

FIVE FORKS BRETHREN IN CHRIST CHURCH

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SERMON: *Man does not live on Bread alone...*

SERIES: *FATAL - Gluttony*

SCRIPTURES: *Proverbs 23:20-21; Exodus 16; Matthew 4:1-4*

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**Credit to Scott Scruggs series from "Sanctuary"; Tony Campolo "Seven Deadly Sins";
Scott McKnight*

Well good morning, it so great to worship with you. Want to say welcome to all of you in this room and to so many gathered on-line, at home, tuning to the live stream.

(SERIES GRAPHIC) We've been talking about 8 vices (closely related to the concept of the 7 deadly sins), that are a common condition in the human heart. We see them in the lives of Biblical characters, Jesus talked a lot about them.

And I want to begin with a question for you this morning. **What would you say is our society's most acceptable sin/vice?**

Proverbs 23:20-21 - ²⁰ Do not join those who drink too much wine or gorge themselves on meat, ²¹ for drunkards and gluttons become poor, and drowsiness clothes them in rags.

C.S. Lewis said,

One of the great achievements of the last hundred years has been to deaden the human conscience on the subject of gluttony (he's being facetious), so that by now you will hardly find a sermon preached or a conscience troubled about it in the whole length and breadth of Europe. [The Screwtape Letters, p. 83].

According to the Barna research group, Christians, are often known for pointing out, vices...areas of failure in others. We are quick to condemn things like...drunkenness, arrogance, using certain language, the way someone dresses...all the while, content to ignore and overlook, this most common vice in our society and in our own lives.

So let's talk about gluttony and what exactly it is.

I. What is gluttony?

At it's core...**gluttony is an excessive desire for food or when we choose to over-indulge in the pleasure of eating.**

A couple of important clarifications:

When it comes to dealing with eating habits, this is a complex, sensitive subject.

One, **A person's weight is not an indicator of gluttony or lack-there-of.**

While gluttony is related to overeating or overindulgence in eating, it is important to keep in mind that a person's weight has numerous contributing factors, including diet, genetics, physiological make-up, upbringing and many more. So let's acknowledge the complex nature of weight factors.

The truth is, people from all over the weight spectrum can suffer from gluttony. I will be the first to confess to you, this shows up in my life.

Second, while gluttony is related to excessive over-eating or over indulgence in eating...I want to acknowledge that there are also eating disorders related to "not eating enough" or "under-eating". And these also are serious issues.

When it comes to our eating habits, as you begin making choices, it may require **talking to health care professionals** & nutritionists to make sure you are eating an appropriate diet.

A. Is it the quantity of food?

Well, yes & no.

In one sense you can't really begin putting numbers on how much constitutes gluttony and how much doesn't.

Eating is good, it's one of the basic necessities of life. God made us to eat. Even throughout Scripture "feasting" is a common symbol for the Kingdom of God. You need to eat.

So when it comes to how much you can't put numbers on it. Because our physical bodies are all different. My kids eat less than I do, because their bodies are smaller and they tend use less energy in a day.

And then even thinking about myself...I'm a runner.

The amount of food I eat often depends on the amount of running I do. If I'm not running at all, I don't use nearly as much energy and need less food intake. On the other hand if I'm training for a half-marathon and running significant mileage my body needs more food.

Every single one of us, our physical bodies are different and so we don't want to get into legalistic rules trying to put numbers on, how many carbs or calories are ok and how many aren't. Let's acknowledge we can't put a specific number on it.

At the same time, that doesn't mean any amount goes. There is such a thing as "overeating", eating too much, not knowing when to stop. The word gluttony, actually comes from a Latin word, meaning **to gorge oneself**.

You know on Thanksgiving Day, when you stuff yourself to the brim and for a moment it's glorious, but then you quickly start feeling uncomfortable, can't sit up straight, start to fall asleep. There is an aspect of gluttony related to overeating.

I'm always been reminded of Jesus' most famous prayer. The Lord's Prayer. **(Matthew 5)** Have you paid close attention to the words and thought about what they might mean on a practical level for how much we eat?

"Our Father in Heaven, Hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven..." What's the next phrase?

