

Coming to Our Senses: Towards a Spirituality of Wine, Joy and Feasting

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[0 : 00] begins with the ultimate goal of the Christian life. And that is, do you know? How does the Westminster Catechism begin? To glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

Think about that. The ultimate God is to enjoy God. And so what is this joy? How do we welcome it? How do we nurture it in our midst? If this is the case, that we are to glorify to enjoy Him forever, why is there so little joy in this world and especially in the life of the Church?

It seems that exhaustion, anxiety, fear and loneliness have become specters that many of us are all too familiar with. Joy seems hard to come by.

The accusation that Christians have no joy is indeed, I would say, a terrible one. Alexander Schmemmann believes that the Church has embraced the modern ethos of a joyless and business-minded culture.

He argues that our frantic and pathetic hunger and thirst for perfection, for perfection is the death of joy. Schmemmann goes so far to suggest that we experience a serious crisis in understanding the very idea of a feast and its role in Christian spirituality.

[1 : 26] And Schmemmann, I think, rightly encourages us to recover the Christian meaning of joy and learn to embrace and cultivate it. I can think of no better way to explore and recover a decidedly Christian understanding of joy and feasting than to watch the film *Babette's Feast*.

How many of you have watched the film? Quite a few. To me, *Babette's Feast* is a really beautiful piece of art. And for me, a good piece of art has many levels of meaning.

So *Babette's Feast* is very layered. There are many, many layers to the film and its theology. And when I was doing some research on it, I was surprised how little people have picked up on that thick theology in the film.

So I'm going to use this film as a text for us to sort of look into a theology of joy and feasting. And I wonder if we could turn off the light so you can see the slides better.

I want to engage as many of the senses as I can. I want to engage as many of the senses. We've got some of the notes over there. Oh, good.

[2 : 39] Oh, good. Well, I'll just start drawing you into the story. And then perhaps as we go along, the lights can be turned off.

And then we'll be able to see the pictures more clearly. Because the whole film creates different atmosphere.

And that's a powerful part of the film, how they use light and darkness. The film tells the story of a small Lutheran pietistic community in 19th century Jutland in Denmark.

While the community is deeply religious and rooted in a life of prayer and thanksgiving, there's no sense of joy or joyful celebration.

A flight from created matter in order to ascend to a higher spiritual realm marks the spirituality of the community. Their true home is the heavenly Jerusalem and their understanding of the Christian life is about the salvation of one's disembodied soul.

[3 : 52] Asceticism and scarcity mark their existence. The founding dean and pastor does not allow his daughters, though beautiful and gifted ladies, to go to dances or parties.

He turns their suitors away because of his selfish desire that he hides behind pious language to have his daughters serve at his right and left hand.

And in the film, it's really beautiful, they depicted how these poor suitors in the back longingly gaze at the daughters and there's no chance they'll ever get to them. It's really funny.

He even names the daughters Martine and Philippa after the great Lutheran reformers Martin Luther and Philip Melancthon. No pressure on the girls there.

They continue to lead the community after their father's death and live a sacrificial life of serving the poor and elderly. And what's important here, there's sort of an underlying thread, is they serve their community by denying their own artistic giftedness.

[5 : 02] They believe that the Christian life is about enduring this life here on earth until they arrive at their true spiritual home, the heavenly Jerusalem.

Their shriveled up imagination cannot fathom that the Christian life is about welcoming the kingdom of God here on earth. Circumstances, however, repeatedly interrupt the melancholy existence of these sisters.

Three strangers descend at different times upon the close-knit community. All of them have a keen sense for beauty. The first one is the young officer Lorenz Löwenhelm, whose lifestyle is anything but pious.

His parents made him leave the army to spend time with his very, very elderly aunt in the solitary confinement of Jutland to come to his senses and reconsider his wild and indulgent lifestyle.

He's in a good place with those Lutherans. The sight of the beautiful and pious Martin inspired him towards a higher and purer life.

[6 : 19] It is the beauty of what he calls the gentle golden-haired angel that touches him deeply and allows him to glimpse into the spiritual realm. And yet, very sadly, he turns to a life of vanity.

