

# Taste and See!

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[0:00] I do have a small voice so if you want to move close if you have a hearing issue such as I have a noise allergy because I have six children so I'm allergic to noise and if you can't hear me then just come sit next to me.

So yes I'm so grateful to Ife for inviting me I hope that you'll end up being grateful as well and that we'll have a good time together let's pray together first of all.

Lord Jesus thank you for this evening I pray that you will carry my voice as far as it needs to go I pray that you'll help us to taste and see that you are good and that you will send us home this evening satisfied with who you are.

We pray this in Jesus name Amen. So I have to confess to you that since I was very young I have had a hard time with this particular psalm.

It's a good fine psalm and I hope that you after five weeks love it unreservedly but I'll just tell you why I didn't love it at first.

[1:24] It's that well as if I said I grew up in West Africa and I went to a boarding school from the age of 12 on and one year we always had to have a spiritual emphasis week where somebody would come from America to tell us how to be good and one year the theme for our spiritual emphasis week was a year when I was particularly a bad person and having a lot of attitude problems.

One year the theme was taste and see that the Lord is good. And so for a whole week almost all the student body wore t-shirts that said taste and see that the Lord is good and I did not join in that time of wearing a shirt.

And to top it all off the person who spearheaded the theme and did a lot of the work on that week was one of my classmates who ended up having a lot of personal grief and even trauma in her later life.

But for that week she walked around with a clipboard and her t-shirt really motivating us all to taste and see that the Lord is good.

Felt like with maybe a punch at the back of it. Felt like with maybe a punch in your heart. So but this person who I lived with in a dorm for many years does not believe in God anymore.

[3:15] And chiefly I think she for our lives together in school did keep opening her mouth and did keep opening her eyes.

But she never saw that God was good. When all around her turned out to be very very bad she concluded finally that he was bad.

And so when Ife picked this psalm I was transported back to my early youth and I suddenly had a bitter taste in my mouth associated with this verse.

So that's really the problem we have to deal with. How do you know that God is good? Or do you know that God is good?

Do you know that he's good because someone told you? Maybe you read it online somewhere. Maybe you did a Bible study. Did Ife tell you that God was good and you believed him because he's trustworthy?

[4:22] Is it because the psalmist has told you that God is good? Or maybe for some of you who have been around the Christian life for a long time.

When you were in the midst of trouble. You had to bite down hard on something that you really didn't want to. Or open your eyes to look at something that seemed really impossible to you.

And you had to have the rubber meet the road. And really answer that question for yourself. So it's so interesting that the psalmist, who is David, the Bible tells us, draws on these two essential sense perceptions.

Right? That are so basic to what it means to be a human. This is how your body, not just your mind, but your body judges whether something is good or bad.

If you look at something, your eyes are not supposed to deceive you. If you look at something, or if you put something in your mouth, your tongue should tell you if that thing is good or bad.

[5:40] And if it's not good, you should spit it out. Or if you see something bad, you should run away. That's how you're made to work as a person.

So, but of course, there's a twist here, isn't there? Because sometimes what you see isn't always what you think it is. Or sometimes what tastes good to you does not bring you into the kingdom of health, as so many of us have discovered through life.

So my classmate, so I'll admit, I should call her my friend because I lived with her for almost ten years in a dorm. But I was a bad person, and we never became friends.

In the swirling troubles of her life, she bit down hard on a faith that turned out to be made of straw, if not actual dung, I would say.

And at every point, her own eyes deceived her, and she did conclude that God was not good, and that he had done something wrong.

[6:57] So you've seen for four weeks now that this psalm is cut into four wedges. There are two exhortations at the end. There's the introduction, and then there's this gut punch in the middle, the taste and see verse.

In the beginning, David gives his testimony for how God has been good to him, has provided for and delivered him out of all his troubles. And then David pivots and talks to you, or to any person who wants to sit down and read this psalm, who wants to grapple with the implications of who God is.

That's what we're talking about. Who is God? In the middle of the difficulties and tragedies of this life, God is the good one, says David.

He's not the bad one. So, if we go back, I don't know how many of you, oh, you do have it open, some of you. Go back to the beginning and see how David describes the works of God, which you've seen for many weeks.

First, you can see that when God went looking, when David went looking for God, God was there for him. And, crucially, God delivered him from all his fears.

[8:15] That's what it says. In other words, at a basic level, David was in a bad spot. Actual bad things were happening to him.

He had no power in himself to help himself. He only had one thing he could do. He looked to God, and that was the right thing to do, because God delivered him out of his material, real troubles.

