

TASTE AND SEE

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COC

Feb. 17, 2021

Script. Text: *"O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusts in Him."*

Psa. 34:8

"For He satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things."

Psa. 107:9

"Then Jesus declared, 'I am the Bread of Life. Whoever comes to Me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in Me will never be thirsty.'"

John 6:35

"A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed."

Prov. 11:25

"Jesus answered, 'It is written: Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.'"

Matt. 4:4

"Gracious words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones."

Prov. 16:24

"How sweet Your words taste to me; they are sweeter than honey."

Psa. 119:103

"The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The decrees of the Lord are firm, and all of them are righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much fine gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb." Psa. 19:9-10

I. GOD'S WORD IS A DELIGHT FOR US; BOTH AS A THING OF SUBSTANCE AS WELL AS A SOURCE OF ENJOYMENT —

A. In fact, the Hebrew Writer declares, *"For the Word of the Lord is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."* Heb. 4:12

B. The goal and aim of the *"Living Word"* is to testify of *Jesus Christ* —

1. *"You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that testify concerning Me."*

John 5:39

- C. The goal of the N. T. Scripture is to see the **Person of *Jesus*** emerge from its pages —
1. So that our *friends*, our *neighbors*, our *community*, our *nation*, our *continent*, and ultimately our *world*, say **YES** to ***Jesus*** —
 2. And the only way people who are unfamiliar with ***Jesus***, will say **YES** to ***Jesus***, is to see ***Him*** because we are willing to bring them to ***Him*** —
 3. The *Gospel* is deliberate in its *power*, *influence*, and *force* to reveal ***Jesus Christ!***
 - a. The *Gospel* illustrates in candid color the difference between merely "***searching the Scriptures***" and "***coming to Christ.***" —
 - b. ***Jesus*** said, "***come to Me.***" **John 5:40**
 - i. We know from both the **Pharisees** and the **Sadducees**, that it is possible to "***search the Scriptures***" yet be unwilling to "***come to the Lord.***"
 - c. The **Pharisees** and **Sadducees** both had contact with Scripture ***yet would not*** accept

the **Lord** as their **Messiah** Savior and come to the **Lord**. And it is **only** the **Lord Jesus** who can give **eternal life**.

D. In our post-Christian world, there is no greater force that is more *effective* in its influential, saving power, than that of the **gospel of Jesus Christ** —

1. By its nature, it creates space for **His anointing** to work, and where **His anointing** is allowed to work, it comes to set men and women free from the bondage of sin —

a. **"lifting off of our shoulders the burden of our sins and destroying every yoke in our life"** — Isa. 10:27 WEH

E. The *effectiveness* of the **Gospel** is the reality that in it we discover our Purpose, our Love, and our sense of Community — (to **Belong**)!

1. Everybody is looking for **PURPOSE** —

2. Everyone seeks to discover **LOVE** —

3. Everyone wants to **BELONG** —

G. **God** designed the **Gospel** to work in our lives through the **intimacy of fellowship** and the **dynamics of community** —

1. Why? *"Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."* Rom. 5:5

H. So, the stunning work of the **Gospel** is designed to reveal the chemistry of true community be revealing *"unity in diversity at the Table of Commonality."* —

1. Our **Evangelism** is only as good as our **Table Manners** —

2. And our **Table Manners** are an exhibition of our *culture* (ethos) of **Hospitality** —

I. **Jesus** said to us, *"Go and make disciples of all nations."* — That's the **Great Commission**

1. **Question:** How are we as a church 'doing' at this **Great Commission**?

a. This is **The Question** the church is tasked with answering —

2. How are we doing at **making disciples**?

a. How well are we growing in our faith in a virtual reality?

3. **Growing in faith** is **No JOKE** ——— It's the compelling command of **Jesus Christ** to us!

J. It is noteworthy to remember that **The Great Commission** is our **Response** to **The Great Commandment** —

K. *"Jesus answered, 'The most important is, 'Hear O Israel: The Lord our God is One. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."* Mark 12:28-31

L. So, the Gospel works where its **followers** are obedient to **Jesus'** Command and Commission —

1. To the degree that we **"go and make"** is the degree to which we **"grow in faith."**

M. The way one grows in the Lord - the way we feed ourselves is by leading people to faith in Jesus Christ —

1. This is the way we are designed to grow in our faith and we are stretched into ministry!

II. THE GOSPEL OF JESUS IS, AT ITS CORE, AN INVITATION INTO A 'NEW CREATION' ADVENTURE —

A. In the **Gospels**, we are invited into a journey from the ancient paths of nomadic wanderers seeking for a country **whose builder & maker is God** —

1. In the **Gospels**, we discover that we are *aliens* to 'true love' & *foreigners* to true 'community'

2. In the **Gospels**, we find a majestic highway of holiness cut through the bi-ways of a sin-spoiled, homesick souls —

3. In the **Gospels**, we realize that we are all grimacing prodigals in hopes of finding our way home ———

B. As **Foreigners** to the ***Love of Jesus***, and **Strangers** to ***His Gospel of Good News***, we were *aliens* drowning in the loneliness of our **Adam-shame** —

1. We shed tears of *hopelessness*, not knowing the **One** to turn to —
2. But, when we received the call "***to come unto Me***" — in a moment, *in a twinkling of an eye*, the world that was so filled with our troubles, at once became Sacred Ground —
3. **Why?** Because we were **invited in?** **Into?** **Inside?**
4. And, when we *entered*, we found in **Him** our ***Refuge*** in which our hearts were stilled & our souls were soothed — & there time & troubles faded into irrelevance —
5. **Why?** Because we met the **Host** whose **Love** prepared for us the **Ministry of Hospitality**

C. **Hospitality** has the power to change the atmosphere for the soul-weary —

- D. **Hospitality** transforms a world of snow, ice, broken pipes, & no lights — into a world **SACRED** with the warmth of a fire & the soothing grace of a hot Cup of Cocoa —
- E. **Hospitality**, borne out of our **Gospel Experience** & in concert with **The Great Commission**, invites us to Partner with Love, to minister to God's Prodigal Children —
- F. Love doesn't require an exclusive **Six-Course Meal** —
1. Love knows that hearts are revived & people are brought to life because our **Hospitality** was intentional & every act of kindness was curated with Love —
 2. At the **Table of the Lord**, we are nourished in our souls in places we don't realize we are starved.
- G. At the **Table of Gospel Hospitality**, spiritual bonds are formed through gifts of food, togetherness, & the gift of Presence prepared by Intentional Love!

H. **Intentional Love**, practiced & communicated with **Gospel Hospitality**, uncovers the deeper longings of those assembled at **The Table** —

1. **God** is Intentional about our **Gathering** —
2. **He** uses each of our Encounters as an Opportunity to uncover our Deepest Needs & mollify our hunger —

I. At **The Table**, when we gather **to do life together**, we discover that our longings for connectedness & friendship are fulfilled —

J. At **The Table**, we satisfy those aching desires for rich relationships by knowing & being known —

III. **HUNGER RESIDES IN EACH OF US** —

A. When we exit our mother's womb, the umbilical cord connecting us to our mother (our life source) is cut, severing our constant nutritional source, & from that moment on - we are perpetually hungry!

B. Infants hunger for safety & security —

- C. Children starve for guidance & knowledge —
- D. Adolescents yearn for acceptance & understanding —
- E. Adults crave all manner of things - power, success, recognition, affirmation, belonging, community ———
1. At **midlife**, we long for impact & influence
 2. At **twilight**, we crave good health, stability, & grace to finish well.
- F. Every stage of human life stokes our deeper appetites — for inherent in each of us is the perpetual craving, constant gnawing, longing to find meaning & purpose ———
- G. We yearn to know that **God** still cares & the details of our lives really matter.
- H. We hunger to know and to be known —
- I. We hunger for others to accept us —
- J. We hunger for someone to love & cherish us —
- K. And just as food was created to quench our natural hunger, at **The Table** we also create a

place where **God** can meet us and fill our hearts —

IV. **WITHIN THE FIRST THOUSAND WORDS OF THE CREATION STORY, GENESIS UNFOLDS THIS REALITY THAT GOD CREATED US (humanity) TO BE DEPENDENT ON FOOD** —

- A. **God** could have designed us to survive on any element **He** could choose, but **He** designed us (our bodies) to depend upon food as a necessity —
- B. Food would provide more than nourishment to mankind, it would become a doorway to the Divine Purpose of God & the Gateway to Transformation for men —
1. Through *food*, the Israelites will break free from their unhealthy upbringing —
 2. Through *food*, the Israelites will grow in dependence on & trust in **God** —

3. Through *food*, the Israelites will discover new ways to think & talk about **God** —
 4. Through *food*, the Israelites will experience the goodness of **God** together —
- C. In fact, in life's most crucial conversations, including the defense of Mary of Bethany with her alabaster jar & **Judas' betrayal**, all take place surrounded by *food* —
- D. **Jesus** would reveal **Himself** as foodstuff: the **Bread of Life**, the **True Vine**, the **One anointed with Olive Oil**, & the **Sacrificial Lamb** —
- E. **Jesus** reveals **Himself** to the heartbroken backsliders at **Emmaus**, when **He's** blessing their *food* —
- F. I see something here — **God** used *food* to open **His** people to **Divine Possibility** —
1. And because **He is the same yesterday, today, & forever**, **He** wills to work for us in like manner today —

G. When we gather around **The Table** to eat, **God** wants to nourish more than our bodies: **He** wants to nourish our souls with unparalleled joy & supernatural community & Divine Presence —

H. There is nothing greater in life than to experience the **Presence** of the Resurrected Jesus —

1. The **Risen Jesus** commissioned us (**His** followers) to **"go and make disciples of all nations."**

2. **This is our calling!**

I. You see, together with the **Command** comes a promise: **"I am with you always."**

1. The resurrection is the life-changing reality that **God** promised you, that as you go about fulfilling **His** commission, **His Presence** (*the Spirit of the Resurrected Jesus*) goes with you.

J. **Matthew's Gospel** starts by stating that **Jesus** is **"God with us"** & in the last verse of the

Gospel, **Jesus** affirms that **His** eternal ongoing Presence ***will be with all His followers*** —

1. To those who believe & obey **His** command, **He** promises, ***"I am with you always."***

Matt. 28:20

K. At **His** Table, we not only Encounter **His** ***Food***; we also encounter **His** **provision** —

1. ***"Whoever eats of this Bread will live forever."***

John 6:48-51

2. Because **Jesus** ***has been raised to life***, those who eat ***this Bread*** **will live forever.**