

March 4, 2018

The Seven Deadly Sins
The Deadly Sin of Gluttony
Proverbs 23:1-3

Opening words: Here is a statistic you should never forget! 100% of people have sinned. That statistic did not come from the Barna Research group, or the Gallop Research group. That statistic came from the word of God, the Bible. Romans 3:23 says, "*All have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God.*" It is not open for debate. Sin is real, and we are sinners. Sin is not reserved for the law-breakers on the news. Sin didn't just happen in another time or place. Sin is not just found in the Bible. Sin is as close as your next breath. Let me say it bluntly, so you don't miss the point. You are a sinner! This is the Good News:

Lent is a time of spiritual renewal. It is a time to rediscover the person God intended you to be from the very beginning. It is not just a time to identify your sins, it is a time to take steps to eliminate your sins. Never forget it, we are striving toward perfection. On Ash Wednesday, I began my new sermon series, *The Seven Deadly Sins*. On that evening, I preached a sermon called *Taking Sin Seriously*. On the First Sunday in Lent, I preached on the first of the seven deadly sins, lust. Last Sunday, on the Second Sunday of Lent, I preached on the second deadly sin, greed. That brings us to today. My message is called *The Deadly Sin of Gluttony*. Our scripture reading for this morning is Proverbs 23:1-3.

Proverbs 23:1-3 When you sit to dine with a ruler,
note well what is before you,
² and put a knife to your throat
if you are given to gluttony.
³ Do not crave his delicacies,
for that food is deceptive.

Gluttony has been defined as, *a habitual greed or excess in eating*. If you will admit food is an important part of your life, say, "**Amen!**"

Let me begin with this story. When I was in Kentucky, I had a parishioner by the name of Fred Sharp. He was just a "good old boy", a tobacco farmer by trade. He was a faithful church member. He came every week, and every week, he did the same thing. As he was exiting the church, he would shake my hand, smile and say, "*Russ, now you have gone from preaching to meddling.*" Let me warn you now. This morning's message may cross into meddling. Orson Welles once said, "*Gluttony is not a private vice.*" Today, we are going to talk about food. If you wish this sermon was already over, say, "**Amen!**"

We find ourselves today in the Old Testament Book of Proverbs. It is classified with the other pieces of wisdom literature in the Bible. It stands with Job, Psalms, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs. Tradition tells us, Solomon wrote Proverbs around the tenth century B.C. Solomon's lineage is noteworthy. Solomon's grandfather was Jesse, so his father was King David. However, Solomon stands on his own. He will always be remembered for his wisdom. He knew what many in our time have forgotten: The wise life is the one lived with God. Our scripture lesson for this morning illustrates that wisdom. Solomon is telling us that there is more to life than food. Yes, it is needed to exist, but food alone is not enough. A greater priority in your life must be God. In verse three, Solomon says something that is painfully true: Food is deceptive. Let's just be honest.

Food is a big part of this church. Every time people gather, we feel the need to feed them. Food is all part of being hospitable. Just think about it for a moment. When we gather for the men's breakfast, we eat. There is a pile of French toast, mush, fried potatoes, scrambled eggs, and bacon. I love bacon! When the United Methodist Women come, there is a collection of wonderful casseroles. I always look for the deviled eggs. Maybe I shouldn't admit it, but I love deviled eggs. I don't know who makes them, but they do a wonderful job. When the community was here in the fall for a choir festival, the evening concluded with a mountain of cookies. I love cookies, especially peanut butter cookies. That night reminded me of our old Sunday night Lenten series. Every church specialized in a different dessert. We were known for our cookies. Mahoning Methodist was known for their pies. Boardman made everyone an ice cream sundae. I don't remember a single sermon from the series, but I do remember the pies. I love pie! Now, we gather on Wednesday nights for dinner, before Communion. Some don't stay for Communion. They are more interested in the physical food than the spiritual food. Some don't come if they don't like the menu. A few come to feast on the body and blood of Christ. I am for anyone who will cook for me. If it doesn't scream when I bite into it, I will eat it. When we lose a loved one, we gather in the fellowship hall and eat the bereavement meal, fried chicken and scalloped potatoes. I love fried chicken! At every baby shower, people eat. At every bridal shower, people eat. For years, I ate stuffed chicken breasts for dinner on the first Thursday of the month. I loved those stuffed chicken breasts! The last few months, I have eaten swiss steak on the first Thursday of the month. I love swiss steak! Last Thursday, March 1, the first Thursday of the month, I ate stuffed cabbage. Do you know what? I love stuffed cabbage! It was delicious. I could go on, but I won't. If it wasn't for this church's kitchen, I would be twenty pounds lighter. If it wasn't for this church's kitchen, this church would be poorer. Let's just be honest. Food is a big part of this church. You know the truth. Food is a big part of every church. That is not all bad, because when we eat, we socialize. When you cook in a group, we can socialize. Yet, what did Solomon say about food? Food is deceptive. With all the benefits of eating in church, there is a down side.