The second visitor is Achille Papin, a French opera singer from Paris. He visits Jutland for health reasons. By chance, he hears Philippa singing in church.

Achille Papin is a Christian. While she sings of heaven and earth perishing and God's glory being revealed in human hearts alone, Achille becomes enchanted by her heavenly voice.

Achille then convinces Philippa to take singing lessons from him, and he falls in love with what he calls the beautiful soprano of the snow. He is smitten.

Together, they sing a duet from Mozart's Don Giovanni. In it, they sing of the voice of joy calling, and Philippa responds.

[7 : 28] And this is all in the opera. I am fearful of my joy. The joy that Achille Papin, as Don Giovanni, sings of is seductive and not redemptive.

Philippa senses the dangers of Achille Papin's sensual world and rejects Achille's pursuit of her. She returns to the safety of her ascetical home.

And Achille is heartbroken, and he returns to Paris. Years later, another stranger arrives at doorsteps of the two sisters.

Babette, a French woman, seeks refuge with them from the terrors of the civil war in France. The sisters have pity on her and take her in.

Babette's ability to cook and her very, very shrewd sense of business become indispensable gifts to the sisters and a ministry to the small, poor, and aging Lutheran community.

[8 : 30] She serves the Lutheran community by using her gifts in very humble ways. And so you see a development from, you know, sort of that porridge-like gooey meal that they begin with.

And Babette discovers all the herbs that grow there and starts making really lovely broth. And, you know, the lights, the eyes lighten up when she comes and brings the food because it's a new level of beauty and they can savour a little bit.

Babette, in all the years of her service to this community, never asks anything of them. Never, except once. She begs the sisters to let her cook a real French dinner in celebration of the founder's birthday.

The sisters are stunned but feel unable to decline this unusual request so affronting to the lives of asceticism and scarcity.

When Martine and Philippa watched the goods arrive from France, including living quails and a large turtle being delivered to their humble kitchen, they suddenly realised that they have opened their door to great dangers.

[9 : 46] A living turtle stares at them like a demon from the underworld. Terror sizes their hearts. What if the anniversary dinner will turn into a witch's Sabbath?

Has Babette become a servant of the devil? When they see the wine bottles emerging, they're pious home, they're horrified and ask if these bottles contain wine.

Babette says, Oh no, it is Claude de Bougo, 1846. Indeed, it is not merely wine. It is choice wine, just like at the wedding of Cana.

But the sisters believe that Babette is going to seduce them into evil things. While it is too late for the community to withdraw from the terrifying feast, they literally, and this is so funny, they literally swear to one another that they will deny themselves of any sense of taste and smell, and direct their tongue to its ultimate and higher purpose of praise and thanksgiving.

Their pietistic faith had no room for fathoming that God's love and grace might come to them through a feast. They had no clue of the spiritual powers of a Claude de Bougo, first planted by Cistercian monks in Burgundy.

[11 : 09] The film continues to narrate in the most moving way the role that food and wine can have in the formation and in the transformation of a Christian community.

While the sisters and brothers put up their defenses, embrace themselves against the temptations that might befall them at this festive dinner, an unexpected guest joins the festive meal.

Lorenz Löwenhilm happens to be back to visit his very, very elderly aunt, and he joins in the festive occasion. The former prodigal has returned and becomes the voice of a prophet.

He recognizes, names, and praises the gifts of God to the ignorant and unreceptive saints who are actually tangled up in strife and bitterness, despite their pious demeanor.

For the rest of the film, the camera zooms in and focuses on the festive dinner. It is only Lorenz Löwenhilm who pays attention to the beauty, the color, the smell, the taste of the delicious food and wine presented before him.

[12 : 27] But his own sense of wonder and delight, together with the effect of the delicious food and wine, is infectious. The brothers and sisters begin to understand that perhaps the grace of God might come to them through a feast.

The camera now zooms in and focuses on the act of eating and drinking, on the facial expressions, the gaze of the eyes, the reddened cheeks.