"Give us heaping mounds and an overabundance, way beyond what we need or what will fill our stomachs that we may gorge ourselves on pleasurable foods"...no what does Jesus say,

"Give us today our daily bread..."

Give us enough for today.

There is this sense in Jesus prayer of simplicity and frugality in the daily sustenance of our eating...it's good to eat, we need to eat but we shouldn't have too much, too much isn't good for us.

There's a fascinating story in the Old Testament (**Exodus 16**)...God has led the nation of Israel out of Egypt. Remember the 10 Plagues and across the Red Sea? And Israel finds itself in the desert as they march towards their new Promised Land. But they

soon find themselves hungry. And so God miraculously provides food to sustain them with these instructions...

16“Everyone is to gather as much as they need. Take an omer^a for each person you have in your tent.” (An omer is about 2.5 liters...think of a 2 liter bottle of soda. That’s your meals for the day.)

17 The Israelites did as they were told; some gathered much, some little. (There are 5 people in my family so we would gather much. But you may be single or you may just be two in your home...so would gather less.) **18 And when they measured it by the omer, the one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little. Everyone had gathered just as much as they needed.**

19 Then Moses said to them, “No one is to keep any of it until morning.”

Why? Here’s the crux of the issue with gluttony. The point of the food was to sustain them for that day and then help them recognize God as their daily provider, even in the desert. Each day a reminder God is there to provide. Trust him.

If you take extra, it means...you don’t trust God is gonna provide tomorrow.

So the crux is...**do you trust God?** Gluttony is related to trust and security in God. Gluttony is when I begin to place my sense of security in food. Food becomes god in my life.

Philippians 3 - 19 Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things.

Food has become their source of security and contentment, a place reserved for God.

How do you think the Israelites did on this test of not taking extra food? About as well as we do.

20 However, some of them paid no attention to Moses; they kept part of it until morning,

I trust God, but I'm gonna pig out anyway, indulge anyway, I'm gonna take more than what is necessary....because food makes me feel good, it gives me a sense of control, fulfillment...security. What if the food doesn't show up tomorrow?

And the result was, when they woke up in the morning all of their excess food...

...was full of maggots and began to smell.

Part of the issue is that in eating too much, over-indulging...we are finding a sense of ultimate security...in food! And that sense of security should be reserved only for God.

Remember with pride, we said the problem with pride is that I make myself god. I put myself on god's throne. My security is in me. When we overeat, because it makes us feel good and we want that pleasure and that feel good security, we have turned food into an idol. That's gluttony.

B. Is it what I eat that matters?

Well, yes & no.

Enjoying different kinds of food is also good. God is the one who gave you taste buds. I used to always encourage our teens, don't get stuck in a rut always ordering the same old thing off the menu. God gave you taste buds, try all different kinds of food and enjoy the tastes, flavors etc of the world God gave us. Eat suishi!

That said, it is really important to become aware of the different kinds of food that you are putting in your body and how they affect your physical body.

Just on a really practical level, one of the reasons many of us over-eat or over-indulge is because we do not understand the effects that certain foods have on the body.

In his book, “Overfed But Undernourished”, Dr. H. Curtis Wood describes a condition he calls **“hidden hunger”...an abnormal craving for food, caused by a diet that is inadequate and lacking in certain elements the body needs.**” (Campolo 110)

We tend to think in very simple terms when it comes to our eating habits. If I’m hungry I just eat something until I feel full...whether it’s broccoli or 3 cup cakes. Or If I’m thirsty, I just drink anything until I feel quenched. Whether it’s water or coke.

But our bodies are not that simple. There are certain kinds of foods, nutrients, minerals, vitamins that our body needs in order to feel satisfied and to be nourished. When we don’t eat a healthy diet, it leads to over-eating and all other kinds of health problems, because our bodies are not getting what they need.

A number of years ago, back when I was still in college there was a documentary film that came out called, “Supersized” **(Pic of Documentary Cover)**.

It was a gentleman, Morgan Spurlock, talking about the American tendency to eat quick and easy...Fast Food and the effect it can have on our body. And so this guy spent 30 days eating nothing but FastFood. Kind of over exaggerated the tendency.

