



## Maundy Thursday | Which food do you usually choose?

### *Which food do you choose? Earthly or Spiritual?*

#### **Intro |**

Now I'd like to start my message by asking a question, that I DO NOT want you to raise your hand to answer.

Why? Well because, if your answer is anything like mine, it would be way too embarrassing.

If I were to offer you a bowl of freshly cooked vegetables, maybe spinach, and a bowl of salty freshly fried potato chips, which would you choose?

Even if I was having a good day, where I was making wise food choices, the smell of salty chips would surely tempt me!

Salty, savoury food is very tempting, as are sugary, lemony desserts!

As many of you know I made a commitment to pray morning, noon and night during lent, focussing especially on praying for the salvation of souls here in Southlakes.

As the weeks drew on, I found this commitment quite burdensome. It meant organising my schedule in a whole new way, stopping work early in the middle of the day, and turning the TV off at night so I could honour my commitment.

About a week ago, as the 7 O'clock reminder alarm went on my phone, I happen to be watching one of my favourite shows, *Antiques Roadshow*.

I knew if I was to keep to my prayer commitment I needed to switch it off to pray. I have to confess, I was a bit late getting to prayer, because I wanted to see how much the rare hat contraption was actually valued!

Nevertheless, a few mornings later my journey through the Bible had me at the book of Numbers.

This book tells the sacred story of the nation of Israel as they journeyed through the wilderness.

During that season, God promised to provide for all of their daily needs and He literally rained down food from heaven for them. It was called manna – a flaky, wafer, bread like substance.

The manna was called "the bread of heaven". It was a daily testimony that God was their Provider and Sustainer, a reminder that without him they would wither and perish. It was also spiritual food that reminded them of God's goodness (Deuteronomy 8:3, 16).

But it didn't take long for the Israelites to get bored with the manna.

They wanted some variety, some different flavours.

So, I'm reading along, and I came to the passage that said,

*"Then the Egyptians who had come with them began to long for the good things of Egypt. This added to the discontent of the people of Israel and they wept, "Oh, for a few bites of meat! Oh, that we had some of the delicious fish we enjoyed so much in Egypt, and the wonderful cucumbers and melons, leeks, onions, and garlic! But now our strength is gone, and day after day we have to face this manna."(Numbers 11:4-6)*

To be honest, I kind of understood their complaint – who wants to eat the same meal for 40 years?

But, then I read that the complaining of the Israelites greatly angered the Lord (Numbers 11:10). And although he provided meat for them, a whole month's worth in fact, the Lord regarded their preference for the 'luxuries of Egypt' as a rejection of Him (Numbers 11:20).

Why am I mentioning all this?

As I read this passage, from within my spirit, I heard,

"When you secretly prefer to watch TV or a movie over spending time in prayer and my word, are you not doing the same as the Israelites? Are you not preferring the tasty but toxic food of the world, rather than the heavenly, spiritual food that I provide to nourish your soul?"

**Point 1 | Too often we can be like the Israelites who preferred the spiritual food of slavery, rather than God's nutritious heavenly food that nourishes our souls.**

OOOhh! Did that voice convict me!

I immediately confessed that yes, too often, I choose the world's spiritual food: because it always comes in such a tantalizing, easy to digest, form.

Some of you are saying, "what on earth is she talking about?"

Please allow me to unpack it.

In our daily lives we have a smorgasbord of food to choose from: food that is either healthy or unhealthy.

We all know that a healthy meal is one that provides nutritious protein, vitamins and minerals to our physical body – so that our health may flourish.

But there are also unhealthy food options: usually it is highly processed food, which is void of any nutritious value.

... Kind of like the choice between poached eggs and wholegrain toast for breakfast, or sugar laden fruit loops!

But did you know the same choice exists in the spiritual realm?

There is healthy spiritual food and there is unhealthy spiritual food.

God has provided for us healthy spiritual food which nourishes our soul.

But the devil, also called the god of this world, has stripped God's truthful food of all its goodness, and added toxic artificial colours and flavours, making it not just unhealthy, but downright poisonous to our souls.

It's still spiritual food, but it is dead food, devoid of all life and nutrition.

Too much of the world's spiritual junk food, makes our hearts sick, and we waste away from malnourishment.