Slowly but surely, a transformation happens, and the storyteller tells the audience. The convives grew lighter in weight and lighter of heart the more they ate and drank.

And somehow this newfound lightness frees them from their interior entanglements, and they become more open and receptive. The main chorus consists of the famous Burgundian red wine, Clos de Bougo, 1846.

Back then, a very, very, very good wine. World-renowned. Today, the Clos de Bougo's aren't that good anymore. It's indeed a choice wine, together with a beautiful but also very disturbing dish.

[13 : 43] The dish is indeed rather disturbing and highly suggestive.

Quails, in the Christian tradition, remind one of the Exodus story. God miraculously delivered the people out of Egypt. And as they wandered in the wilderness, the Lord supernaturally provided them with food, quails in the evening and bread in the morning.

The bed, however, serves her quails in a very unsettling way. They are entombed in a puff pastry sarcophagus with their heads hanging over the rim.

Now, look at that, how detailed the film is and sort of hones in on that one dish. Literally, a sarcophagus from the Greek sarx, flesh, and phagen, to eat, means eating flesh.

In the theological context of Babette's feast, it seems highly suggestive of the Lord's Supper in the sacrificial nature of the Christian faith. Somehow, Babette's feast is linked to the Exodus and the Passover meal turned into the Lord's Supper.

[15 : 04] These connections are made throughout the film, but they come to a climax in this beautiful but also disturbing dish. And as you can recall from the film, the camera zooms in quite a bit and shows how Babette prepares this meal.

Even when Lorenz Löwenhelm, you know, the brothers and sisters, watch him, how he eats all of this. When he takes the bird, he takes the skull and he crushes it and he sucks out the brain.

It's a very violent process. But I think it tries to get at sacrifice, at the crushing of the bones, the sucking out of life. It's really, really disturbing.

So, in this meal and in this dish, there is a climactic moment. This is very, very important.

And it's in Lorenz Löwenhelm eating this main dish that he's transformed. And he is transformed from a prodigal to a preacher.

[16 : 11] He suddenly understands the nature of grace. And here he starts preaching. And because his sermon, his mini-sermon is so beautiful, I'm going to read it to you.

He says, Man, my friends, is frail and foolish. We've all of us been told that grace is to be found in the universe. But in our human foolishness and short-sightedness, we imagine divine grace to be finite.

For this reason, we tremble. But the moment comes when our eyes are opened and we see and realize that grace is infinite. Grace, my friends, demands nothing from us, but we shall await it with confidence and acknowledge it in gratitude.

The film ends on a beautiful note of hope. The pious sisters and brothers recognize that God wants them to be joyful.

Their spiritual exile seems over. The film ends with the brothers and sisters holding hands, singing and dancing under the starlit sky around the village water well, so deeply symbolic of Christ as the living water.

[17 : 28] The heavenly stars have moved closer to earth, said Philippa, in the little Lutheran community, is finally able to embrace their faith with joy.

One of the things that the film *Babette's Feast* reminds us of is that both the traditional Passover meal and the Lord's Supper were festive occasions celebrated with lots of food and wine.

During Jesus' ministry, the Passover meal consisted for each person of four glasses of wine that they drank throughout the evening, and that is a lot for the Jewish culture that Jesus indwelt.

Now let me ask you this. Why is it still so hard for us to believe that the grace of God can come to us through the very sensual experience of eating and drinking?

Why do we feel so uncomfortable with the idea that festive play before God, as Jürgen Moltmann calls it, is an important way that we can nourish our spiritual life and foster community?

[18 : 43] Of course, there is the traditional suspicion towards the arts in general that the film *Babette's Feast* so poignantly challenges. But we have begun to embrace the arts, and yet I would suggest that we still hold a deep suspicion towards the senses of smell and taste, and how they might aid us in our pursuit of the knowledge of God.

This suspicion has a long history in the Christian church, and therefore Western civilization. And I'm going to just briefly introduce you to that stream of thought, but only very briefly.

So it began when Greek philosophers started to distinguish between human sense perception and a superior form of knowledge. Here's an early sort of medieval image of when the Passover meal, Lord's Supper, was still sort of depicted at this great festive occasion.

I'm sure some of you are familiar with the Rebliss icon of the Trinity, and already that's cleaned up. There's just one chalice, and you don't get that sense of feasting anymore.

But I love this image because you do get that sense a bit more. So Democritus argued, a Greek philosopher, he said, there are two forms of knowledge, one genuine and one obscure.

[20 : 08] To the obscure belong all the following, sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch. The other is genuine, is quite distinct from this. So can you see how already a distinction is made between a higher form of knowledge and then what we gain through sense perception?

Of course, that's all challenged today. The famous Greek philosopher Aristotle argued that the intellect that he calls *nous* is always right, while desire and imagination are imperfect.

He believed the intellect is independent of sense perception, while the imagination is a movement resulting from sense perception. So you can see, though Aristotle appreciated and talked about the five senses, he did have a deep suspicion towards the five senses in their role in our pursuit of understanding the world.

Now, Aristotle, in turn, had a very, very deep influence on the Dominican theologian Thomas Aquinas, and it is really through him that we have received a value judgment on the sense of smell and taste that has lasted to this day.

Thomas Aquinas discussed the five senses and how they relate to our experience of aesthetics, what we sort of, the understanding that we gain through the senses, and also beauty.

[21 : 31] He distinguished between the senses that have sufficient cognitive complexity and those that do not. And I wanted you to just have a little look at this one little paragraph from the Summa Theologica.

He wrote, those senses chiefly regard the beautiful, which are the most cognitive, sight and hearing, as ministering to reason. For we speak of beautiful sights and beautiful sounds.

But in reference to the other objects of the other senses, we do not use the expression beautiful, for we do not speak of beautiful tastes and beautiful odors. Can you see how this suspicion is just sort of threading through the tradition?

And both Aristotle and Aquinas discussed the senses. So you get the sense, oh no, no, no, the senses are important to them. They are, but they still have sort of hierarchical understanding of them that devalues, especially touch, taste and smell a lot.

Aquinas believed that both the sense of taste and smell lack cognitive complexity and are therefore not worthy to be considered as aesthetic experiences. Now, when you look at the history of wine, it is only now that philosophers are starting to look at savoring wine as an aesthetic experience.

[22 : 49] Throughout the history of Western civilization, we haven't done that. Aquinas made a value judgment on the senses of taste, smell and touch that profoundly shaped how Western civilization has understood these senses and especially Western Christianity.

The effects of this value judgment have lasted until this very day. Now, in addition, and that did not help that sort of suspicion, during the Middle Ages, theologians and lay people developed a deep suspicion towards the senses of smell, taste and touch because of their close association with gluttony and sexual immorality, two of the seven deadly sins.

And that, in the medieval sort of worldview, you know, the seven deadly sins were a big part of their spirituality and so sort of looking at where they are at. So you can just see that in different ways, it really built up a suspicion towards these senses.

Now, and yet, if we were to examine all of this from a biblical perspective, we would not be able to uphold all of these prejudices. In the Hebrew world that Jesus and his disciples inhabited, feasts and celebrations were important ways believers cultivated their spiritual lives.

In addition, studies in anthropology and neuroscience have revealed a very different picture. And I can't go into that very much, but I do talk a bit about that and I engage with neuroscience in particular.

[24 : 19] For example, our capacity to recognize and perceive flavor is deeply interconnected with other functions of the human brain. Scientists have shown that those areas of our brain which process smell and taste also process emotion and, very important, memory.

Our capacity to smell and taste somehow influences our capacity to remember. Neurobiologists are researching in particular the relationship between smell and memory.

They've found that the loss of smell is one of the initial symptoms in degenerative neurological diseases such as Parkinson's and Alzheimer's. And there's a lot of research being done now how they are related.

It's very, very difficult to find that out but they know they are related. And think about we often live in a world today sealed off from the fragrances and stench of our world.

You know, public buildings don't have a lot of smell, maybe coffee smell. We sit in front of the computer, there's no smell. The one group of our culture that has realized how powerful smell is is the marketing world.

