

COMFORT FOOD



Scripture:

Luke 10:38-11:1

³⁸Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. ³⁹She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. ⁴⁰But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me.' ⁴¹But the Lord answered her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; ⁴²there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.'

¹He was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, 'Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.'

John 12 1-3

¹Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. ²There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. ³Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.



THE BIBLE IS ALL ABOUT FOOD

You'd think that all the people in the Bible did was prepare food, eat it and then talk about it.

The Bible is a cookbook: what to grow, what to eat, what not to eat, how to serve it, how to bless it. Jesus turned water into wine at a wedding. Jesus fed the 5,000. Jesus had dinner with Mary and Martha. The Jews celebrated the Passover. Shouldn't we be talking about "more important things?"

My good friends Bill and Barbara Wahlert are visiting us this week. We have memories of the marriage of their daughter, and the baptism of a granddaughter. So what was the first thing we did when we got together? We started planning places to eat. We would renew our longtime friendship at Betty's Fish and Chips. From there we would figure out where the good vineyards are.

Our scripture is the familiar story of Mary and Martha. Martha fixed a meal for Jesus. Mary just sat and talked with Jesus. While Martha cleaned

up, Mary washed Jesus' feet and put foot lotion on them. Martha didn't think that sounded fair. Jesus used this story to recognize that both food and hospitality are needed. We need "Marys" and we need "Marthas," and of course, we need Jesus.

EATING OUR WAY THROUGH SCRIPTURE

As we gnaw through scriptures, there are lots of "food channel" programs to select from:

- Eve was seduced with an apple. (Is that stretching it? Was it really a Gravenstein or the fruit of the tree of knowledge?)
- The Lord looked with favor upon the gifts of Cain, wheat and grain, but with disdain upon the gifts of Abel, the production of livestock. Food produced the first murder. Why do you think that is?

- The Lord provided manna in the desert for the hungry Hebrews. (Exodus 16) Can we depend upon the Lord do the same for us?
- Leviticus instructed the Hebrews not to serve milk and meat together (not mixing the meat of the calf with the milk of its mother), and to avoid shellfish (scavengers). Do you know why that is? Leviticus has been called a book of the origins of public health.
- Jesus used food in symbolic ways: Jesus reluctantly turned water into wine as his first miracle at a wedding because his mother requested it, and he turned five loaves and two fishes into enough for five-thousand of his closest friends because they were hungry. Some of the greatest miracles were about food.
- But Jesus most compelling lesson about food is that Jesus said someday we will all eat together. And this is where we are going today: You are invited to a banquet of good things. The Kingdom of God would be like a big family gathered for a sacred meal. The invitation is broad, the food is sumptuous, and the fellowship will be keen. Come to the table of the Lord.

THE SCRIPTURES ARE ABOUT COMFORT FOOD – THAT IS FOOD WITH SPECIAL MEANING.

What is comfort food? "Comfort food" is simple, familiar food that is usually home-cooked. Comfort food brings some form or measure of well-being, or easy satisfaction, usually from being warm and filling such as a dish made with a staple food, or basically pleasing such as sweets or desserts. Comfort foods may also involve foods that have a nostalgic element either to an individual or a specific culture.

HEAVEN'S BANQUET

If the Kingdom of Heaven is like a banquet, and if the banquet will bring us comfort, then each of us has a role in making the banquet happen. We

might have a role in production, some in preparation, some in service, hosting, and planning. Preparation for a family meal was a matter of days if it were a large meal. Travel might be involved, and the meal that could last for several hours was the focal point for many other activities. Preparation for the banquet with the Lord can take us a lifetime.

EATING IS A CONTRACT

But the point of the Heavenly Banquet is the comfort, not the food. Feasting together is a contract. A good response is expected.

So here's the point. God has invited us to a banquet, and we need to be good guests. We need to assist in the preparation and the clean up, we need to bring something to the banquet, and we need to chip in on the cost of the meal and utensils.

**We sit at the Lord's Table
not to fill our own stomachs,
but to share the comfort
and pass it on.**

OUR CHARTER

The Lord's Supper is our charter. Let's remember our contract:

- Everyone is welcome at the table.
- We gather in faith to help members and others grow.
- We gather in service – we are dedicated to living the gospel by serving one another and neighbors in need.
- Our charter is our community – we seek to build acceptance and belonging among those who worship here.
- We gather for mutual support – we seek to cooperate, and to grow in interdependence.