That's, you all have heard that part. Second, though, this is the part that captured me. David tells us that all those who look to God are radiant, and that their faces are never covered with shame.

And I think this is a strange thing for David to say. Look at David himself as he's writing this psalm, or the context of this psalm.

He's pretending that he's out of his wits. He's drooling on himself. He's an outcast. He's in fear for his life.

[9:25] Saul didn't just want to kill him. It seems like Saul wants to grind his soul into the very dust. And I have wondered about that over the course of my life.

Why did Saul hate David so much? It seems like there's maybe something more there than just run-of-the-mill hatred, jealousy.

I don't know. This is my own theory. I wonder if Saul himself felt humiliated by God's rejection of his wrong kind of sacrifice.

You remember how Saul got impatient and did the sacrifice himself, and that's when God said, you're not going to be my king anymore.

I wonder if at the heart of Saul's rebellion against God, he really had that shame that comes with pride, where you really wanted God to recognize you in some way, and you didn't feel like he did, and so you're particularly angry with him and bitter, because God could have shared his throne and his glory with you, but he didn't.

[10:52] And I don't know if any of you have ever been humiliated in your lives, but is there any greater desolation than feeling like God isn't noticing you? And so Saul, who could have repented in ash and dust like so many people in the Bible do, instead, he, it seems like, wanted David to feel the shame of rejection and dishonor.

I think the taste of shame is particularly wretched.

It's a bad, bad taste. And like every other person in the world, I try to do almost anything to avoid tasting it.

I'll do almost anything I can do, which has made my life as a Christian complicated, because, I don't know about you, but when you put everything on the line to follow Jesus, one of the very first things that happens to you, if you're serious, is that you have to face some kind of experience of shame. And I think that's what's so ironic about tasting and seeing that God is good, the goodness of God, because if you put yourself in his hands, you will be asked to give up some things and to endure the shame and degradation of being a sinner.

[12 : 32] To feel that in yourself without running away from it or shoving it off on somebody else or giving it back to the person you feel like is giving it to you.

No, God, who is good, asks you to taste that. Maybe swallow it sometimes or absorb it, like the bitter paschal herbs that we're about to think about this coming week.

So the person, if you look back at your text, I have no idea what verse I'm on. The person who accepts the shame of living as a believer is then made very poor in this life.

Look at David, pushed out, running for his life, letting the spittle run down his beard. He's desperate. He can only turn to God by this point.

He has no resources to solve his own problems. And so he calls out to God, and the Lord encamps around him and delivers him. And that's amazing.

[13 : 48] So that's the first wedge of our psalm. The second wedge is these instructions that we have to taste and see on the one hand and then fear the Lord on the other hand.

And both of these are just a repetition or a circling around of our two major problems of being poor and having lack and being in danger and peril and things just not being okay.

You don't want to get killed. You don't want to be humiliated. You need to have enough to eat. You need to be happy. And so you have this verse, fear the Lord, taste and see.

So let's leave that wedge there and go to the third one. There's another third section here. And I hope you've taken a whole month to memorize this psalm because you've gone through it so many times.

And by now you should know it by heart. The next set of instructions are pretty basic too. They're easy, right? Listen. So we add another sense perception. Don't let bad things come out of your mouth.

[15 : 03] Especially don't tell lies. Go away from evil and towards good. It should be easy. And look for peace and do peaceful things.

And of course, like all the commands of the Bible, these are perfectly good. Right? Go do them. Just do that. And they're impossible.

Right? Just seek peace. Why don't you? For me, I should only say good things, but I'm a blogger.

And I need to get clicks. So I have to say a lot of things every day to keep the clicks coming for me.

And I try really hard to always say what's true and never to make any mistakes.

But I don't know. Maybe I deceive myself sometimes. Some people have tried to tell me recently that I've been very wrong about something important. And you know what?

[16 : 04] Let's just skip this section. Let's come back to maybe. Let's go to the last section here. So we'll see that David, let's go back to David.

David turns in this last wedge of our psalm. And it's as though he's seeing a vision, isn't it? David, it's like he's talking about his own circumstances, but at the same time, he's also talking about something else that's bigger.

And all the instructions are gone here. There's no more things to do in this section. You could be doing anything, actually, as you look at this last part of the psalm.

You could be doing good things or bad things. You could be seeking peace or not. You could be lying to yourself as you read this last bit.

You could be eating all the donuts at the back of your fridge. Although I don't know why you would put donuts in the fridge, but I feel like that could be a place you could put them. You could be starving yourself.