As a result, the then-32-year-old Spurlock gained 24 lbs, a 13% body mass increase, his cholesterol went through the roof, and he experienced mood swings, sexual dysfunction, and fat accumulation in his liver.

It took him fourteen months to lose all the weight he gained during this short experiment.

Now, listen, I'm not saying Fast Food is wrong or evil. I eat fast food. But we need to be knowledgeable about the kinds of foods we're putting into our bodies and how it is effecting our bodies.

We want our food, how we want it, when we want it.

In particular, we need to be especially careful when it comes to food that causes addiction.

And I know immediately we think of alcoholic addiction. It's an important topic and alcohol addiction should be on this list.

But let me point us to two other items that in the last couple of years, I have personally have become far more aware of. Two common food addictions that we need to be really careful about.

Caffeine and Sugar.

Most of us are addicted to these and we don't even realize it. Sometimes coffee, is referred to as the "Christian drug." I will be the first to tell you, this is really hard for me, because I drink a cup of caffeinated coffee every morning. I told you this stuff hits home in my own life.

Consuming these items on a large scale, gives us a high, very similar to the high you get from drug addiction. Most of the food items we eat have sugar in them, and spike our blood sugar levels. Even things like, white bread and milk, which are favorite of mine by the way. And when we eat them we get an sugar boost. It makes us feel

good. When we don't get that sugar boost for a while, your stomach starts to feel empty, hungry. And you need another shot.

The danger is that we become dependent on that high. It starts as a physical response. But as we become dependent on the physical response, these addictions then begin to effect our attitudes and emotions...often without us realizing it.

And if you don't believe me that this is a reality. Just pay extra close attention to the sugar content of the foods and drinks you are eating this week. And try to eliminate the sugar and see how you start to feel by the end of the week. It will be like going through withdrawal, because of our dependency on that blood sugar spike.

And this lead to one of the primary reasons, gluttony is a fatal vice...

C. Gluttony affects our physical well-being.

With all of the fatal vices we've been talking about so far, we might say we've been using "fatal" as a figurative concept. Sloth is fatal. Envy fatal. Lust fatal. We mean fatal to your character, your spirituality.

But gluttony happens to be that vice that is fatal to your physical body and life. When we don't eat within the bounds of God's guidelines for our physical bodies, it can take years off of the end of your life. The earliest church wrestled with this issue...Paul writes to the church in Corinth....

¹² "I have the right to do anything," you say—but not everything is beneficial.

¹³ You say, "Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy them both."

(In other words, people were saying, I can eat whatever I want it doesn't really matter, it's just food, what really matter is my spiritual life not my physical body and diet.

But Paul says, your physical body, is tied to your spiritual life...what you do with your physical body, impacts who you are, your character.)

19 Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; 20 you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.

We talked about this last week, one of the very first gifts God gives to you is a physical body, physical life existence.

It is our responsibility to treat that body well.

All that to say, if you're not eating a healthy, balanced diet it can be fatal.

II. What do we do about gluttony?

A. We look at the life and teachings of Jesus.

Jesus lived a life of moderation and simplicity.

Jesus was born in a guest room, laid in an animal feeding trough.

Jesus grew up as the child of a carpenter. The fact that Jesus parents, went to the temple and offered doves, instead of a lamb, confirms they were not from the wealthier class of society.

Jesus himself was an itinerant preacher. Traveling from village to village.

When Jesus shared a meal with his disciples it was bread.

When he taught his disciples to pray it was...

“Give us today our daily bread...”

There is even one example in Scripture of Jesus being encouraged to indulge in eating or at least to find a sense of security and comfort in food. Matthew 4...

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted^[a] by the devil. ² After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³ The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.”

He's telling Jesus, eating will make your problems go away. It will make you feel good. It will give you the “sensation and pleasure and comfort and the security” you desire. He's saying Jesus place your trust in food.

And isn't that how our own appetites cry out to us. Eat this. It will bring you the security and comfort you desire.

⁴ Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

What is Jesus saying? He's saying, ultimately, security, pleasure, comfort come God. God is the sustainer and source of security in life.

The answer to gluttony, begins by telling your stomach, your taste buds, your appetite they are not god in your life. Jesus is your primary source of security and satisfaction in life.