[25 : 30] So when you go shopping into a mall and you see these wafts of smell come they know that they can lure you in with a smell. So they've been very shrewd. So I think in light of all of this I would like to challenge our prejudices against smell and taste when it comes both to our spiritual lives but also in relation to our appreciation of aesthetics.

And usually, you know, if we were to go into a church service I would like, I would want to encourage you when you go to the Lord's Supper think about smelling the wine allowing your lips to be touched allowing to taste the wine and slowly swallowing it really helps you to remember.

It enhances your act of remembrance and that's something that we don't focus on. usually after this presentation I do a wine tasting and I call it a spiritual practice but we're not doing that today so I will have to introduce you to the concept of the priesthood of all drinkers holy tipsiness and other things another time I'm going to be at Arusha on Thursday where I'm going to give this presentation but with a wine tasting as a spiritual practice and I'm not joking I do feel that tasting wine can be a profoundly spiritual experience because wine like no other liquid in the world is capable of capturing beauty that the earth brings forth in one glass of wine and I think too often we miss out on it because we don't pay attention we haven't been taught to pay attention it takes a while when we drink or eat something for it to be processed in our brain and usually by that time we are in conversation which is really the important thing to be in conversation and conversation is very important but I think there's something to be said to pause and allow the beauty of a wine or a food to really move you to a sense of wonder and astonishment and gratitude towards God who's not only our redeemer but also our creator thank you now I would like to open this up for conversation so Sherry that last thing that you ended on was amazing to me because I can so

I can so remember and think of times where you know feasting maybe around a holiday Christmas Thanksgiving and we do immediately jump into the conversation and then the image at Babette's feast or you're at an exquisite restaurant or whatever and you're tasting that food and you're actually connecting and conversing over the food and I get it now that that's engaging in the whole picture of creation so thank you the lady okay I have so many things I want to say that I try to put it in your shoulder form first of all thank you so much for this presentation which made me feel much much better about last night seriously you know we have six families that do fellowship every other

Saturday and last night it's our turn to host we both we both you know try to from Saturday night I was preparing and cook the whole day and you know and so when the dinner you know was ready and I thought myself I said you know I love to offer some wine this is from this constant background before I would say hey you know to their place I said do you have wine I love to you know bring beautiful food and they say no no we're doing fellowship Bible study no we don't bring let me tell you let me tell you a little story part of why I'm doing this book tour is my desire is to really have a conversation not just with Christians but to engage with culture so I've been contacting people in the wine world one of them is

[30 : 13] Kermit Lynch he is a very well known importer of very good European wines in the US everyone who is sort of familiar with the wine world if they don't you know in a good wine shop you will have wine imported by Kermit Lynch so I just contacted him because I'll be in the Bay Area and I just sent him an email or to his wine shop I said I'm coming to the Bay Area I love what you're doing with the wines you're importing because he is importing those sorts of wine that bring us to a place of wonder and I said I would love to be in conversation with you are you going to be around and he sent me an email back saying I'm so sorry I won't be around but let me tell you where I come from he grew up in a church of Christ his father is a church of Christ minister very fundamentalist wasn't allowed to drink wine and his parents split up so there's all of that I don't know him he just told me all of it and then he said I'm now an atheist but I would love to be in conversation with you because most people in the wine world that really look for and I'm not saying they have to be expensive wine but well-crafted wine they know there's a spiritual dimension to it so you know I think here is someone who was a

Christian but he grew up in a church context that rejected the beauty of creation even though that is a huge part that nourishes and sustains us on this earth that life is very hard for most people it's very very hard and so the reformers both Martin Luther and John Calvin said we have no right to forbid the gifts of God to the people of God that's not ours so thank you for mentioning that and that we have a job to do can I just say another thing which is that the six families well the other five they're all prostitutes families but us because our children were educated in Catholic schools so that we attended you know the Catholicism and also I was just that time very surprised because the prostitutes families all considered the Catholics are so rigid you know they're just like you know like their servants and you know they just stand up kneel down stand up sit down and all of this repeating after I had the same impression with them but gradually you know we attended