Food can be damaging to your physical health. Have you ever watched that show, *My 600 Pound Life*? Several years ago, Kathryn and I traveled to Italy with a group organized by the Youngstown State radio station, WYSU. It was a great trip! If you ever have a chance to travel to Italy, then go. I want to go back to Italy. The tour started in northern Italy and ran south. Along the way we visited some amazing places. Italy is filled with history, cathedrals, and priceless art. This may surprise you, but I do have a certain appreciation for art. One of the members in our group was a young woman who worked for the radio station. I don't remember her name, but I do remember she had a degree in art history. One day, I asked her a question I have always longed to ask. (I really just wanted to get a rise out of her.) This was my question, "Why are there so many paintings of naked women?" Without missing a beat, she responded, "Because, men have always liked looking at naked women." (I know, I am bordering on my lust sermon.) Then, she asked me a question. She said, "Russ, do you know why all those nude women in the paintings are plump?" I didn't have an answer, so she told me why. She said, "Their excess weight showed they were wealthy. The poor were always viewed as thin. The poor were starving; the rich were well fed." Can I ask you a question: How many wealthy people do you know? Listen to the next line. Food has the potential of ruining your physical health, and food has the potential of ruining your spiritual health too. Food itself isn't a sin. Food, like money, is amoral. However, food can become a problem when it disrupts your relationship with God. That is why it is considered one of the seven deadly sins.

Food can be damaging to your spiritual health. May we never forget, we are not a restaurant, feeding the masses. We are a church, which exists for one reason, to make disciples for Jesus Christ. In other words, we are supposed to be preparing people for eternity. Through the eyes of God, nothing else really matters. Have you ever been guilty of gluttony?

Crossroads came up with a list to help you answer that question. This is their list:

- 1. You eat too soon** – In other words, are you consumed with what you will eat next? (Genesis 25:29-34)
- 2. You eat too expensively** – In other words, are you more interested in the creation than the creator? (Numbers 11:4-6)
- 3. You eat too much** – The people of Sodom were guilty of eating too much food. (Ezekiel 16:49)
- 4. You eat too daintily** – Perhaps, food is too important to you? (1 Timothy 4:3-4)
- 5. You eat too eagerly** (see Genesis 3:6)

That list came from a December 14, 2016 article entitled *Is the Sin of Gluttony Really that Important?* So how did you do? Are you a glutton? Is food damaging your relationship with God?

Years ago, during the season of Lent, I wanted to try something new. I work hard on my sermons and I am always trying to do something new with them. I decided to form a sermon discussion group. The idea was simple. I would generate a list of questions based on the sermon, as we ate sandwiches. I ordered a sandwich ring to feed the crowd.

At noon, on the First Sunday in Lent, I assembled my group to discuss my outstanding sermon 😊. There were about twelve of us. I was ready to dig into my hard-hitting questions, because they were so outstanding. However, before I could ask my first outstanding question about my outstanding sermon, someone asked me a question that got us off track. She asked, "Russ, where did you get this sandwich tray?" I told her, and then she asked, "What did you pay?" I didn't have a clue, so someone ran out of the room and started rifling through the trash can looking for the receipt. When the prize was found, the price was announced, and the woman who asked the original question reacted in disgust. She reprimanded me for wasting money and announced she would cook a better, cheaper lunch next week. (She had combined the two goals within every church: saving money and eating.) By the time we were done with our food discussion, there was no time left for my outstanding hard-hitting questions.

The next week, she came with her food. She was correct. It was good and cheap. Someone asked for the recipe, which triggered another fascinating discussion about cooking. Once again, there was no time left for my outstanding hard-hitting questions on my outstanding sermon. The same thing happened the third week, so I gave up. The group never met again. Can I tell you the truth? I have never tried to compete with food since. Solomon was right!

Food is deceptive. I think it is safe to say, food is a complex topic. There is nothing wrong with food, until it damages your appetite for God. Do you remember the definition of gluttony? It has been defined as, *a habitual greed or excess in eating*. Never forget it. Gluttony is one of the seven deadly sins. This is Lent, a time to repent. And all of God's well-fed people said, "**Amen!**"