So, every day we are faced with decisions: which type of food will we select?

Will we choose God's nourishing spiritual food or the world's poisonous junk food?

I confess, I often do not choose wisely.

## **Point 2 | God has provided healthy spiritual food in three flavours for us to feed on: (1) His Son Jesus, the bread of life, (2) His written word, the milk, (3) and the experience of the goodness of God's salvation**

The suggestion that God offers spiritual food for us is certainly not a new concept.

Even the earliest story in the Bible involves humans eating physical food which ultimately had a powerful spiritual connection.

Then as we read earlier, the Israelites were given 'bread from heaven' as a daily reminder of God's presence amongst them.

Let's look at the three flavours of God's spiritual food.

Then, you'll see the connection why I am speaking about this tonight, on Maundy Thursday.

We are about to participate in a heavenly spiritual meal – a meal where we partake of spiritual food, that is Christ.

So, the first and most essential of God's spiritual food is of course, His Son Jesus.

Jesus told us that it is essential we 'feed' on His body and 'drink' his blood. We do so when we eat the bread and drink the wine, as a sign we are totally reliant on his sacrifice of himself for our salvation.

In fact, Jesus told us, that unless we 'feed' on him, we cannot have eternal life (John 6:53-58).

That's why Jesus called himself 'the bread of life that came down from heaven' (John 6:41-42).

So, the first spiritual food which God has provided is His Son Jesus. This food is absolutely essential for our life – both our spiritual life and our physical life.

But there is another type of spiritual food, which anyone who has a sweet tooth, will love!

In Psalm 119, we learn that God's word is a "sweet taste in my mouth, sweeter than honey ..." (v103).

Also, a bit later in the same Psalm, the psalmist declares that God's Word sustains him (119:116)

That's why Jesus told the devil, "... *Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.*" (Matthew 4:4)

So ... clearly Jesus felt that God's word was so essential to human existence that it was just as important as physical food (also see John 6:63).

The truth that God's word is spiritual food is carried right through the New Testament (Hebrews 6:5, 1 Peter 2:3).

So, the second flavour of God's spiritual food is like 'milk' which is necessary if there is to be any growth and maturity in our spiritual lives (1 Peter 2:2).

But there is another type of spiritual food, of which we are called to feed on.

We learn about this food from Jesus when He was ravenously hungry.

He and his disciples had been travelling for a long time and they arrived at noon to a town in Samaria (John 4).

While the disciples went to buy food, Jesus had a wonderful conversation with a woman who was longing for water that would satisfy her thirst.

The outcome of the conversation was that the woman drank from Christ's living water and tasted God's refreshing goodness.

When the disciples returned, they urged Jesus to eat something (4:31)

But Jesus answered in the most outstanding comment,

*"I have food to eat that you know nothing about."* (v32)

Because the disciples had no idea what he was talking about, he explained,  
*"My food ... is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work."*(v34)

Jesus was living on the experience of God's goodness, and the sustenance that comes from walking in the will of God.

So, the third type of spiritual food God has provided is the experience of His goodness in our lives (see Psalm 34:8 and Hebrews 6:5).

**Application | The world can only offer poisonous food that reeks with artificial flavours and additives. To feed continually on the world's food is extremely detrimental to our spiritual health.**

But, that's not the only kind of spiritual food that we're faced with in this world.

Everything the world has on offer, the temptations of sin, the deceptive lies which contradict the truth of the word of God, are all laid out before our eyes, and our appetites, like advertisements which screen on our televisions.

When we 'feed on' the world's messages and lies, it is like we are 'feeding' on spiritual junk food – devoid of any nutrition and goodness.

So, it is up to us to decide upon what we will live and feed on.

Will we try to sustain ourselves on what the world offers or on what God offers?

Now, some of you are thinking, 'she's become a bit too spiritual!' Is she saying we can't watch any TV or movies?

No. I'm not saying that. That would be like suggesting we can't ever eat any of Rosemary's amazing cakes, or Margaret's delicious biscuits, because they are not as healthy as vegetables!

But ... just as we would never expect to exist solely on cakes and biscuits, we should not expect to grow spiritually if we are only feeding on the world's junk food.

Rather, God has provided us with nutritious spiritual food: This Son Jesus, the written word, and the experience of God's salvation.

Which food will you choose?