Saturday Eucharist and I was really surprised they're always dancing around the table they're always food they're always warm so I had a very hard time to convert this sense of celebration to this Pakistan family it's a journey you know we have to be realized that we all come from different backgrounds and that these things don't happen overnight we need to allow people the journey so thank you for that Bruce I think you were in the next one thank you so much it's beautiful and the reading of the that's really lovely why have you seen or reflected at all on the beautiful film of the Cistercian martyrs in Algeria of gods and men I think of that feast as a kind of a vet's feast as well because the entire movie is haunting you know that this martyrdom is coming with the Mujahideen and so on and this beautiful ailing aging Cistercian community but then at the moment just before the Mujahideen are going to break in and take the brothers away they have a meal and the entire film has been shot the background is chant music but at this meal brother Luke puts in a cassette tape and it's

Tchaikovsky at the meal and then they have what is kind of a last supper and there are these long shots patient long shots at each face of the brothers around the table it's a last supper but it's fish and chips it's fish and chips it's melamine plates it's ordinary kitchen tumblers and it's on the verge of this tremendous kind of pouring out of sacrifices in their lives and I wonder if there's a kind of dialectic between that meal and the bat's feast they both involve this element of they're both feasts but it actually we need to hear both of those messages because we can so easily tip over in a kind of go from sort of fundamentalist reactionary ideas just simply into sort of a late capitalist indulgence and what goes to me as you held together well I start off the chapter with another film so I wanted to use two films and that's what I've done in my teaching

I taught Christian spirituality and my introduction to Christian spirituality sort of climaxes in hospitality as sort of a very profound expression of the Christian life and so I start off with the film that actually Eugene John Peterson introduced me to called Avalon it's about the deconstruction of the table in American society and it starts off with an American Thanksgiving dinner and that's a more normal festive occasion it's not as outlandish I mean that's just an extreme Babette's feast but it's more this sort of American immigrant family struggling financially and trying to help others to come over into the country but they always gathered for the Thanksgiving celebrations which is sort of more of what people could still do even if they didn't have a lot of money which they didn't to begin with and then it narrates how with the competition coming in and then becoming successful how they move out into suburbia and the film ends really on the little family unit with their TV tray sitting in front of the TV at a

[35 : 56] Thanksgiving and it is utterly depressing and for that reason I love that film because it just shows us what we have lost so I was hoping that having both of those films in that it would give them a more normal Thanksgiving is an annual celebration but it's not this high end sort of celebration but I think that's a very important point that we don't develop what I call the Martha Stewart syndrome I think you were next I'm sorry I don't know who is next when you said you're meeting with that Arakha where are they meeting by the way I think the center is in Surrey oh and Surrey yes the center is Brooksdale is the name of it and the location is down by the border so it's a little bit of a trip but it is so worth it so if you're interested in going talk to me and I can explain to you how that works and it's also on my website there's a link to the event and it will involve a wine tasting you know about the wine thing like I grew up in

Caristil in the United Church of Canada commercial drive from six blocks up to Portuguese Catholic Church and my mom's family is from the former colony of Macau by Hong Kong and so there's no big deal on Mother's Day Father's Day beer garden after mass they look at you funny because you don't have a glass of wine and there's no way you do that in the United Church but for the culture and maybe because they're Catholic too no taboo no big deal about wine you just always have it off the side with your meal and you know they say this guy from Portugal says there's no liquor laws I can get my son or my daughter here's an empty bottle go to the grocery store have a filled with whiskey they've got so many laws here about liquor and they figure by the time you're age 19 you know how to drink but it's never served in the table but you have to realize and I'm always trying to emphasize that we must not be too quick to judge people and traditions there's a history to that there's a history to why the prohibition happened just to give you a snippet of that on the east coast when the pilgrims came with all their beer and wine and you know we need to start growing vines here because we can't always import the vine they did not take to the east coast because of the climate was happening on the west coast wine culture was thriving on the west coast but they didn't know that so what happened is because it was right when the industrial revolution happened maybe we can turn this off that they started to have distilleries and hard liquor became the primary drink and that is never a good idea so there's a history and then the civil war happened and people started to self medicate with alcohol and so you had all this incredible alcohol abuse that we did not know in the history of the church because we were not able to produce distilled spirits on such a scale and so the dimension of alcohol abuse that happened was very different from what the reformers struggled with I don't agree with you know that they forbid alcohol altogether but you have to realize there's a history and so again your journey of embracing alcohol is going to be very particular to the history of your own country and this is something else