- We dine together in trust – we foster a climate of mutual respect and trust among staff, leaders, and members.
- We are nourished for mission outreach. We are committed to being a spiritual presence in our community by our charter.
- We gather for excellence – we believe that things worth doing are worth doing well.
- Our purpose is to heal hurts, to renew hope, to rebuild dreams. This is a place to equip people for spiritual fitness to live balanced lives, and bring balance to others.
- Our short term strategies may change, but our values and purpose have not changed since the time of Jesus Christ.

MAYFLOWER

I'm reading a book called "*Mayflower.*" I'm not very far along. It is a book that mentions some of my ancestors, so it's interesting to me. After the preparations had been made, a drama of who would travel to America in the 17th Century began to unfold. Half of the passengers were Puritans, and the other half was loosely referred to as The Strangers. What they had in common was that they were as unreligious as the Pilgrims were pious.

The Mayflower landed at the tip of Cape Cod in November 1620, having fallen short of their goal of reaching the mouth of the Hudson River, near New Amsterdam. But before they landed, they realized that the welfare of everyone on board would depend upon the establishment of a community in which some people would grow food, and others would create households and practice farming skills. John Carver was elected to govern. There would be mutually agreed goals, and laws were created so that everyone worked for the good of the entire colony once they left Cape Cod and hit the Massachusetts mainland at Plymouth. So before he permitted the passengers to disembark from the Mayflower, William Brewster had a committee draw up a document for each family to sign.

THE MAYFLOWER COMPACT:

In the name of God, Amen. We whose names are underwritten, the loyal subjects of our dread (aka revered) Sovereign Lord King James, by the Grace of God.

Having undertaken, for the Glory of God and advancement of the Christian Faith and Honor of our King and Country, a Voyage to plant the First Colony in the Northern Parts of Virginia,

do by these presents solemnly and mutually in the presence of God and one of another, Covenant and Combine ourselves together into a Civil Body Politic, for our better ordering and preservation and furtherance of the ends aforesaid;

and by virtue hereof to enact, constitute and frame such just and equal Laws, Ordinances, Acts, Constitutions and Offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general good of the Colony, unto which we promise all due submission and obedience.

In witness whereof we have hereunder subscribed our names at Cape Cod, the 11th of November, in the year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord King James, of England, France and Ireland the eighteenth, and of Scotland the fifty-fourth. Anno Domini 1620.

This is the forerunner of the Constitution of the United States. It is a fundamental contract to live and work together in peace despite our differences. These settlers consented to follow the compact's regulations for the sake of food, community, safety and survival. This contract saved their lives. It became the first statement of regional government in the colonies.

THE LORD'S SUPPER IS OUR CONTRACT

Comfort food symbolizes our contract with each other.

**It will save our lives and our churches,
if we will all sign on to promote the
peace and purity and unity
of our little colony above all else.**

If we cannot get along with ourselves, what kind of easy target will be to those around us?

Our contract requires us to sacrifice some of our own freedom for the good and safety of everyone.

The disciples were as diverse as the Pilgrims, and so are we. They were as different as fishermen and bureaucrats. But their survival depended upon the bond that was symbolized in the banquets, meals and celebrations that brought them together.

THE WORLD IS GOING TO HELL AND WE ARE HERE TO REPORT IT

There are some television networks that would like to have us believe that the world is going to hell, and that they are going to be there to report it. The worse they can portray it, the more we will need them to tell us how bad it is. We are in a vicious cycle. We want to blame someone. We want to insist that we are victims, and that we have been given a bad shake. I believe this is destructive to our contract with each other.

Breaking bread together will do more for our country than demonizing others who are different than we are, or even our enemies, because we know that the Kingdom of God is like a Heavenly Banquet to which all are ultimately invited. It is our best hope.

**Our contract with each other,
as children of God, beckons people
into helping, healing and teaching
professions; it provides
strength in times of crisis;
and offers spiritual health, even when
physical healing is not possible.**

Criticism is easy. Comfort is sometimes next to impossible.

THE GREATEST GIFT

The greatest gift is to provide comfort when

others are in need. The right comfort, at the right time, in the right quantity. That's part of our contract.

It is not food that comforts, it is the one who prepares and serves it. Food feeds belly, but love and hope feed and comfort the heart. We can live for a week without food, but cannot go a day without hope.

Comfort food is not one product, but two. Comfort and food – together they are a bond.

So here is what the disciples agreed to because of the comfort they found in sharing the Lord's Table.

BEAR ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS – FROM GALATIANS, CHAPTER 6:1-10

My friends, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Take care that you yourselves are not tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. For if those who are nothing think they are something, they deceive themselves. All must test their own work; then that work, rather than their neighbor's work, will become a cause for pride. For all must carry their own loads. Those who are taught the word must share in all good things with their teacher.

Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow. If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh; but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit. So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up. So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith.



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