

“Feeding Our Appetites” (Revelation 2:18–29)
(10.31.21)

Revelation 2:18–29 (NIV84) *To the Church in Thyatira*

¹⁸“To the angel of the church in Thyatira write:

These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze.¹⁹ I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first.

²⁰ Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols.²¹ I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling.²² So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways.²³ I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds.²⁴ Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan’s so-called deep secrets (I will not impose any other burden on you):²⁵ Only hold on to what you have until I come.

²⁶To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations—

²⁷ `He will rule them with an iron scepter;

he will dash them to pieces like pottery’—

just as I have received authority from my Father.²⁸

I will also give him the morning star.²⁹ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

The word of God for the people of God.

LET US PRAY.

Title: **“Feeding Our Appetites”**

INTRODUCTION:

What is today? If we were on the television game show, Family Feud, the number one answer would be Halloween. Maybe some Christians would say All Hallows Eve because tomorrow is All Saints Day. Protestants believe what Paul teaches, that all Christians are saints. We are part of the great cloud of witnesses he speaks of in Hebrews chapter 12. And from our classic hymn, “For All the Saints,” the first verse:

1. For all the saints, who from their labors rest,
who thee by faith before the world confessed,

thy name, O Jesus, be forever blest.
Alleluia, Alleluia!

When you heard that I was planning to have Communion on the last Sunday of the month instead of the following week, what did you think? Maybe you thought the pastor is confused. Maybe you are annoyed because of the change in routine. Did you figure? "I am sure it was deliberate and he had a good reason for the decision."

It seems that Halloween hype grows each year. As you can see on the bulletin cover, it is a coupling of candies and costumes. It may seem innocent enough, but I postulate that it represents unhealthy human appetites. In contrast, the scriptures teach healthy appetites, maybe some of which you have not thought about before. So, I chose to celebrate the Lord's Supper today because it is part of a healthy diet and it connects us in Holy Communion to Christ and the Church Universal.

BODY:

But, this is not a topical sermon in search of a scripture. Over the last few weeks, we have been in the Book of Revelation. In today's message to Thyatira, Jesus says that Jezebel misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. In last week's message to

the angel of the Church of Pergamum, Jesus chastises those that follow the teaching of Balaam, who taught King Balak to entice the Israelites into eating food sacrificed to idols and committing sexual immorality.

I remind you of the connection to the newly established Gentile churches in this context. Of all the prohibitions put on the Jews, the only ones that the Jerusalem Council imposed on the Gentile churches were the same ones of which Jesus warned Pergamum and Thyatira.

We cannot fail to see their significance and importance. But why? Is there a connection between the two? Yes, and that is why I chose "Feeding Our Appetites" as a title for this message. Food and sex are both appetites of our bodies. In this world we have Christians and we have pagans, for there is only the God – the Father of Jesus, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit who proceeds from both.

How we feed our appetites separates us from paganism. It is part of our identity as Christians. In the days of the Early Church, they were surrounded by a culture where food, festivals, idol worship, sacrifices, pagan temples, and sexual practices were interrelated. Today, the ways of the pagans are not much different, even if they are more sophisticated in the practices.

A fellow pastor warned on social media this week that we do not want to be too legalistic about Halloween. I grew up celebrating Halloween. I remember one year that my mother and one of her girlfriends went out with us kids. They put on witches hats and carried brooms and a wine glass. Well that seems harmless enough, right?

But I have to say, for me, Halloween represents unhealthy appetites. It is pretty easy to make a case against all the candy and sweets. WebMd says:

“According to the CDC, two-thirds of Americans are overweight or obese. Now that the average body weight tends toward plump rather than svelte, the perception of what's normal may be sliding. And that may have health consequences that are flying under your radar. The average American is **23 pounds** heavier than his or her ideal body weight.”

Of course, it is not just sugar that is a problem. My challenge in this area is salty crunchy snacks. One of the most successful advertising slogans for Lays Potato Chips was, “Betcha can’t eat just one.” And truth be told, I cannot eat just one.

According to the American Institute of Cancer Research, “It is excess body fat that is convincingly linked to greater risk of 12 types of cancer.” The consumption of alcohol not only adds to the

obesity issue, by itself it lead to 53,000 cases of cancer in the US in 2020. It may also damage DNA and proteins. They know it affects hormone levels. It may also open pathways for other substances to enter our bodies' cells."

