

Sermon #16

## Fasting and Feasting

God is full of goodness and joy, and He wants us to be like Him.  
God is the author of feasts and celebrations.

He is not stingy or snooty.

He is inclusive of all who choose to share His joy.

The Lord also is faithful to give us what we need  
to live each day well and whole.

God is good, very good.

He knows how to feed His people;

He knows just what they need.

All who follow Christ, the Good Shepherd,

will be content and whole, strong and healthy.

Don't you want to be counted among His sheep?

Fasts and feasts are part of the religious rituals that are  
fulfilled in Christ. Let's seek Jesus' teaching on these  
matters and resolve to put them into practice.

## Fasting

Fasting is abstaining from eating; the rejection of food and drink.

Here is what Jesus said about how to fast:

<sup>16</sup>“Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.  
<sup>17</sup>But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, <sup>18</sup>so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who *is* in the secret *place*; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.”

Matthew 6:16-18

Jesus also explained when to fast and when not to fast:

<sup>14</sup>Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast?”

<sup>15</sup>And Jesus said to them, “Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast. <sup>16</sup>No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and the tear is made worse.

<sup>17</sup>Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.”

Matthew 9:14-17

Therefore, the time to fast is when you do not see, feel, sense or know that God is with you; when you have strayed from His paths and have gotten lost in darkness.

There is usually no need to fast if you are following Christ and are in communion with Him.

Yet if you do fast, He says to do it without others knowing, and you will be rewarded by God.

**God, speaking through the prophet Isaiah, made it clear that the spiritual meaning and dimension of fasting is more important than the physical dimension of fasting:**

<sup>6</sup>*Is* this not the fast that I have chosen:

To loose the bonds of wickedness,

To undo the heavy burdens,

To let the oppressed go free,

And that you break every yoke?

<sup>7</sup>*Is* it not to share your bread with the hungry,

And that you bring to your house the poor  
who are cast out;

When you see the naked, that you cover him,

And not hide yourself from your own flesh?

<sup>8</sup>Then your light shall break forth like the morning,

Your healing shall spring forth speedily,

- And your righteousness shall go before you;  
 The glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.
- <sup>9</sup>Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer;  
 You shall cry, and He will say, ‘Here I *am*.’  
 “If you take away the yoke from your midst,  
 The pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness,
- <sup>10</sup>*If* you extend your soul to the hungry  
 And satisfy the afflicted soul,  
 Then your light shall dawn in the darkness,  
 And your darkness shall *be* as the noonday.
- <sup>11</sup>The LORD will guide you continually,  
 And satisfy your soul in drought,  
 And strengthen your bones;  
 You shall be like a watered garden,  
 And like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail.
- <sup>12</sup>Those from among you  
 Shall build the old waste places;  
 You shall raise up the foundations of many generations;  
 And you shall be called the Repairer of the Breach,  
 The Restorer of Streets to Dwell In.”

According to this passage, God is a lot more interested in us abstaining from evil than He is in us abstaining from food. He also says that the rewards for doing what is right are great.

## Feasting

Feasting is dining on a sumptuous meal that has an abundance and variety of food and drink. Usually it is accompanied by celebration and fellowship.

Here is what Jesus said about feasting:

“When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor rich neighbors, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid. <sup>13</sup>But when you give a feast, invite *the* poor, *the* maimed, *the* lame, *the* blind. <sup>14</sup>And you will be blessed,

because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just.”

Luke 14:12-14

This passage shows us that we are not following Christ’s instructions concerning our church suppers and social dinners. We can remedy that by inviting the poor, maimed, crippled and blind people in our community to our church dinners.

Here is a sign-up list that will be posted in the main hallway of the church building. {Hold up the list for all to see}

Please add the name of anyone you know or have heard of in the community who is poor, maimed, crippled or blind. We will send invitations to them prior to each supper we have at the church, and the cost of their meals will be covered by the tithes and offerings of church members, just as God told the people to do in *Deuteronomy* chapter 12.

On a personal level, any time you have an urge to have a dinner party invite some of the people on this list rather than your business associates, friends and family members. Then you will be following the instructions of Jesus and certainly will receive His blessing.

Whether the feast is at your home or at the church, use the occasion to celebrate God’s goodness to us all. Rejoice and enjoy His presence, being thankful for all He has done for you!

There is also a spiritual dimension to feasting that is more important than the physical feast; and that is to feast on the Bread of Heaven and the blood of the new covenant, both of which are found in Christ.

### **What are some ways that you and I can feast on Christ?**

-Read His words as recorded in the Bible.

(A red-letter Bible is especially useful for this.)

-Seek to hear His voice, the Spirit of Truth (Counselor) within you.

-Look for His beauty and love all around you and in you.

-Obey what He tells you to do.

- Speak His words and believe them.
- Ask God for what you truly need, and believe that He has provided.  
    Let Him show you the truth about yourself,  
    and who He has called you to be.
- Rest in Him. Breathe deeply of the life He gives.
- Confess your sins, forgive others and receive forgiveness for yourself.
- Celebrate, enjoy and rejoice in Him and His goodness, love, truth,  
    mercy and power.

“I, the Lord, AM your Shepherd.  
    You shall not want if you follow Me.  
I provide you with all you need to do My will each day.  
    No devil or angel can take it away.  
Put your trust in Me, and receive your food from Me.  
I know just what you need,  
    and it will bring health to your mind and soul.  
Rejoice in My goodness, eternal love,  
    and share My goodness with others.  
Do not be greedy and gluttonous;  
    give freely just as I give to you.  
Do not hoard or fear; I AM with you always.  
Look to Me for all you need; put your trust in Me.  
Feast on My goodness, peace and joy;  
    do what is right and good.  
Then your feasts will continue,  
    and your daily bread will be supplied.”

Notes: