

Wednesday, March 24<sup>th</sup>

### The Ultimate Diet

Well as we continue through our Lenten season of looking at the Seven Deadly Sins and contrasting them with the Seven Heavenly Virtues, we may find ourselves feeling as I had mentioned in one of the previous weeks, like we are back watching Casey Casem in **America's Top Forty** and we're counting our way down to #1. Then again after the last couple of weeks of dealing with lust, envy, equity; you might think well we've hit number one now, we're down to the lightweights. And I'm here to tell you, not so. Ironically, as we begin tonight, we now look at the heavyweight champion, gluttony.

Gluttony, think of that word; when you hear the word gluttony what comes to your mind? Perhaps it's an image; an image of well Jabba the Hutt, from the Star Wars movies. An individual so big he's called a Hut or house. For me when I first heard the word gluttony and I thought about it; it wasn't so much an image, it was actually words. It was a recording growing up one of the funniest things I ever heard. It was Bill Cosby's comedy about 'Hey, hey, hey, here comes fat Albert.' But then again, realistically, some of us may tie gluttony, and our first thought would be tied to something like the Hometown Buffet, or the Forest Buffet at the Peppermill in Reno. As I say that, I just have this funny feeling that Pastor Tim may have just thought of Harvey's Seafood Buffet up at Lake Tahoe and an experience that we had one time with a friend of ours. He was looking at us kind of oddly and wondering, do you guys really like this shrimp stuff? When he actually said that to us, we said well yeah, why? Well because the shell stuff, it gets all stuck in my teeth.

When it comes down to gluttony, we probably don't think about the number one category of books in the United States. What is that category? Cookbooks. How to cook food, how to promote gluttony. By the way, interestingly the number two category of books is, you got it, diet books. It's that kind of irony that finds us in the United States dealing with airlines who are constantly trying to shrink the size and space required for each seat so that they can get more and more people on each plane. And at the same time, we find that within churches it's

the exact opposite. We are looking for the biggest reclining theater style seats that can be found and maybe that's because of this little fact: 60% of professing Christians are overweight. Then again, that might not surprise you. After all what are churches known for? Potlucks. When it comes down to it, gluttony is a huge part of our society and the commercialism that we see within our society. After all, it was Lay's Potato Chips that came up with "Bet you can't eat just one." It's a temptation for gluttony. Or remember the Alka Seltzer? "I can't believe I ate the whole thing." Or maybe Wendy's, who came up with that little slogan, "Would you like to super-size that for dollar more?"

Now about this time, some of you might be saying "OK, Pastor, OK! We got gluttony, ha ha, ha!" But seriously, one of the seven deadly sins? Yes one of the seven deadly sins, and I'm not counting cholesterol levels, diabetes, hypertension, or covid co-morbidity. I'm dealing with something much more deadly. In fact, in the past, I've been ending sermons by saying, "Let's take a trip back to Eden. Let's do it now at the beginning, with gluttony, let's go back to Eden. Let's consider what happened there.

In the garden of Eden, we read that God had planted the garden with every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. So, every tree in the garden was pleasant to the sight, good for food, see potlucks, smorgies, buffets, there biblical. But we're not going to go down that road right now. But what did God then say? 'However, from the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden you shall not eat of it. You've got all these trees, but just don't eat from this one.' Did you see, when we look at it, gluttony is the root of the very first sin. Is gluttony deadly? You bet! It condemned the whole human race for all time.

Like greed, gluttony is wanting more and more. It's an excess. And like all the other seven deadly sins, it literally is a condition of the heart. But again, I'm not talking about cholesterol. Part of it is physical, because our bodies are the temple of God, and we should care for it as such. But it's much more so, spiritual. That spiritual desire from the heart for excess. Now you might say, excess what, pastor Matt?

Let's go to Philippians 3:18-20. Many walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. That's a pretty scary beginning, isn't it? It's telling us that

there's many people who are enemies of Christ. What does it say about them? Well, the first thing is also very scary. Their end is destruction. So, who are these people destined for destruction, who walk as enemies of Christ? Here's the first characteristic of them. Their God is their belly. They glory in their shame. Wow! Their god is their belly, they glory in their shame. In other words, its self-glory. Self-glory in their self-centeredness, and their gluttony, their gluttonous behavior; and excesses in their parties, their gatherings, their social status, etcetera. In fact, when we look at it, and we go back to the time of the 1st century when Paul was writing here it was the Romans who had invented the vomitorium. So that when you had a social gathering at your house a party, a dinner party, whatever you want to call it. It was a focus on excess. Eat so much that you need to vomit, and once you vomited well now you got room for more and we've got plenty more for you. Go for it!