While dressing up in costumes by itself is not a problem, the Bible warns us to have nothing to do with the occult. Witches, werewolves, vampires, wizards, ghosts and the like should probably be avoided. Our culture seems obsessed with these though. The whole genre of horror films is strange to me. And I have no stomach for the blood and guts that must be continually amplified to get the desired emotional response.

Please do not think that I am putting undue emphasis on problems with Halloween. I am simply using it as an illustration of a societal ill. And, our appetites for the unhealthy grow and grow. But be warned, the Wicca religion, a subset of paganism that uses witchcraft, has been reported by many sources, to be one of the fastest growing religions in the United States.

Let us not forget that originally choosing what to eat was the only test of obedience. Genesis 2:15-17 (NIV84)

¹⁵The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. ¹⁶And

the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden;¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."

King Solomon lamented in Ecclesiastes 6:7

(NIV84) All man's efforts are for his mouth, yet his appetite is never satisfied.

Let me give you a real-life illustration on how our diet can literally determine life and death. It is the story of my friend Keith Kendrix. He is the advisor for an apologetics student club at Stockton and at Rowan, teaching the students evidence to support their Christian faith. Changing his diet, his appetites, saved his life. Here is his story:

"At around age 53 in a routine physical it showed my kidneys were leaking albumin or protein into the urine. Normal readings in the urine are zero to 30. Above 30 is condition called microalbuminuria which just means leaking small amounts of protein. If the levels get up to 300 that means kidney failure and the need for dialysis. Dialysis patients do not live very long.

The good news my doctor told me was that this disease progression will take 20 or 30 years and if I begin medication now [it will] slow it down. So, I began taking medications and being tested every 3 months. By the way I should say prior to this we

thought we were eating a fairly healthy standard American diet but with reduced sugary foods like no desserts except when eating out and vegetarian night once a week and cutting down on red meat. And getting regular exercise.

Every 3 months the numbers would continue to climb and he would increase my medications. After four years I was at the maximum tolerable doses and I was already at 170. More than halfway there and only four years to go until dialysis.

So, I began researching the topic myself and read as many medical studies as I could find on this particular disease. I found a large major study that showed that this medication regimen for this disease process showed no improvement until the time of renal failure.

I also found a very small study by Harvard Medical. They were interested in the fact that in countries where the population eats almost exclusively plant-based food, there is almost no renal failure. So, they took a small group of patients in renal failure [and] put them on a strictly plant-based diet for 8 weeks. It showed a dramatic improvement in albumin levels in the urine.

I took both of these studies to my doctor and asked if we could try a plant-based diet. He said sure but don't stop my medications and we will

test again in 8 weeks. 8 weeks later my albumin level in the urine was 7, [from 170 to 7 in eight weeks]. [It was] Well within normal and lower than they had been for over a decade. My doctor said now we will stop the medications and test again in 3 months. Three months later the level was 9. And has been running around 8 ever since and that was four years ago.”

Keith still enjoys eating. He often posts pictures of his meals on social media and remarks about how tasty they are. And of course, he has no problems with his weight. He gets plenty to eat but tries to eliminate SOS – salt, oil, and sugar, as much as possible.

It is interesting that Jesus’ longest message was for the church in the smallest town. Thyatira was a town of tradesmen and guilds were the defining part of society. Many of these guilds were associated with pagan temples and practices. It would be natural for new Christians to feel caught in the middle of their old lives and new lives.

Jesus starts with a very strong statement of His authority. He is the Son of God with one of the descriptors from Revelation chapter 1, just like all the other messages. There is another common component that I failed to notice previously. In each of these messages, Jesus says, “I know.” As

God, Jesus is omniscient – all knowing. He even knows our hearts and our minds.

Jesus commends the church in Thyatira for their deeds, love and faith, service and perseverance; and they are now doing more than they did at first. My friends, this is the first appetite that I want to lift up to you. Do you think I am speaking in riddles? Remember the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well. The disciples had gone off to find food and when they return there is this encounter.

John 4:31–34 (NIV84)

³¹ Meanwhile his disciples urged him, “Rabbi, eat something.”

³² But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you know nothing about.”

³³ Then his disciples said to each other, “Could someone have brought him food?”

³⁴ “My food,” said Jesus, “is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.”

I say to you that kingdom work is our food.
Feeding and clothing our neighbor is our food.
Sharing the good news of Jesus is our food.
Growing and encouraging each other in our faith

walk is our food. Do you have an appetite for such a diet? Could you develop such an appetite?

