

# Sacred Food of the Highest Order

Hebrews 13:10-11

Halifax: 7 July 2024

## Introduction:

Today we will resume our sermon series from Hebrews 13.

- As it has been a few weeks, I will do a brief review.

We have been looking at our life's journey as Christians from sin to glory.

- It is described in Hebrews 12 as a race we run, looking unto Jesus as the one who has been so marvellously presented to us in Hebrews as our most excellent High Priest.
  - He is the only priest who is God in human flesh, the only priest who lives forever, the only priest appointed with an oath, the only priest who represents us in heaven at the altar not made with hands, the only priest with a sacrifice that has been offered that forever takes away our sin, and the only priest who has offered Himself as that sacrifice for sin.
  - We run this race to glory in our Father's house, looking to Him as our only sufficient provision, as our perfect example of endurance, and as the one who is able to help us go on.
- In Hebrews 13, we have been looking at God's instructions about how to conduct ourselves on this journey.
  - We are to let brotherly love continue, including reaching out to brothers we do not know, remembering prisoners, honouring marriage, and being content...
  - And now we are looking at how we are to maintain worship as we have been instructed which includes not getting caught up in rituals, but looking to be established by grace—grace that comes from looking to Jesus.
    - Today, we want to look especially at feeding upon Him as the one who is the bread of eternal life.

Our text today is Hebrews 13:10-11, but I will begin reading in verse 1.

- This is God's word. May He add His blessing to it.

**Heb 13:1-11: Let brotherly love continue. <sup>2</sup> Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so *doing* some have unwittingly entertained angels. <sup>3</sup> Remember the prisoners as if chain-ed with them—those who are mistreated—since you yourselves are in the body also. <sup>4</sup> Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adul-terers God will judge. <sup>5</sup> Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." <sup>6</sup> So we may boldly say: "The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?" <sup>7</sup> Remember those who**

**rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of *their* conduct. <sup>8</sup> Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. <sup>9</sup> Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines. For *it is* good that the heart be established by grace, not with foods which have not profited those who have been occupied with them. <sup>10</sup> We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. <sup>11</sup> For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp.**

Thanks be to God for His holy and infallible word. May we have ears to hear.

**I. Our text speaks of the food we have as Christians.**

- Verse 10 says, **We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat.**

A. This tells us that *we* have an altar to eat from.

1. It says that we have this altar that even the priests who serve in the tabernacle have no right to eat from.
  - The implication is clear that it is an altar that we *do* have a right to eat from.
    - Since it says that the priests of the Old Covenant *do not* have a right to eat from it, it implies that it is an altar that has food to be eaten.
    - And since it says that *we* have this altar, *we* speaking of Christians, it testifies that we are permitted to eat from it. We have it and they do not.
2. This is striking because the priests in the Old Testament had privileges to eat of many sacrifices that those who were not priests did not have the right to eat.
  - There were sacrifices such as the Passover, peace offerings, vows, and other offerings that ordinary worshippers could eat from if they met the qualifications (they had to be ritually clean and be professing believers), but there were others that only the priests could eat from.
  - The sin offerings and especially the offering for sin on the Day of Atonement were offerings that nobody including the priests were permitted to eat from.
    - So here is the altar that we have in the New Testament that has food that all believers are able to eat from.
3. Although the Jews may have boasted of all their ritual foods, we have an altar with food that is far superior to theirs.
  - Even though all the ritual meals of the Old Testament and the elaborate ceremonies are done away in the NT, we have spiritual food that is far better.

B. The food on this altar is Christ who was sacrificed for sinners.

1. We have been instructed in Hebrews that the altar on which Christ was offered was not a material altar in an earthly temple.
  - The altar on which He was sacrificed was an altar not made by human hands, eternal in the heavens.
  - His was no mere ritual sacrifice.
    - John Owen speaks of how silly it is to think that this refers to an earthly altar. If that is so, the Jews are right—the earthly altars that men erect today are inferior to the great temple and altar under the Old Covenant.
    - Hebrews is clear that the excellence of our altar is that it is not on earth, not temporal, not made by human hands, but eternal and spiritual.
      - So many churchmen have gone wrong in erecting altars made with human hands in their churches. God never appointed this.
      - They deserve not only to be mocked for their foolishness, but also rebuked for their disobedience.