Is that really, very serious? Let's compare that to Jesus. What was Jesus first act in ministry? Some of you might be saying, 'oh I remember that one from Sunday school. He changed water to wine in Cana. That was the first miracle. His first act in ministry after being baptized in the Holy Spirit descending on Him, He went into the wilderness and He fasted for 40 days. Jesus did the exact opposite of gluttony. And when Satan came to tempt Him, what was the first temptation? See Jesus take the stone turn it into bread. Why, you could do it standing on your head. Eat Jesus, satisfy yourself first. And see there is the root of gluttony. It's satisfying self and our personal wants and desires first. How did Jesus react to Satan? This is a monumental quote, "Man shall not live by bread alone. But by every word that comes from the mouth of God. Fasting, it's denial of self and of the physical needs. Why? Because it is the root of gluttony and when it comes right down to it, what does the Bible tell us about the food that we eat? It's not all that important, because as we know, it does just pass through. But consider what Jesus says; 'not to live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.' It is the word of God, that we were told in Isaiah 55, 'will not return void.' It is the word of God, that we read 'will last forever.' And by the way, might I add? And think about this as a challenge. Find a place in the Bible, any place in the Bible, that would indicate in any way whatsoever that we are to fast from Bible study. Every call for fasting in the Bible, is a call to turn away and deny self, and to actually feed ourselves on

God's word. Isn't it sad that we never hear in the Bible, or much less society today, that there are gluttons of Bible study? It's because it doesn't happen, does it?

Gluttony, self-centeredness, focusing on our physical needs before spiritual needs. Now let's put it into perspective in the Bible. I am going to ask you another question. I'm going to tell you right off the bat, the answer is not Jesus. Because Jesus is true God and true man. So here's the question. Who is the greatest man ever born? And by the way, you have to be able to back up your answer with something that is beyond contestation. Who is the greatest man ever born? Was it maybe George Washington? You are probably going to say, 'no, no, no, it can't be. It's got to be someone from the Bible. Maybe Moses, the great deliverer. Elijah, the great prophet. You know it's Jesus who gives us the answer in Matthew 11:11 of all who have ever lived none is greater than John the Baptist John the Baptist. The guy who had a diet of grasshoppers and wild honey. I don't get a real image of a Jabba the Hutt kind of person when I think of John the Baptist. But John the Baptist is the guy who knew what was right and what he needed to focus on. And so when we look at John 3 verse 30; we hear John the Baptist to saying in very non gluttonous thing. He, Jesus, He must increase I must decrease. You see John had that fruit of the spirit that we call self-control. It was not John himself controlling self, no it was John filled with the Holy Spirit who was empowering him to control his focus on self and to make his focus Christ.

Our sinful self wants to appease self. That is gluttony. we want to excessively appease our self. And as a result, we would become gluttons of food, of power, of glory, of status, of goods. We naturally, sinfully focus on an excessive self. But the Holy Spirit and only the Holy Spirit can strip that away. In return our focus, as far as physical focus goes, to focus on our body as God's temple; and as a gift from God to carry the gospel into all the world. You know, blessed are the feet of those who carry that word to others. It is the Holy Spirit that can transform us so that we have self-control. And we understand that it is Christ who must become greater while we become lesser. It's the Holy Spirit that takes us back to the Sermon on the Mount, the fourth point that Jesus made: blessed are

those who hunger and thirst (gluttons) for righteousness. For they will be satisfied.

So we return back to the beginning of the sermon. The number one category of books, cookbooks. The number two category of books, diet books. The number one book-the Bible. And it is there that we find the spiritual cookbook with one recipe-more Jesus less me. May we focus on Christ and may our lives be gluttonous towards Him. May we desire to grow more and more in His word. May we desire to take care of these physical temples we've been given as a gift to carry the gospel to others. And may we share that gospel to the glory of His Name, for the salvations so that He might become greater, His Kingdom might become greater. But that the focus would never be on us and that we would be less. Just his humble servants, like John the Baptist, the greatest man ever born.

In our Saviors Name, Amen