

“Are you hungry?”
Sermon for 3 February 2019
Text: Gen. 1:14-2:3

Now our text is about the gift of food. vv.29-30:

29 Then God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the [face of] surface of all the earth, and every tree [in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed] which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you; 30 and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the [heaven] sky and to every thing that [creeps] moves on the earth [which is a living soul] which has life, I have given every green plant for food”; and it was so.

That’s the scriptural inspiration for this message. But what I purpose to do today is to connect Paradise yet to come (including our present participation in the feast of the kingdom held at the Lord’s Table) with Paradise Lost. So, here’s the other inspiration, a passage written by Dr. Peter Leithart (Cambridge, unfortunately):

The Lord’s Supper is the world in miniature; it has cosmic significance. Within it we find clues to the meaning of all creation and all history, to the nature of God and the nature of man, to the mystery of the world, which is Christ. It is not confined to the first day, for its power fills seven. Though the table stands at the center, its effects stretch out to the four corners of the earth. (Leithart, Blessed Are the Hungry; Canon Press, Moscow, ID 83843; 2000; p. 11)

Blessed Are the Hungry is a series of meditations. They came about in this manner, while he served as pastor in Birmingham, Alabama (1989-1995): “For several years, we celebrated the Lord’s Supper every week, and I made an effort at the end of every sermon to say a few words to connect the sermon topic to the meal. I discovered that, without stretching things, the Supper could be brought to bear on everything I said from the pulpit, and this led to the conclusion . . . that the Supper’s significance is as broad as creation itself.” (from the “Acknowledgments, p.9) Well, frankly, I was dubious. However, out of prayer, I had come to the place where I thought, “I really should try harder to tie the message on Communion Sundays to the Supper.” So those two streams came together which were originally quite independent. Dr. Leithart also wrote of his conviction: “that the Scriptural descriptions of the Supper are the most fundamental possible descriptions.” (p.12) So, I read on, I was not disappointed; in fact I was uplifted and inspired. What follows is my attempt to trace the passage (Gen. 1:14-2:3) from Scripture to the Communion Table, from the Word of God (keying off Gen. 1:29-30—and God’s good gift of food).

So the text today falls very near the end of our reading, Gen. 2:1-3, which is the completion of the last three days of Creation (days four through six). Gen. 2:1-3 addresses the **finishing of the work** and the **seventh day Sabbath rest**. The love gift of food is the last act of Creation and that is recorded in verses 29-30 which I shared this morning as the scriptural inspiration for the message. So to be really clear, we are exploring the last half of the first week of Creation, the final act falling on the sixth day.

The gift of food provides the finale of the sixth day activities. The day has been given over to the production of living creatures—all the land dwellers and mankind. **Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds** (that would include livestock, land dwellers and wild animals—mankind would be singled out for separate treatment). The divine command, **Let the land produce**, is joined, in verse 25 with **God made the the wild animals according to their kinds**. Similar verses occurred earlier in Gen.1:11-12: **Let the land produce vegetation** (“field crops” will be distinguished in Paradise) but for now it is the omission of **and God made**, as it relates to vegetation, leaves us to wonder if we should conclude that there is a clear distinction between *plant and animal life recorded in Genesis*. The land was created so as to produce vegetation—but God **made all the creatures** (v.25). ***All life stems from God, but animal life especially so***. This oddity is reinforced by the declaration in v. 30: **and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the [heaven] sky and to every thing that [creeps] moves on the earth [in which is a living soul] which has life, I have given every green plant for food**” The EV’s typically follow this word “moves” to the detriment, I think, of our immediate understanding. “Moves,” or motion is equated with “the possession of a living soul” as the defining characteristic of animal life!

This is huge idea. The concept that animals possess “souls” raises the possibility, no doubt comforting to those who have had a favorite pet! that animals might have an existence in heaven—an afterlife. Some support for this fond hope might be taken from the announcement that Jesus will come in his second advent riding on a white horse. We also read of “living creatures” in heaven, as well as possible eagles, lions, lamb, goats—my listing is far from exhaustive.

Animals have souls, apparently, and God fashioned them that way. Plants and animals both emerge at *the command of God* but they are still not the same form of life. Perhaps this distinction feeds into the connected idea: **every green plant was given as food to every form of animal life—makes the cultivation, harvesting, cooking and consumption of plants as food okay**. That flora should feed fauna is part of the ordained nature of things. **Then God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the [h]surface of all the earth, and every tree [i]which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you.** (v.29) And that is a great relief for those who like stir-friend vegetables and broccoli!

Anyway, this gift of food is the last act of the Creation week as revealed in Genesis.

The biblical Creation story, however, as we all know, isn’t the only one out there. According to the Akkadian creation myth, *Enuma Elish*, which contains a cross-reference or allusion to Genesis 1:26: **Let us make man as Our image, after Our likeness.**¹ However, the two creation accounts couldn’t end more differently. For Akkadians, man exists *to feed the gods—to meet their needs*. In Genesis, God is revealed as the One who ought of love meets all our needs!

Blood I will mass and cause bones to be.
I will establish a savage, “man” shall be his name
Verily, savage man I will create.

¹ (in E. A. Speiser’s translation margin notes)

He shall be charged with the service of the gods
That they might be at ease.

