

Richard Davenport  
April 1, 2018 – Easter Sunday

Text: **Isaiah 25:6-9** (NIV)

<sup>6</sup> On this mountain the Lord Almighty will prepare  
a feast of rich food for all peoples,  
a banquet of aged wine—  
the best of meats and the finest of wines.  
<sup>7</sup> On this mountain he will destroy  
the shroud that enfolds all peoples,  
the sheet that covers all nations;  
<sup>8</sup> he will swallow up death forever.  
The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears  
from all faces;  
he will remove his people's disgrace  
from all the earth.  
The Lord has spoken.  
<sup>9</sup> In that day they will say,  
“Surely this is our God;  
we trusted in him, and he saved us.  
This is the Lord, we trusted in him;  
let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.”

America as a culture is obsessed with food. We all are. It's not necessarily a bad thing. We need to eat, after all. It wasn't that long ago you could find a Betty Crocker cookbook in every household. Many families still have one, perhaps one passed down through generations, dog-eared, with notes in the margins, well-worn pages of favorite dishes. Now you have cooking shows for nearly any type of food, well-known chefs showing you all of the tricks of the trade in a step-by-step fashion. There's even a whole tv network dedicated just to food.

One of the benefits to having such a multi-ethnic culture here in America is you can experience many different cuisines. Just here in Cincinnati you can find German, Italian, Chinese, Japanese, Thai, Mexican and many others, particularly in places like Over the Rhine. There are grocery stores in every neighborhood and they are always on the lookout for new kinds of food people will buy and enjoy. The big club stores like Costco where you can get stuff in bulk and save yourself some time and money. That doesn't even consider Jungle Jim's, where you can find just about anything you can imagine, and probably a few things you wished you didn't know about.

That's fine though. You've got to eat. You may as well enjoy what you're eating. It

used to be meals were family time and everyone got together to share in the meal together. That's not so much the case anymore. Now dad works late and grabs dinner at the office. Your son has soccer practice. Your daughter has a study group. Everyone kind of goes their own way. The fast food industry stepped in to help deal with that. Now you can hit Burger King and grab something to eat while you're out and about. More and more places are popping up in the "fast, casual" restaurant category, aiming at giving you good food quickly. If food is just something you need to do and stopping to eat would slow you down, now you have some options that let you manage eating with your on-the-go life.

However you look at it, food has a central place in life. Next to sleeping, eating is probably what you spend more time doing than anything else. That's why good chefs can make a lot of money. Good cooking isn't a talent everyone has, so those who do it well are providing a service everyone needs.

However you view food, you have to eat. When you're not eating right, you'll start to feel run down and sluggish, upset stomach. When you don't eat at all, you'll start to get headaches and eventually much worse, though we rarely let that go too long. Whether you eat on the go or whether you sit down for the family meal, your life revolves around food. It's part of how you plan out your day. What you eat, when you eat it, who you eat it with. Without it, you die.

Food is more than just something we do to live, it's one of the features our whole society is built around. Most social get-togethers are centered around food. Birthday parties have cake and ice cream. Superbowl parties have snacks of all sorts. Most holidays are all about food, Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving dinners. For the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, it's grilling out. Cincinnati has Oktoberfest and the nine or so other months of the year when there isn't Oktoberfest going on, there's often some other, smaller event like Sausage Fest or Goetta Fest, Italian Fest or other ethnic cuisines.

Our holidays center on food. Our social events center on food. Any kind of big celebration is bound to have food involved. But, even more, for thousands of years the most basic picture of family life has been everyone sitting down at the dinner table to share a meal together. A number of sociologists argue one of the reasons many kids are having trouble as they get older and not developing good relationships is because families don't do things as a group anymore, particularly sharing that special time around the dinner table.

It's a bit of a wonder then, that the first things Jesus does after inaugurating his ministry at his baptism, is go out into the wilderness to fast for 40 days. Food is good for you. You need it. What possible benefit can there be to avoid food? Intentionally not eating food was something the medieval monks did all the time and Luther called them out on their foolishness. They aren't going to earn God's favor by intentionally inflicting pain and grief on themselves. All it does is let them feel secure in their false righteousness and it will ultimately condemn them.

Yet, Jesus does it. Not just for a day or two or even a week, but 40 days. But, Jesus is doing it, so it has to be good, or at least ok, right? You end up scratching your head to try and make sense of it all. God created food, so he must want us to eat it, and yet Jesus chooses to stop eating for a time.

The way we think about food is an indication of a much bigger problem, a terminal problem. We eat because we need to eat. We eat because we need to live. Maybe we enjoy food, maybe not, it doesn't really matter. We have to eat, because if we stop, we'll die. The same could be said of many other aspects of our life. If we stop going to work, we don't get paid. So we work because we have to. Sometimes there are ways around that, but ultimately if the money isn't coming in any more, we won't be able to provide for our basic needs and the needs of our family and we'll die.

We treat our emotional needs the same way. I need to find that certain, special someone to spend my life with and if I don't I'll wither away and die of loneliness. Without him or without her, I'll die. I need to keep that relationship with my kids. My kids are my life and if something were to happen to them or if they were to cut me off and never talk to me again I'd have lost my whole reason for living. My kids are my life.

For all of that, Jesus still goes off into the wilderness. He goes to fast. He goes to be alone. He goes to separate himself from all of those things we think are necessary to sustain life. He goes out into the wilderness and lives there for 40 days and at the end of it all, he's still alive. This isn't some mystical new-agey program to meditate away all of your physical and emotional needs. Jesus is proving life doesn't come from food. It doesn't come from your job, or your relationships or anything else. Life comes from God alone.

Jesus spends much of his ministry redoing the things Adam should have done. Jesus is tempted by Satan but doesn't give in. That first sin of Adam and Eve has many facets and

implications. In addition to the pride they had in thinking they could be like God, they also sought life in creation, rather than in the Creator and, in so doing, chose death over life.

It seems odd to be talking about food on Easter. The passage from Isaiah today is all about food, a banquet no less. God is encouraging his people to eat. He wants them to come and find life. The same God who abstains from food in the wilderness is now offering to his people. He wants them to have it. Can he not make up his mind? If he's trying to tell us something, he shouldn't make it so hard to understand. If there were some great celebration to at least explain why he is giving this feast it would make more sense, a victory celebration for a battle or something. But no, Isaiah 25 doesn't really have any of that. He's simply describing who God is and what he does. One of the things God seems to be interested in doing is having a feast for his people.

When read together with the Easter story, it all fits together quite nicely. Jesus is baptized and goes out in the wilderness and then continues on with his ministry. He endures a lot of hatred and wrath, betrayal, abandonment, pain, and finally death. He is reliving Adam's life, all of the consequences of sin that came from first eating the fruit. Every step of the way, God does what Adam and Eve should have done, all the while taking the consequences of what they did. He does not seek food to live. He does not cling to anything in all of creation in order to survive. Even when he comes right up to the end, he trusts in his Father to provide.

If Good Friday had been the end, it would have validated the way we all think. If we aren't struggling every day to provide ourselves with the things we need for this life then we are lost. But Easter proves otherwise. Jesus trusted in his Father and was not disappointed. God gives life even to one who is dead. Nothing else in all of creation can do so great and wondrous a thing. Christ leaves the grave behind because he already had what gives life.

Jesus' own words, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be added to you," take on their fuller meaning here. Isaiah tells of God setting a feast for his people, for us. He tells of God wiping away sorrow and death. He tells of people trusting in God and not being disappointed. When we put God first, none of these other things matter because God takes care of them for us.

Jesus lives out Adam's life right up to the end, suffering everything, even death. But he also shows God is mightier than sin. Jesus trusts his Father and is not disappointed, not even death can hold back the power and mercy of God. Trusting in God for life, everything needed

for life is provided by the one who created it all.

Today God sets a feast for us. God provides what only he can give. He gives us what he knows we need and gives it to us freely. We don't need to struggle and fight for it, like we do when we look for it elsewhere. It is here for you. Everything Jesus gained by reliving Adam's life, all the way up to the end and beyond, is found here at the table for you. Food, yes. But, also forgiveness, grace, strength, and life. So trust in God and come to him. Come to him for food. Come to him for love and comfort. Come to him for life and you will find all of these things and more are yours.