Let me point you to another healthy appetite.

Matthew 4:4 (NIV84)⁴ Jesus answered, **"It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"**

How many of you are doing regular Bible study? We joked at our Tuesday night Bible Study that the rest of the church must already know their Bibles and the four that were there must be in the remedial class. When we are nurtured by God's word, every area of our life is enhanced. It equips for kingdom living and kingdom expansion.

Let me whet your appetite in another God-honoring way. Jesus said in Matthew 5:6

(NIV84) **Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.** Do

we truly have a desire to live holy lives? Paul exhorts us in Romans 12:1 (NIV84) "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship."

The Church of Thyatira had the first appetite. They may have been lacking in the second respect, feeding on the word of God. Remember though that they did not have the New Testament like we are blessed. Maybe that is what made them

susceptible to the wiles of Jezebel. It seems likely that they also failed to develop an appetite for righteousness. Otherwise, they would have opposed Jezebel and her teachings more vigorously.

Jesus rebukes them, **“Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel.”** Isn't being tolerant a good thing? So says our culture; but not so says Jesus, when it comes to sin. Were the people in the church afraid to speak out? Are we afraid to speak out?

The sexual nature of the sin cannot be missed: sexual immorality; time to repent of her immorality; a bed of suffering; and, those who commit adultery with her. There is another layer here: adultery is analogous with unfaithfulness. Sexual sin is a defilement of the blessing for which God designed it. Jesus called it immorality twice.

Today's culture asks why Christians are so hung up on sex. Read Jesus' words. Remember we are to hate what Jesus hates. Sex is beautiful as it was designed: a husband and wife become one flesh. It is a monogamous relationship that builds intimacy and trust. Outside of those parameters, it violates God's design and purposes.

Jesus' condemnation here could not be much harsher: a bed of suffering; intense suffering; and,

"I will strike her children dead." These are metaphorical children – all that follow her ways. Jesus warns about death, hell and punishment. Yet, at the same time, do not miss mercy: "I have given her time to repent; unless they repent of her ways."

How does she fool people? She claims to be from God, a prophetess. She claims to have a special knowledge. Maybe it is like today where so-called pastors, preachers, and bishops claim the Holy Spirit has given them a new understanding against two thousand years of study and experience. Jesus calls these things, "Satan's so-called deep secrets."

My friends, it is time for another Reformation. It is time to separate from Jezebel and all those that follow her teachings. She leads people into unholy appetites and sexual immorality. Do we want to hear Jesus say, "²⁰ Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel."

As in each message, Jesus calls on them to overcome. Keep, keep holding on till Jesus returns. Then He, the King of kings and Lord of lords, will share His authority with faithful believers. We will receive the gift of Jesus Himself – the bright morning star. "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

CONCLUSION:

The challenge of being overcomers is addressed in the hymn, For All the Saints. At the same time, it is an encouragement and an exhortation.

For All the Saints

1. For all the saints, who from their labors rest,
who thee by faith before the world confessed,
thy name, O Jesus, be forever blest.
Alleluia, Alleluia!

2. Thou wast their rock, their fortress, and their
might;
thou Lord, their captain in the well-fought fight;
thou in the darkness drear, their one true light.
Alleluia, Alleluia!

3. O may thy soldiers, faithful, true, and bold,
fight as the saints who nobly fought of old,
and win with them the victor's crown of gold.
Alleluia, Alleluia!

4. O blest communion, fellowship divine!
We feebly struggle, they in glory shine;
yet all are one in thee, for all are thine.
Alleluia, Alleluia!

5. And when the strife is fierce, the warfare long,
steals on the ear the distant triumph song,
and hearts are brave again, and arms are strong.

Alleluia, Alleluia!

6. From earth's wide bounds, from ocean's farthest coast,
through gates of pearl streams in the countless host,
singing to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost:
Alleluia, Alleluia!

In an article from this past Friday, Ryan Danker wrote, "For John Wesley, communion was the "grand channel" of God's grace. Communion and holiness go together. But his teachings included a firm conviction that Christ is made present to the believer in communion while at the same time acknowledging that we cannot explain precisely *how* Christ is made present to us through **something as simple as bread and wine.** Wesley believed, with the Church, that this holy encounter was a transforming gift of God's grace, that it needed to be taken with both reverence and joy. Communion isn't an academic exercise. It is the heart of Christian worship."

Do you have an appetite for the "Bread of Life?" Let us prepare our hearts for the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

Amen and amen. Let us pray.