

# **“The Whole Enchilada: Giving Yourself More Completely To God”**

**Rev. Perry J. Fruhling, St. Mark’s Lutheran Church, 27 April 2008**

(Based on a message by Bob Rognlien)

(**Video: scene from “Hook”** where Peter can’t see or “imagine” what the children are eating)

Grace to you and peace...Imagine how frustrating it would be to sit at that table, watching everyone gorging on a delicious feast, while you sit there unable to see or even smell the food—sounds like pure torture to me! I wonder if that’s why so many people don’t come to church, or maybe others don’t enjoy coming to church. Do you ever feel like everyone around you is enjoying some kind of delicious meal that you can’t see or smell or taste? Maybe we are not getting the whole enchilada; maybe we’re missing some crucial ingredients in our worship recipe?

I’m a person who loves to bake. My mom was a professional wedding cake decorator and I’ve enjoyed baking cookies and bars throughout the years. When Marlys and I were living in Germany early in our marriage, I felt the need to bake and decorate some Christmas cookies for my relatives who we were going to visit in Northern Germany. If you’re a baker, you know that Cream of Tartar is an essential acidic ingredient in many recipes, including Christmas cookies. Living in a foreign land, we had trouble locating Cream of Tartar in the German language. (In fact I went on line this week and found a recent blog of someone living in Germany looking for it and couldn’t find it anywhere in Munich!). So, we settled on what we understood to be Cream Tartar, or Gereingter Weinstein (in German) that came not in a powder but in crystals. The little crystals were placed into the mix and voila, out came the cookies! Except for they had a little acidic taste to them because the crystals didn’t dissolve well. Against Marlys’ wishes I shared the cookies with our relatives, who after tasting them never took another one in my sight!

I wonder if that happens in our worship: maybe the reason we so often feel like we are sitting at the table, but are not enjoying the meal, is that we are missing some crucial ingredients, and our worship ends up leaving a sour and unappetizing taste in our mouths. God has something so much better in mind for us! The Prophet Isaiah describes it this way, *“On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear.”* Mmmmm, smells good, can you taste it, you see this is a more biblical image of heaven that what we usually think of—clouds and harps—it sounds a lot more appealing to me! Isaiah was one of Jesus’ favorite books of the Bible. The Bible records Jesus speaking of or eating numerous meals with friends and adversaries. Jesus used this same image of heaven as a banquet table when he said, *“I tell you, many will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.”*

What do you suppose is the main course of the heavenly banquet we will one day enjoy forever? The apostle John was given a rare glimpse into the very throne room of heaven: he saw four creatures, 24 elders, myriads of angels, all singing to God and to the Lamb, "*Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God the Almighty, who was and is and is to come.*" And then he described what he saw: "*The twenty-four elders fall before the one who is seated on the throne and worship the one who lives forever and ever; they cast their crowns before the throne.*" You see, God is the main course of the heavenly banquet! No wonder the psalmist, the worship leader of the Bible, invites us to *Taste and see that the LORD is good!* When we enter into genuine worship, we get a foretaste of the eternal feast to come.

When we come to church we need to ask if we are fully entering into that heavenly feast or snacking on stale leftovers. Food pyramids show us a balanced diet and remind us we need all four major food groups for healthy life. The same is true in our spiritual life. One day Jesus was asked about the ingredients of a genuine relationship with God, he offered this powerful recipe . . .

In **Mark 12:28-34**, Jesus encounters a religious teacher tired of the hypocritical quarreling between the Sadducees and Pharisees. He was deeply impressed by Jesus' wisdom and insight, and so he asked the question behind all other questions, when you strip away everything else that matters, what is the most important thing in life? In **Mark 12:29**, Jesus responds by quoting **Deut 6**, the "Shema," the great monotheistic creed: "*Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is the one and only God! And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.*" Jesus is telling us our relationship with God is comprised of love and there is nothing else that matters more, because love is the source of every other good thing in life. In **Mark 12:31**, he quotes a little known passage from **Leviticus 19**: "*Love your neighbor as yourself.*" Jesus is telling us that our relationship with God is the source of our relationship with others, as we learn to love him with all that we are, his love will empower us to love ourselves and to love others the way he does. Do you see the brilliance of this answer? Jesus summarizes everything that really matters in life with two scriptures showing us the secret to living the life we were meant to live—no wonder that religious teacher was so impressed!

