



August 15, 2021, Worship Sermon
" The Feast of Life "
Delivered by Rev. Stephen Keiser

Proverbs 9:1-6; Psalm 34:9-14; Ephesians 5:15-20; John 6:51-58

My health insurance company is always sending me newsletters and emails with helpful advice about maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Obviously, insurance companies want their members to stay healthy, because that reduces the medical expenses they have to pay. So, I am constantly getting articles about diet and exercise and other approaches to getting healthy. I remember one article they sent about making good choices for eating. For each meal of the day, there were photographs of two options for eating: one healthy and one not so healthy.

- For breakfast, there was a picture of a jelly donut on one side of the chart. On the other side, was a bowl of healthy cereal and milk, covered with fresh blueberries, and accompanied by a glass of nice pulpy orange juice. Each of these breakfast choices has the same calories; you choose which would be more satisfying.
- For lunch, there was a picture of a Snickers bar on one side or a big bowl of turkey vegetable soup, carrots, celery, and whole grain bread. Which would you choose?
- For dinner, you could choose between a greasy cheeseburger or a beautiful chicken breast accompanied by a mound of brown rice and lots of fresh green beans.
- And if you wanted a snack while sitting in front of the TV, you could choose between six little potato chips or a big bowl of popcorn – no butter.

When I saw all these choices side by side on the chart, it seemed like a no brainer. The Snickers bar might be fun for about five minutes, but then I would feel gross; the turkey vegetable soup would be both delicious and satisfying.

So, on Friday afternoon, when I was hungry for a little snack, guess what I ate: a frozen Snickers Bar. I'm not proud of that. All my pants and shirts are too tight already. But if health and happiness are about making good choices, then it's going to take more than a little education to spur me into making the right decisions. My whole brain circuitry needs to be rewired, plus I need a coach to walk around with all day long and make sure I do the right thing.

The Book of Proverbs is like the newsletter I receive from my insurance company. It is full of advice for how to live a happy and healthy life. In our reading from Proverbs this morning, Wisdom offers us some good diet choices: "Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed. Lay aside immaturity, and live, and walk in the way of insight."

There is no doubt that we human beings would greatly benefit from a diet that consisted of the food of wisdom. Wisdom is something we desperately need in our world today. We have

acquired tremendous power: we can change the climate; we can blow up mountains; we can manipulate DNA. We have tremendous power, but that doesn't mean we have the experience necessary to use that power wisely... and that's scary.

We're already seeing the impact of climate change in terms of extreme and unpredictable weather. Scientists have been telling us for decades that this was going to happen. We had the knowledge, but we didn't have the wisdom to use that knowledge in a way that would benefit life for ourselves and our children. We've been foolish. We've been eating the Snickers Bar when we should have opted for the turkey soup.

It doesn't help that there are powerful people in business and politics who do not want us to make wise choices. There are people who benefit from our foolishness and not all of them are drug dealers and casino operators. So, between my own inclination to make foolish choices and the influence of people who benefit from my foolishness, wisdom can be pretty hard to attain.

But even if one does act wisely, that is no guarantee that one is going to live a happy and healthy life. Life is full of examples of people who do all the right things and still suffer.

In our Gospel reading, Jesus invites us to feast on something even greater than wisdom. Jesus invites us to feast on his own life.

The idea of eating Christ's flesh and drinking Christ's blood is not particularly easy to stomach. It certainly wasn't easy for the people who were listening to Christ say these words 2000 years ago, because after he says these words, most of them are so revolted that they leave.

The language of eating and drinking shows how intimately Jesus wants to live in us. The bread that we eat becomes a part of our bodies. In the same way, Jesus wants to become a part of us.

And remember, according to the Gospel of John, Jesus is God becoming human flesh. God became human flesh in Jesus of Nazareth 2000 years ago and God becomes flesh in you today. That's why we share this meal week after week, so that through this bread – the body of Christ – and through this wine – the blood of Christ – God becomes flesh in us. And God is life... eternal life.

Because Jesus offers us his own life as our food, we don't need to be afraid of anything else that claims the power to destroy life. We don't need to be afraid of those who benefit from our foolishness. They can cause suffering; don't get me wrong. They can lead our society down the wrong path. But they cannot take away the eternal life that we have through Jesus abiding in us.

You who feast upon Jesus Christ have life that death cannot destroy. So many are so hungry for this feast. Like one beggar showing another beggar where to find bread, let us welcome others to feed upon Jesus Christ and live.