

SERMON DIET & EXERCISE (MOTHERING SUNDAY)

Readings: Exodus 2:1-10 & Luke 2:33-35
Additional Texts John 4:1-15, Daniel 1:8-End

SERMON

Water of Life

As you are aware we are in the middle of our Lent sermon series - And if you remember as a church we have identified seven areas of focus.

If you have a look at the screen you can see how well we are doing. The areas highlighted in yellow are what we have covered already in our sermon series.

- 1. Praying and learning**
- 2. Resting and playing (last week – rest and recreation)**
- 3. Looking after our world**
- 4. Diet and exercise**
- 5. Emotions and relationships**
- 6. Doing things for others**
- 7. Being fair**

Well today our topic is diet and exercise. And I have to say on this Mothering Sunday I would say it is probably our mothers who have had the greatest influence on what we eat and drink. They had us up in that high chair filling us with all sorts of liquidized and mushy food, or cooking Sunday lunches, or encouraging once we had left home to eat a broad diet.

But what about the Bible? What does it say about food? I have to say, as you rummage through the old testament you get a lot of food laws. This was part of the God's people being kept separate from everyone else. It was circumcision and food laws which were the two physical things that kept the Jews from

mixing with others, and maintain their status as a holy nation set apart for God's purpose.

But the arrival of Jesus changed all that when he said

It is not what goes into your bodies that defiles you, what goes in enters into the stomach and through to the drain. It is what comes out of a person that defiles them.

So with the arrival of Jesus the old covenant was gone and the new covenant of grace and truth comes in.

But now we have Jesus enlightened teaching we need to ask ourselves what the New Testament says about diet and exercise.

As you begin to examine Jesus' life you notice that he does a lot of exercise. Most people did in those days and very few people had sedentary lifestyles like we have today.

In term of diet we tend to see Jesus sharing food with others. But what is most interesting is how Jesus uses the most important foods to explain the kingdom of heaven. There is no doubt that physical sustenance was very important to everyone in Jesus' day. People could and DID starve. And what we see with Jesus is him using the most important foods, the foods that kept the people alive, to get his point across about the heavenly kingdom.

He says such things as...

I am the bread of life. or

"The water that I give will become a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

So Jesus used the most important things in our daily lives like food or our relationships as a way of conveying important spiritual truth.

And the use of food as metaphor in much of his teaching shows us that Jesus was aware of the importance of physical sustenance and the even greater importance of spiritual sustenance.

I liked to think that if Jesus was around today he would have been into holistic medicine – certainly he would never allow you to disconnect the physical from the spiritual.

If he was your orthopaedic surgeon I think the first thing that he would ask you is how you are feeling. How life is treating you – what are your fears? What age are you? How is your thinking? He would be well aware that the physical affects the spiritual and the spiritual affects the physical.

Now Jesus did say some bizarre things...

When he heals a cripple and the Pharisees ask who had sin, the cripple or his parents, Jesus says neither of them.

But then he says to one person who he has healed 'if you continue sinning something worse may happen to you.'

So what I am trying to get across is the complexity of our bodies – and the importance of both physical and spiritual sustenance – and how on some occasions the physical and the spiritual relate very strongly indeed!

In his care of people Jesus was well aware of both the physical and the spiritual

When Jesus is with the crowd - the five thousand – he realizes they are hungry.

He sends for the boy with five loaves and two fishes – and then continues teaching them spiritual truths through parable and Hebrew imagery.

And we see with Saint Paul – that he builds on the teachings of Christ.

In 1 Corinthians he says

1 Corinthians 6:19 *“Don’t you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and who was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourselves but to God”*

Paul was well aware of the physical requirements of the body but he remind his listeners that the body is also the temple of the Holy Spirit.

– what is eternal lives in what is temporal.

- What is physical resides with what is spiritual

So be aware that when you are ill or unwell it may be that it is to do with your emotional and your spiritual health. We know that when we are stressed we may get ulcers, or a rise in blood pressure or cholesterol

The Body, the mind and the spirit are connected.

I even find when I have a meal - if you eat too much - it dullens your senses.

When I was a school teacher the lessons after lunch were the graveyard slots. It is even worse after a Sunday lunch!

Well our Lord and Savior knows our physical needs. He was the one who alerts the disciples to the hunger of the crowd.

He knows that we are both physically and spiritually hungry. He was constantly sharing food with others.

But he knew the limitations of the physical body.

When the disciples were urging him to eat he replied...

, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work. (John 4:34)

This is not to say that Jesus did not need physical nourishment – of course he did. But he was aware of its limitations.

I don't know whether you are like me but I look to food for satisfaction – and I don't think that is a bad thing. But it will never satisfy my deepest needs.

And in Jesus we see the perfect human – ultimately that missing link is satisfied by God – hence his food is from God. That is where we see completion.

Again...

“My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work. (John 4:34)

And if we do not always feel like turning to God – or are tempted to get our satisfaction from other sources – cry out to God!

Ask him to help you. This is what David meant when he said...

Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.

David knew his shortcomings – he didn't even feel like loving God at times – and so he cries out to God and asks him to give him that desire.

So often we can get bogged down in our own feelings. Our physical senses so often dullen our spiritual senses.

But King David never gave up. And like David we should ask God for help when we feel down or debilitated.

Concluding Comments

In finishing let me encourage you by the words of Jesus to the woman at the well. She had been looking for physical sustenance but Jesus points her to the way.

Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, **but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again.** The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water."

And Jesus replies that 'I am he'

He is the Messiah – He is the Living Well.

The Water of Life

Well, as I finish may I encourage you to satisfy yourself with that Living Water. Of course you need your physical sustenance – we all do. Only last week we read of a totally depressed Elijah being assisted by God on a physical level... and God provided him with a baked cake and a jar of water.

So God IS into our physical sustenance, our food on the table, but like the Ten Commandments - God always comes first. The first four are all to do with your relationship with God.

You see when we seek God first - it becomes so much easier – you cannot do this life on on your own.

Jesus says, 'Seek ye first the Kingdom of God' (Matt 5)

And so when it comes to our own diets Jesus is saying come and feed on me and I will provide all your needs. **AMEN**