Which leads to the second aspect of dealing with gluttony...

B. Moderation in our own lives

Scott McKnight says it like this, **“We perhaps need to remind ourselves that the followers of Jesus were not wealthy with pantries and refrigerators filled with food.”**

Become aware of the amount of food you eat and stop eating sooner than you think you need to.

Can I tell you one of the lies we have started to believe in our society is that we have made cleaning off our plate a golden rule.

Doesn't that happen so often? You put too much food on your plate. But now you say to yourself, "well I don't want to waste it" so I'll guess I'll keep eating til it's gone.

Or we tell our kids, "make sure you eat everything, so we don't waste it."

And it's often with this well-intentioned sense or idea that, *"some people around the world don't have enough to eat, and here I am throwing food away. So we believe that it's better to eat it up anyway."*

I want to free you from this thinking. While it is true that there are people around the world who do not have food to eat and that is a very serious problem for us, and that as followers of Jesus we should be on the frontlines in resolving...the reality is, your choosing to either eat or not eat the food on your plate has very little to do with actually solving the worlds hunger problem.

My older brother, who was very health-conscious even back in high school used to say this and I think he was right: *"Once you have put too much food on your plate, you can either waste it by throwing it away or you can 'waste' it just as equally, by eating it unnecessarily and making your body unhealthy. Either way you're "wasting it."* Better to throw it away and waste it in the garbage, than to put your body in harm from eating too much.

Best solution to avoid throwing food away unnecessarily is to just start out by taking smaller portions to begin with.

16'Everyone is to gather as much as they need. Take an omer^a for each person you have in your tent.'"

At our sermon meeting we even started to brainstorm ways we can help ourselves to take smaller portions. One person suggested, they use smaller plates. I thought that was great. That forces to take less to start with. Someone suggested drinking more water regularly, helps you to stay filled up as you approach mealtime. Slow down your eating. Part of the reason we gorge is because we stuff in as fast as possible, but if we slow down and allow our bodies to realize they are being filled up, helps us to eat less.

That's really the solution to waste.

So, last thought...

C. World Hunger

I mentioned earlier that one of the fatal consequences of gluttony is the way it ruins physical health.

But there is a second fatal consequence of gluttony. The sad reality is that our over-eating, indulgence...gluttony is often at the expense or neglect of those who have much less.

- Hunger is the world's number 1 health risk. It kills more people every year than AIDS, Malaria and TB combined.
- 1 in 7 people go to bed hungry.
- 925 million people do not have enough to eat.
- Undernutrition contributes to 5 million deaths of children, under the age of 5 each year.

Our gluttony is part of the world's hunger problem.

Our food addictions are part of the world's hunger problem.

We have grocery stores stocked to the brim with food, we gorge, we overindulge all the while, people around the world are starving.

I say this not to point fingers and beat us up. I am part of the wealthy, powerful, privileged elite North American system.

I say this, because, I'm in this with you...and as followers of Jesus, it is not ok for us to ignore.

And I know thinking about what it would take to begin changing the system is almost overwhelming.

But as with most things in life start small. Start with one small little thing, maybe smaller plates this week or here's another suggestion.

I want to encourage you this week...select one item that is part of your weekly (maybe even daily) diet and find out more about it. This is like going back to high school. You have a research assignment this week.

Take a little more time to read the nutritional label. Find out nutritionally what is in that food item. Find out how much sugar or caffeine is in that item. Find out what kinds of effects that food has on your body and your health.

And then, if you are able try to find out the process by which you receive that item and how it effects the global economy and the world's hunger problem. I told you I drink coffee almost every morning. I started reading a little bit more about the coffee industry and how it is that I get my cup of coffee every day. Have you heard of something called Fair Trade groceries? If not you should look it up. But I've started

to buy a different kind of coffee, because I feel convicted about how it is that I get coffee.

After you have learned a little bit more about this food that you enjoy, perhaps consider fasting from that food/drink for a certain period of time as a way to remind yourself that it is not food that brings ultimate security in life...it is Jesus. You could live without this item. And you would actually be ok.

“For man does not live on bread alone...but our security is ultimately in God.”