

Sermon 7

Topic: God Provides Food in Abundance, Part 1

Scripture Reading: 1st Timothy 4:4-5; Psalm 136 :25

“Everything that God has created is good; nothing is to be rejected. But everything is to be received with a Prayer of thanks, because the Word of God and the prayer makes it acceptable to God”. (1st Timothy 4:4-5)

“He gives food to every living creature; His love is eternal.” (Psalm 136 :25)

*All things bright and beautiful, all Creatures great and small.
All things wise and wonderful, the Lord God made them all*

*He gave us eyes to see them and lips that we might tell
How great is God Almighty who has made all things well.*

*The rain our crops to water and sunshine through the year,
The luscious fruits we gather. He made for us to share.*

*Majestic trees with flowers, bright yellow, red and green.
The lovely plants and gardens enjoyed by young and old*

*All things bright and beautiful, all Creatures great and small.
All things wise and wonderful, the Lord God made them all.*

(C. Francis Alexander .a.1848)

Food is a powerful symbol because it is so basic a need - life is not possible without food. When we eat together, whether we are feasting on our bounty or stretching our rations, we recognize our mutual need as bodily creatures. Eating together is an act of solidarity that binds us together. This is why so many traditions have rules about who eats with who. It is why family dinners are so important. It's why wedding parties include feasts.

Paul's idea that, *“Everything that God has created is good; nothing is to be rejected”* raises some questions: Does this really mean everything is good and permissible as long as it is received in the context of thanksgiving? We receive things correctly when we receive them as the gifts they are—with thanksgiving—rather than as though they were our rights. However, our food choices do not make us more righteous. We can refuse to eat certain things on the basis of health, but not greater spirituality! In other words, a person's diet, in and of itself, should not be used to judge a person's spiritual condition. (Romans 14:1-4)

In fact, we read in Genesis 9:3 God says this: *Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything.*

This sermon will not delve into the reason why the Apostle Paul wrote his epistle to young Timothy or the concerns which lie in the background of the text. However, we need to take this into consideration: our dependence on food also makes us vulnerable to manipulation, to suffering, to desperation, or to greed and gluttony. Yes, as passionate as we are about food, we are fundamentally incapable of providing it for ourselves, just as we are incapable of making the rain fall, or a plant grow, or the sunshine. Our food – our life – ultimately comes from God. He is always speaking, hearing, seeing, pursuing, and restoring His creatures to higher ideals about what we eat on a daily basis. So my friends, we do well to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits, humbly to implore His protection and favour, and acknowledge His divine goodness in our lives.

God gives food to all living creatures on earth and in the waters. This is because our lives are meant to have a ripple effect, so that others may feel the influence of our gifts of faith. Our gift of faith must lead us to have a power of purpose so that we will willingly accept the fact that God provides food in abundance for every living creature. My friends, we must at all times, and in all places, use our eyes of faith to see what is being done every day through the providence of God, who is able to meet the needs of the countless multitudes that are dependent on Him. Let it be remembered, also, that the needs of each insect, bird or fish is provided for, just as provision is made for individuals such as you and me. Who can take in a full view of the care, the wisdom, the benevolence of what is done every day by the Father of all in providing for their needs? Let it be remembered, also, that this has continued without ceasing from the foundation of the world and will be demanded until its close. Let us try to imagine what is necessary to be done to provide for the needs of all the dwellers in distant worlds – and who can form any proper estimate of the wisdom and the goodness of God? The universal goodness of God in feeding all His creatures is as worthy of praise and adoration as His special favours to every person upon planet earth. Because the Lord feeds all life, therefore we expect Him to take special care of his own family, for as the Psalmist has said, *“For his mercy endureth for ever.”*

Let us reflect on the following

First, **God’s abundance comes in unexpected ways.** When Jesus provides abundantly, he often does so through unexpected means. Our challenge then is to keep our minds open enough to receive the abundant blessing when it comes. We must resist the temptation to think that God can only provide in one particular way or through one specific medium. If we take that approach, we may be guilty of limiting God’s ability and doubting God’s authority.

Second, **God’s abundance may be immediate, or it may wait for generations.** In 1734 a hardy band of Moravian missionaries travelled from Germany to the island of St. Croix to set up a mission colony. In the first year, ten of the missionaries died. Eleven more came and nine died. By 1736, the survivors were recalled to Germany. But more missionaries came to St. Thomas, and they continued to come

until the Indies became a Moravian stronghold. While there will be occasions in which God's provision is immediate, sometimes it takes many years for God's abundance to appear.

Third, **God's abundance is not to be wasted.** In the story of the feeding of the Five thousand Jesus asked his disciples to collect the crumbs. (Matthew 14:13-21) There is a fundamental sense of good stewardship involved. It is appalling to see how much food is wasted on a daily basis, even in our own homes. God provides food in abundance; therefore, we have been given abundant blessings. God calls us to be wise in our use of the blessing, whether it is time, food, finances, or abilities.

We must also be the very aware and alert about the principle of abundance. God entrusted His creation to us and so we are God's stewards. It takes a community to engage and assist other communities in need; one community connects with another community. All of us together can make our space upon planet earth be very productive. Those who grow food and replenish the land, those who link communities together in partnerships, those who facilitate distribution of food, all have a part to play in our collective stewardship creating circumstances where true sharing can flourish.

Our Almighty God who provides food in abundance for every living creature, uses the circumstances of His word to guide and direct us safely along the pathway of our eating habits. Yes, that direction leads us to the right kinds of food which are beneficial for our bodies. Our response to that guidance must be high praises and thanksgiving at all times and in all places.

So, let us celebrate our food and our faith together. Let us see how we can partner with others in our congregations and communities in effective agricultural techniques. Yes! Let us honour the God who provides food in abundance for us by improving food security. When we do that, we are also improving health and wellness in the process.

*He only is the maker of all things near and far;
He paints the wayside flower, He lights the evening star;
The wind and waves obey Him, by Him the birds are fed;
Much more to us His children, He gives our daily bread.*

Refrain

*All good gifts around us are sent from heaven above
Then thank the Lord, O Thank the Lord for all his love.*

So my friends let us "Grow what we eat and Eat what we grow" as we continue to lavish praise and thanks to God. Yes! As we continue to be overwhelmed with the thought of God's mercy and grace as He continues to provide food in abundance for us.