed that many are feasting. Look at Colossians 2:16-17: **Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. <sup>17</sup>These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.**<sup>6</sup> I love these verses, and have spoken it many times to emphasize that we are free from the demands of old covenant regulations regarding the feasts, festivals and Sabbaths. However, if we take the New Testament as a whole, we might become confused. You read Acts, and you discover Paul participating in certain Jewish activities. So, you can wonder, “Which is it? Are we free from it or are we bound to it?” Well, I think that’s a false dichotomy. I think we’re free to do so and free not to do so. And, I think Paul’s emphasis in Colossians 2 is that we’re not in bondage to these things. All things God has given is given for our good, not to control us. The same with feasts and festivals.

“So, what are you saying, Pastor Timothy? Are you suggesting we celebrate the Jewish festivals?” No. I’m not saying that. But I’m saying, I do think that we as a church could think more proactively about feasting together as a church family. Where the church through the ages has emphasized Christmas, Easter, Ascension Sunday. And where we still anticipate the future trumpet, I can’t help but wonder if we could grow in joy and fellowship even more if we had meals of remembrances for these things. There’s no judgment if someone doesn’t do it, but these could be good remembrances.

All this said, the next and final point is the meal that *is* commanded by God, and I actually think this meal might need to shape any feast we have together as a church family.

**To remember who our Savior is (nourish/life, fellowship, joy).** Of course, I’m talking about communion. In 1 Corinthians 11, the apostle Paul talks about communion with the church. He shares how the cup represents the blood of Jesus that brings forgiveness of sins. As we drink, we’re reminded of that spiritual life. The bread represents the body of Jesus, broken for us. And, Paul emphasizes that the body of Christ spiritually is the church. He emphasizes this because the Corinthians weren’t really celebrating communion. They were celebrating “who’s who” in Corinth. Who has wealth? Who’s poor? And it was the wealthy that were getting full and even drunk. So, Paul then says to them, “Don’t you have food to eat at in your own homes?” What’s he saying? Personally, I think people can get confused about this. I

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<sup>5</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Ti 4:4.

<sup>6</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Col 2:16–17.

have been. Some think Paul's saying, "Eat at home and have a small remembrance when you're all together." But Paul's point is *not* to say, "make communion small." The reality is that the poor might not have had food at their homes, but the wealthy did. If the wealthy actually cared for the poor fellow believers, they should get their tummies at least a little full so the poorer could eat and be satisfied.

Why do I bring all of this up? Because Paul emphasizing the life we have in Christ, and the fellowship we have with Christ's body. And, it revolves around a meal that reminds us of all of this. Sadly, the Corinthians weren't discerning Christ's body because they weren't living in unity and care and fellowship with one another. But if we discern the meaning of communion, we'll see that Christ's blood and sacrifice means our life. The body speaks to fellowship. And if we remind ourselves of these things, there will be joy together in community because of Christ.

So, Ventura, be praying and be ready. The elders are beginning discussion on how we can encourage more corporate fellowship around food. We're just beginning to talk about communion that will look forward to the feast to come. But I also hope you are praying and asking God for wisdom in how to live out the new covenant realities of Christ's life. How can you, through eating and drinking, glorify God? How can you exhibit God's hospitality to others? How can you grow in gratitude of the food you have been given? **Since Jesus fulfills the intention of food, by his grace, live out the intention of food in this world. Show fellow Christians and those who do not believe the life-giving, hospitable, joy-giving God.**