[17 : 18] Whatever it is that you're doing, you can still understand what he's saying in this last section of the psalm. Or you can still see what David is seeing. What is David seeing in this last section?

He's seeing the righteous. That's who he's seeing. And what is he hearing? He's hearing the righteous cry. That's in this last section.

So on one hand, we have the righteous and hearing the righteous cry. And on the other hand of God's hands here, God has set his face against those who do evil.

And he's blotting out their name from the earth. So whereas you have poor people who are looking to him, who have radiant faces, God is turning his own face away from those who do evil.

And then David repeats himself, in case you just immediately forgot what he said, which you might have done. The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them and delivers them from their troubles.

[18:38] So if you are a lover of your Joel Osteen Rubik's, or not Rubik's, Joel Osteen Cube, we have a Joel Osteen Sermon Cube, and you push the button, and you can have Joel Osteen's daily affirmation.

There's 31 daily affirmations, and there's 50 sermons. You can get them on eBay if you don't want to give money to Joel Osteen. And they're fun.

You just get your cube, charge it up, and then you have Joel Osteen with you all the time. It's just a little, if you don't have enough going on in your life.

Don't tell Ife, though, if you get, actually what you should do is get Ife a Joel Osteen Cube. For Easter. And then he'll have stuff to say in his sermons.

Okay. So if you love your Joel Osteen Cube, though, and you've memorized all the 31 daily affirmations, at this point in the psalm, the righteous cry out, the Lord hears them and delivers them out of all their troubles, you should have a mental breakdown.

[19:54] Right? This should cause you emotional distress right now. Because the righteous of this world shouldn't have any troubles. That's the whole problem.

You are good and not evil. That's one of the, probably one of the affirmations. I don't know. You're increasing or whatever. If you're good, God will do good to you.

Taste and see it. Put it on your shirt. What's your problem? Right? That's the way of transaction.

That's the reward. The way of you're doing your bit, and then God will do his bit. In fact, I think that the prosperity gospel, which I think is so interesting and fun, really, it's one way that we foist off of ourselves the very deep shame of being a human person who has been cut off from God.

It's a way of leveling the playing field, of bringing God down into a realm where he can't make us feel bad right now, where good isn't perfect good.

[21:15] It's just pretty good. And evil isn't really that bad. It's just that you tried hard and you failed. Of course, you got cancer and died, but it's fine.

Right? So this is the world where too many of us live, even when we don't intend to. Certainly the world where my classmate lived.

She was all in for God, but he wasn't all in for her. He disappointed her. She was good, and God didn't recognize her goodness.

She kept putting Bible verses in her mouth and chewing them up, but they never came out of her mouth in the right order. And the last time I saw her online, she was gnashing her teeth.

She was in such a deep rage that no one could comfort her. So that's one way of being righteous.

The other way of righteousness is to bite down hard, but on what will you bite down?

[22:27] What else is there that you could eat in this life besides carbs and disappointment? David is seeing another kind of food, and before we look at what that is, I think we should remember a couple of things about eating.

I don't know if any of you gave up anything for Lent, but I didn't because I don't do that. But eating is an essential part of life, right?

So if you want to eat something, you have to put yourself into an awkward position, don't you? It's an awkward situation anytime you want to eat anything.

Before you put whatever it is in your mouth, you are in control, right? You have power. You might as well be God.

Even while you're chewing, you have some agency, don't you? You could run and spit it out into the sink while it's still in your mouth. But what happens when you swallow?

[23:35] That is when you no longer have any say over what's happening to the food in your body. When you are holding a donut in one hand and a carrot in the other, you could be the master of the universe, right?

You can gaze upon the donut and the beauty of the donut. You can gaze on the desolation of the carrot. You can be God and king, right?

But whichever one you decide to bite down on, once you have swallowed that thing, you are Lazarus by the gate. You have no power in yourself to help yourself.

If you have eaten the donut, it will become rock crystals in your arteries and you will die of cholesterol or COVID or whatever.

I don't know. I'm not good at nutrition. If you eat the carrot, you will literally live forever. I saw somebody say that online. The point is, your will, after you've eaten whatever it is, is of no use to you.

[24 : 57] All you can do is deal with the fallout of what you put in your mouth. So when God says to you, taste and see, he is asking you to do something dangerous.

He is asking you to put yourself, body and soul, into a place where, if it goes badly for you, you have no recourse.

If he isn't good, you're not going to be able to fix it. And that is important to see because the food that we're invited to look at in verses 18 to 22, if we take the vision that David sees for what it is, which is the crucifixion, it doesn't look very good, does it?

Here at the crucifixion, we have one person enduring more shame than anyone at any point in human history.