It is pretty obvious that this Great Commandment applies to every aspect of our lives. No matter what we are doing, it will be better if we are loving God and loving our neighbor. But when you think about it, you start to realize there is only one thing we do that is solely devoted to expressing our love for God, so if the Great Commandment applies to anything, it should apply to our worship life. You see Jesus is giving us not only a recipe for life, but specifically a recipe for worship

I like to think of this passage as the four major food groups of worship, these are the crucial ingredients of biblical worship: [our heart, our soul, our mind, and our strength]. As so often happens, our English translations of these biblical words don't always capture the full meaning, for instance when we hear the word "heart" we tend to think of sentimental feelings, but in the Bible the word "**heart**" refers more to **our choices and decisions**, so one ingredient of biblical worship is choosing to love God. When we hear the word "soul" we tend to think of a ghost-like substance inside of us that floats off to some cloudy heaven in the sky when we die, but in the Bible the word "**soul**" refers to **our deepest feelings and emotions**. So another crucial ingredient of biblical worship is allowing yourself to feel something about God. When we hear the word "mind" we tend to think of the storing and processing of information, kind of like a computer, but in the Bible the "**mind**" is more about **understanding the meaning and significance** of information so we can apply it wisely. So biblical worship involves opening our minds and focusing our thoughts on God so we come to a deeper understanding of the truth, not just abstractly but in a way that actually applies to our lives. Finally, when we read the word "**strength**" in the Bible we often apply it symbolically, like strength of character, but it can also refer to **our physical strength**, here we are being called to worship God with our bodies as well as the rest of who we are. When you open yourself more fully to God by combining these key ingredients of worship together, something powerful happens, you begin to experience God more fully and you are empowered to respond to him more fully. This is what it means to become an Experiential Worshiper and this is what we will be exploring over the next five weeks.

As we explore this more complete kind of biblical worship together, we are inviting every member of our church to make three key commitments during these coming six weeks:

**1) Weekly Worship with Others:** there are so many things that can prevent us from gathering consistently for worship, but I just want to ask you to make it a special priority to gather with us for worship each week, because I believe God is going to do something special in our lives and I don't want you to miss it! If you are out of town or sick, you can also order a recording of the service or listen to it our website.

**2) Daily Time with God:** something powerful happens when we spend time alone with God talking to him and listening. For these next six weeks I want to ask you to schedule time with God at least five days a week. If you are willing to make this commitment use these Daily Guides that will give you suggested Scripture readings for each day and a copy of this little book *The Experiential Worshiper*, which will give you some more insights into Jesus' recipe for worship.

**3) Weekly Time with Others:** we need each other, we can't do this alone, and God works powerfully when we gather together and spend time discussing, sharing, and praying together about these things. We will be watching some short, creative teaching videos by the author of this book to get us started and then will go deeper with the topic for each week. You can find opportunities to connect to an existing or newly forming group in the Fellowship Center today. We also have our Faith & Life Training in Room 112 B each week at 8:30 and 9:45, which will discuss these topics. I hope you will join us on this exciting adventure by making these three commitments today!

As we gather together each week, spend time daily with God, and gather in small groups to explore Jesus' recipe for worship, some of our assumptions about worship are going to be challenged. Jesus told the Samaritan woman, "*true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth.*" But it can sometimes be confusing what we mean when we talk about "true worship." Often people define worship as going to a certain building, participating in certain rituals, or singing a certain style of songs, but these are just the external forms of our worship, not worship itself. The true worship Jesus was referring to is an encounter with God that those outward forms are meant to lead us into. The problem is that sometimes we get so fixated on the outward forms of worship that we miss the deeper reality.

I am a chocolate lover. Anyone else here love chocolate (raise your hands)? Glad to see I am not alone. When I was a kid I used to get a chocolate bunny in my Easter basket. Anyone here love chocolate Easter bunnies? Me too, I love eating chocolate bunnies. Sometimes at Christmastime I would get a chocolate Santa. Anyone here love chocolate Santas? Me too, I love chocolate Santas. You see, anyone who tells me they like chocolate bunnies, but do not like chocolate Santas, I know that person is not a chocolate lover! I don't care what form you mold it into, just so long as you give me the chocolate!

One of the reasons we are missing out on the feast of worship is that we have often confused the outward forms of worship with the inward reality. We have decided we will only worship God in certain ways and not in other ways, and in so doing have been missing some crucial ingredients in our worship life. Jesus said God is not looking for people who are fixated on the outward forms of worship; he is looking for chocolate lovers. God is looking for people who will enter into the feast by opening themselves to him, heart, mind, soul, and strength. So, here you are, sitting at the banquet table, but the question is, are you fully enjoying the banquet, or like Peter Pan are you missing out on the feast right in front of you? Watch what happened to Peter . . . (**Hook film clip #2**). There is an incredible feast that has been set before you. It is not imaginary, but it takes faith to see it. It is what you truly long for, it is a foretaste of heaven, it is the only thing that satisfies, it is an encounter with God himself. The only question is if we will enter in.

[Introduction to recipe cards – confessing our need for God to teach us how to give ourselves completely to Him in worship. Confess on the recipe card what it is we need God to forgive and ask God to renew us in these next weeks of worship.]