2. We are also instructed in Hebrews that this New Testament sacrifice of which we partake is the only sacrifice that can take away our sins.
  - We are told in this book that God prepared a body for Christ and that the Son said, "I have come to do your will, O God," and that in doing so, He offered Himself to take away our sins.
    - It was one offering that perfected forever those who come to God by Him.
3. His blood is the blood of the New Covenant and His body is the sacrifice of the New Covenant.
  - It is the sacrifice that God had in mind all along.
  - He did not allow anyone to partake of the sin offerings in the Old Covenant including the priests.
    - As verse 11 shows us, those offerings were unclean and remained unclean. They had to be taken outside the camp and burned and those who handled them had to wash away their defilement before they came back into the camp.
  - Christ is different because although He became a curse for us and was crucified outside the camp as one who was unclean,
    - Because He was righteous, He was received up into heaven and His sacrifice was accepted for the purification of His church. He did not remain unclean.
    - He had become polluted with our sin, but because He was righteous, He was received and now all His people can feed on Him for eternal life.
      - In other words, they have the benefit of His sacrifice.
      - The OT sin offerings ritually covered sin, but they could not themselves satisfy the justice of God for sinners. This was shown in the rituals.
      - They symbolically carried the sin away and covered it, but Christ actually brought eternal redemption to His people.
  - He is the superior sacrifice upon which we continually feast.

C. The eating that we do is spiritual.

1. "What is spiritual eating?" you will say.
  - It is partaking of Christ by faith described under the analogy of eating.
    - The whole idea of spiritual eating is that by faith we receive (or spiritually feed upon) the benefits that His sacrifice provides to us.
    - John Brown says, "It is, in plain words, our deriving from the sacrifice of Christ the blessings which it is intended and calculated to obtain. This we do by belief of the truth respecting the sacrifice. Believing that truth, we have the forgiveness of our sins, the sanctification of our natures, and spiritual favourable intercourse with God as our reconciled Father. We have in Him the redemption that is through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins; we are washed and sanctified; we have access with boldness to the throne of grace."

2. Jesus told us plainly that this is what is meant by eating His flesh and drinking His blood.
  - In John 6:53-55 after saying: **“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed.”**
  - He then, seeing that they were offended, said: John 6:61-64: **“Does this offend you? <sup>62</sup> What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before? <sup>63</sup> It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and *they* are life. <sup>64</sup> But there are some of you who do not believe.”**
3. We receive those benefits (eat) by looking to Him in faith to receive them.
  - Jesus said that we must believe so that we actually receive the benefits (eat) that He procured for us.
    - We do not receive them by sinking our teeth into the flesh of Christ and sucking out His blood. That would be a reprehensible abomination!
      - As Augustine wrote: “If the saying be perceptive, either forbidding a wicked action, or commanding to do that which is good, it is no figurative saying; but if it seems to command any villainy or wickedness, or forbid what is profitable and good, it is figurative. This saying *“except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood ye have no life in you,”* (John 6:53) seems to command a villainous, or wicked thing; it is therefore a *figure*, enjoining us to communicate in the passion of our Lord, and to lay it up in dear and profitable remembrance, that his flesh was crucified and wounded for our sakes.”
    - When Jesus said that He was returning to heaven, **“What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before? It is the Spirit who gives life,”** He was indicating that His physical body by which we receive the benefit of salvation would not be on earth for us to eat and drink physically,
      - but that we would receive the benefit of His sacrifice by the Holy Spirit... it is the Spirit who gives life... the flesh profits nothing. One could eat His human flesh and drink His blood physically (perish the awful thought) and it would not benefit that one at all.
      - The benefit comes when we receive life from His sacrifice (His physical sacrifice is the source of our life and salvation) by the Holy Spirit—we receive it the way we need it—spiritually—not carnally with our palate and our belly, but for the salvation of our souls.

## II. Now let’s take some time to consider how helpful this analogy of eating is to us.

- God has provided this analogy to help us understand that we need to actually receive the benefits that He provides for us through the sacrifice of Christ.
  - We are carnal and fallen.

- It is hard for us to understand spiritual things. God uses marriage to speak of our union with Him, and He uses eating to speak of our receiving of Christ's benefits as the one who was sacrificed for our sins.
  - Let's look three ways the analogy of eating helps us.
- A. First, eating depends on God's provision of suitable food.
1. God made us creatures that require food to live.
    - He also provided us with all sorts of food to eat.
    - He taught us that we must look to Him for our food and that we should thank Him when He provides it.
      - Over and over again in the pages of the OT, we see Him withholding food that His people might be brought to repentance and turn to Him to provide.
  - This is true of physical food. How much more of spiritual food
  2. He is the one who provides us with the spiritual food we need—in particular, Christ who was sacrificed for us.
    - The only way we can have the forgiveness, the new life, and the fellowship with Him that this food provides is by looking to the LORD to feed us.
      - We cannot nourish ourselves, we must look to Him to nourish us.
      - As with physical food, so it is with spiritual food.
  3. John Brown speaks of how we rejoice with the LORD in this provision of His for our nourishment and growth.
    - Brown says: “We are seated spiritually at the table of a reconciled Divinity. We feast on Him. That which sanctified His justice, magnified His law, glorified all His perfections, and gave Him perfect satisfaction, is that which quiets our conscience, transforms our nature, rejoices our heart. We find enjoyment in that which He finds enjoyment: ‘Our fellowship is with the Father.’ We hear Him saying, as it were, in reference to the sacrifice of His Son, ‘I am fully satisfied;’ and our souls echo back, ‘So are we.’ He says, ‘This is My Son, in whom I am well pleased;’ and we reply, ‘This is our Saviour, and He is all our salvation and all our desire.’”