We have one person enduring more pain and suffering than anyone at any point in human history. Here we have only one innocent person ever to have lived among us, a righteous person, in the truest and deepest understanding of that word, being blamed and punished for all the evil that has ever been done in all time and space.

[26 : 37] There we have the only person to feel the full human alien, the fullness of human alienation from God.

We have only the only person who could ever be fully and completely brokenhearted, who could be fully crushed in spirit because there wasn't anything enmeshed in him or admired in his soul that could have correspondence or resonance with the evil that was swallowing him up.

So he was really, purely and truly the innocent victim. And what is so astonishing about this vision is that he did it willingly.

He looked at his two options, obeying the will of his father and dying for you and me, or, on the other hand, obeying the voice of the serpent and calling down a legion of angels to take him off the cross.

And he chose the first option. So there you are. You're looking at him and you're trying to see how is this good?

[28 : 01] You're wondering how to taste this. What can you do? All of your bones are broken, hopefully only metaphorically. Your spirit is crushed.

You haven't been able to seek peace or pursue it. You haven't told the truth. You may know with your head that God is good because, well, you came here tonight, so that's an indication that you think something is okay.

But would you really come here if you didn't think God was a little bit good? Maybe, like me, you go back and forth on this question. You have had a hard time working out the taste, understanding the vision day after day.

The potluck is delicious. We've had a lovely time together. But if you've watched the news, maybe you've pondered the grief of losing a child, which, incidentally, is what my classmate had happen to her in her life.

Or maybe you had your expectations of being accepted and honored by others dashed. And that is still the taste in your mouth. So you can hunch down here in your chair, but I have a better idea.

[29 : 21] And that's to stagger into this building on Sunday morning to church. That's what I do. I don't come here. I go to my own church. And I don't march triumphantly into church on Sunday morning.

Maybe some people do that, but I don't. I stagger into church like one ashamed. I sit in my pew at 8 o'clock, huddled, anxious, full of my troubles and my needs, my head and my heart bound up with a week of disappointed feelings, of alienation and despair.

Maybe you guys are more cheerful than I am, but I don't do that. But wherever you are, if you're happy or not, the point of going on Sunday morning is that you bite down.

You bite down on the word of God first. Proclaim from the pulpit. The readings are read. The sermon is preached. And as you listen, this is what I do.

I let my mind wander a little bit over my week and over the readings. The ancient accumulation of visions and pictures of the glory of God.

[30 : 35] And then, when that part is over, you have to stand up and you inch or you limp your way forward. And when you get to the front, you put out your hands and I or someone puts a little piece of bread in your palm and you eat it.

And then you go to the chalice for a sip and you drink it. And then you inch your way back to the pew and you feel exactly the same way that you did when you got there earlier in the day.

Except that it's not the same. No matter how you feel, things are not the same as they were when you came in. You have actually done a desperate and dangerous thing.

You have given yourself to Jesus even if you didn't think of it that way. And you have bitten down on him. You have let go control of the circumstances of your life.

you have said again in your soul, help me. And because that has been what you have done, God is already gradually replacing the bitter taste of shame-faced repentance with the sweeter taste of praise.

[32 : 05] His name is already continually on your lips, however faint, even if other people can't hear it. As you go to church Sunday by Sunday by Sunday and put yourself in the pew and are fed by the word of God and eat the bread and drink the wine, you are knit together into the mystical body of our Lord Jesus Christ who doesn't break you apart.

He doesn't break all your bones. He doesn't shame you. He gives you everything that you need. In the instructions for this talk, I had a line in the paragraph.

How often do we take this verse to heart? And I had to stop and think of course because I was immediately transported back to my difficult adolescence and that didn't taste great for me.

But then I remembered that I'm not really going backwards. In a few days, less than a week, I'm going to be going to church every night at my church and I'm going to put myself into the path, the way of our Lord Jesus as he walks to the cross again.

And what I love about Holy Week is that we, like the people of ancient Israel, we tell the story of his death and resurrection in the present tense.

[33 : 42] Yes, it happened 2,000 years ago, but also it's happening right now in my mind and in my heart and in my bones. I'm going to taste it and I'm going to see it again that God did the good thing.

He did a good thing that surpassed all other goodness. And that in that plain, quiet, maybe not quiet on Easter Sunday morning, quiet moment of eating a dry, boring wafer and taking a sip of wine, I, I am being swallowed up by the very glory of God.

Lord Jesus, thank you for this psalm and thank you for being good and help us to taste you this coming week.

We pray this in your own name. Amen. about five to seven minutes of questions