Marduk, after crushing the head of Tiamat, his monster mother, has been acclaimed “chief of the gods.” He gave them places in the heavens, for the gods and their constellations—they were hungry though and remanded food. Formed from the blood of the rebel god Kingu, Marduk made man “to establish for his fathers the great food offerings” . . . to bear “food offerings . . . for their gods and goddesses.” Pagan polytheism may not be your gig, but my point is that there was, is a better game in town! All idols demand a *quid pro quo* because they have needs and desires that humans can meet **Our God, the Creator of Genesis fame, *has no needs!*** Idols are creatures falsely presented and treated as gods! As Creator, the living and loving God, needs nothing that he has made . . . and a sufficient *quid* for his *quo* simply cannot be rounded up and offered as an offering.

Isaiah 44:9-20 deals with this matter of idolatry, I include verses 16d-19:

**From the rest he makes a god, his idol;
he bows down to it and worships.
He prays to it and says,
“Save me! You are my god!”
18 They know nothing, they understand nothing;
their eyes are plastered over so they cannot see,
and their minds closed so they cannot understand.
19 No one stops to think,
no one has the knowledge or understanding to say,
“Half of it I used for fuel;
I even baked bread over its coals,
I roasted meat and I ate.
Shall I make a detestable thing from what is left?
Shall I bow down to a block of wood?”**

I include this for two reasons. First, Genesis 1-2 is, as a whole an argument against idolatry. And, secondly, I want to make clear that it is not the false gods, or the idols which are demanding the food but the demonic forces behind them. The false gods don’t exist, they are delusions—sometimes quite strong delusions. And the actual idols are created things which don’t feed nourishment in actuality. The demons have to convince people that they exist, make demands and are to be worshipped². In this, Satan’s ploy is never far away. His invitation to “take and eat” of the forbidden fruit is a perversion of the Lord’s invitation to the feast.

Everything we have is a gift of sheer grace. The eternal character of God, his self-giving love overflows and fills reality with his works. Marduk and his divine companions

² What can be confusing is that the Scripture details food offerings in temple worship—grain offerings (first fruits and thanksgiving) and animal sacrifices. Furthermore, there are meals offered to God (Abraham, Gideon, Manoah), These tend to be gifts, not demanded. They are consumed by fire, not ingested and not digested. It is doubtful that Jesus in his glorified body ate out of nutritional need—but rather for fellowship and identification with his disciples. Moses in Exodus 24:9-11 is described as sharing a meal with God and the elders of Israel!

want their portion, our God sets a table for man. His love made food! Food reveals his love nature. But the creaturely nature of God's image is manifest in eating. The un-fallen Adam had to eat, a new born infant has to eat! Food is life!

However, **Man does not live by bread alone.** Food, which is dead, cannot apart from the miracle of nourishment give life. Like the miracle of the seed dying to come to life and to bear fruit. Germination, gestation and digestion, all miracles, all reveal how God dependent we actually are . . . **man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God!**

Adam's all plant menu is a revelation, too. Influenced by Greek and Roman thinking, moderns. Christian included, tend to assume that ideas, and thoughts and other functions of reason are somehow superior to the body and its desires. We are so big into the head, into rationality and mentalism—even though the mind is amazing! However, there is telling omission in the Genesis narrative: nothing is said about the mind, the brain, or thinking in Genesis 1! What if contemplation is not an once more human than eating a full meal at a banquet?! God did not serve up the Pythagorean theorem with sprinkles and syrup in the Garden for our menu. Adam didn't ask Eve for a bowlful of superstring theory so he could have seconds on new physics! Wave and particle theory weren't among the condiments and relativity sauce was nowhere to be served. No. We would starve on such a diet!

What God did offer was good, glorious, wonderful food! Adam did not arise from vivified dirt counting, calculating and measuring although he was fairly soon observed detailing taxonomies and naming the animals. But he did rise hungry.

Hunger is basic, real, and good. Sin, of course, perverts our taste—may even lead us to eat trash, or to want to taste forbidden fruit. Preferring it to the tree of life? But sin does not alter the fundamental realities of human desire. And our hearts follow where our treasure is—if we desire heaven above all, we will desire Christ who dwells there. If we desire fast food and sugar, earthbound things will be most attractive. Hence our lives are directed by our hungers. We are so designed that our hunger for food, properly pursued, will lead us at last to **the Giver**. Adam was offered a world to eat. He and his wife were expected to enjoy God in enjoying the bounty and provision, the food.

Adam's unfortunate dietary habits did him in. He didn't sin in eating. No, he ate forbidden fruit, and he did so disobediently, and without thanksgiving to God—**as if the food he ate could lead him into wisdom and godlikeness**. Adam sinned by suspecting the generosity and goodness, the adequacy of what God wisely had provided. He sinned by treating Yahweh's table as if were no different from Marduk's table.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. They shall be filled. And we shall find rest when we hunger for the One who opens his hand to satisfy the desire of every living thing **more than for the things in his hands**. The critical issue is rightly directed desires—will we so eat as to fellowship with God, so as to enter into the communion of the Trinity, of the church universal and triumphant? We need to redirect our hopes for our honor into hopes for the honor of God. We need to seek His

wisdom and value it above all other knowledge. ***Our hunger needs to be for the true bread of life sent down from heaven . . .*** which the Lord of the Table offers us freely.

All that exists is a gift from God to man. All that exists exists, including food, to make God known—to draw us into sharing, into communion, into fellowship with him and each other. The Lord's Supper as a gift of food discloses the meaning of life, the meaning of all human life. Here we see how **every good and perfect gift comes from him on high**. Hear how he calls us, invites us to partake of the Word Incarnate . . . invites us to satisfy our hungers in him, with him. Will you come, drink, eat, partake of the Gift that is the Giving God?

Amen