TRANS> So the analogy of eating helps us to understand how God provides for our spiritual needs as He does for our physical needs.

- B. A second thing we learn: eating well is necessary for good health.
1. If we stop eating physical food, we will become weak and we will soon die.
    - This is also true of spiritual food.
    - Those who do not feed on Christ crucified are spiritually dead, and those who neglect this food will be spiritually unhealthy.
      - If we neglect Christ, if we do not read and take in His word; if we neglect the preaching of the word and do not actually feed on His words—actually take His truth into our lives so that it nourishes and transforms us—we will not flourish in our comfort, in our obedience, or in our delight of Him.
  2. We know with our physical eating that we will not be healthy if we eat food that is spoiled or poisoned.

- This is equally true with our spiritual food.
    - How often do find ourselves on the brink of temptation.
    - There is the temptation in all of its deceptive glory, calling to you and saying, “Come and feast upon me and you find great pleasure.”
      - There is the man with his porn.
      - There is the woman with her dreams of romance.
      - There is opportunity to get rich in an unlawful way.
      - There is that task that I don’t really need to do just now that will ease my conscience when I ought to be ministering to my brother or sister.
      - There is that desire to give into my fear instead of boldly testifying of Christ to my neighbour.
      - There is that entertaining video when I ought to be praying or reading God’s word.
      - There is that harsh word that ones to come off my tongue against my dear wife or my dear husband.
    - What will you do when you are on the brink?
      - Will you feast on Christ by doing His will, looking to Him for strength, or will feed on that sin, that fear, that selfish anger?
    - You know what will happen from the analogy of eating.
      - If you feed on Christ, you will grow spiritually strong and healthy.
      - If you feed on the flesh, you will be spiritually weak and unfruitful.
- C. A third thing we learn from analogy of eating: it requires effort. It is not automatic.
1. Consider all the effort that is expended for our physical eating.
    - Seeds must be gathered and planted. The crops ground must be prepared for the seeds, and it must be tended. The crops must be harvested. Likewise, animals must be nourished, cared for, and raised; then they must be milked or slaughtered. Then our food must be preserved and delivered. Then it must be prepared for eating, and then must eat and wash up after.
      - We don’t typically mind this effort, whether we do it ourselves or pay others to do part of it, because we enjoy eating; and unless we as sick, we have an appetite that makes us very much want to eat.
  2. Spiritual eating also requires effort.
    - We have to set out a course for our nourishment. God has commanded us to observe a holy convocation on the Lord’s Day—to assemble ourselves for worship.
      - We must plan our work around His day so that day can be consecrated.
      - He calls for our morning and evening sacrifice each day—we are to pray, to praise, and to receive His holy word.
    - Although this ought to come easy for us, it is often not so.
      - Even though we want to be faithful and know we should, too often we do not have an appetite for our spiritual food the way we do for our physical food... we are spiritually unhealthy.
        - This means that it requires much more effort that our physical eating.

- It helps to think about the danger of spiritual impoverishment, of a guilty conscience, of broken communion with God, of a poor witness to unbelievers, or the sin that we might fall into, of the chastisement and the detrimental effect our spiritual impoverishment will have on our children and those around us.
- Recognise that it requires effort.
  - Sometimes, as Christians, we seem to expect that spiritual nourishment should come without effort and sweat.
    - The truth is, it required more effort and sweat.
    - You must address yourself to it and you must labour.
      - It is not enough to sit in church or to read a passage and say a prayer if you expect to be spiritually nourished.
      - Nourishment only happens when you actually take in the benefits and blessings of Christ.
        - If you sit in a corn field, you will not be nourished.
        - You must eat the corn. You must take it in.
        - As Jesus said, you must take heed how you hear.

**Conclusion:**

And so my brothers and sisters, we have an altar where we have a right to eat.

- The LORD has provided us the best food of all—His Son, sacrificed for our sin.
- If we would have the blessing of spiritual life, eternal life—forgiveness, sanctification, and fellowship with God, we must eat this food.
- Expend the effort and this food will satisfy you and make you flourish in the LORD.

John Brown speaks of the privileges we have at our altar where, unlike the people and even the priests of old who could not eat of the sacrifices for sin, we may eat of the sacrifice of the New Covenant. Brown says:

- “You are permitted daily, hourly, without ceasing, to feast on the sacrifice of the incarnate Son of God, who suffered, the Just One in the room of the unjust, who gave Himself an offering of a sweet smelling savour in the room of the sanctified ones.”

That is what Brown says.

- And our Lord says, “Eat and your soul shall live”
- So eat, my dear brothers and sisters! Eat!