I'm you know in conversation with Alice Waters she's not a Christian Carlo Petrini is not a Christian and I've said to them you know your country needs to heal in relationship to alcohol there's a whole history it's not just going to happen overnight it's going to involve conversation and people going together and then you know and then also the whole question about socializing children into drinking alcohol I grew up in the Lutheran tradition in Germany so I have my official glass of wine I had some earlier I admit it when I was confirmed in the Lutheran church at 14 so in Germany under the supervision of your parents you are allowed to drink alcohol from the age of 14 so you are socialized into drinking and that's and studies have shown that young adults who have been socialized into drinking alcohol alcohol at home are less likely to abuse it and so I think there has to be and that's why I'm trying to bringing some big voices I'm in conversation with

Tim Mondavi the Mondavi family has been very instrumental in developing wine culture because we need to have some big voices that talk about this and so over time there needs to be more thinking well how can we heal our relationship with alcohol and then also you know on the long term how can some laws be changed so we can actually socialize children into alcohol because children not drinking alcohol and then going to college and being with their peers and learning it there that's not a good idea and I think we all know that I think you're next this has been really fascinating and you've given us so much to think about one of the things I was thinking about because you mentioned the relationship to joy and the senses and so on there is a deep suspicion of the senses in some churches like ours connected with emotion which is sometimes thought to be unstable in relation to reason and so on and I have heard this expressed by ministers in this church paying minister in this church we're really buttoned up compared with some of the other expressions in like say

Baptist Pentecostal maybe Plymouth Present I'm not so familiar with that where wine is never used in the communion service Welsh's grape juice is as far as we go and so some of what you're talking about is totally lost there but these are people who express joy in a much less buttoned up way than we do you know yeah yeah no I think it's and again it's there's a history in there's healing that needs to happen you know each denomination has an emphasis I grew up Lutheran the Lutheran church is very rational so you think through things and you know in Germany after the war my parents grew up after the war and so the way the German culture dealt with the war was just sort of not to talk about it working really hard and thinking so I realized that you know if I wanted to become a whole person I needed to learn how to integrate my emotions with all the other faculties and I think the idea that reason in the mind is so stable and emotions aren't that's a myth that's a real myth and it's really really encouraging to read the neuroscientists in particular and have friends who work in that research to realize that the way we come to understand the world is much more complex and much more integrated and we wanted to separate it out but of course I have found in the academy that academics are brilliant thinkers but often the emotional dimension and other dimensions of their lives aren't as developed because you can't do it in the academy because you have to so fiercely work towards thinking and producing and writing and teaching that you don't have the context to really grow up emotionally in the way that we should if we want to become sages as George

[43 : 22] Donald says it you know ultimately you want everything to be integrated so that the more scientific rational and the more mystical and emotional they grow and mature into one that's really what we're called to as Christians not just as individuals but as communities so that and that's part of the brokenness of this world is in the way we come to know things George McDonald has a little story called the dayborn night girl where he talks about this that in a fallen world we tend towards either the rational or the more mystical and emotive but really the growing up of our maturing in the Christian faith is a marriage of the two and for that we need one another we need those who are more emotively oriented and those who are more intellectually oriented to help one another and go into these areas that we find maybe intimidating or scary George McDonald uses fear a lot you know people who are very you know trained in the rational they're terrified of emotions you know because perhaps that's something that they have to tuck away and then the more emotive people they might feel very uncomfortable with all this thinking and so we really really need the body of Christ so that we can help one another to grow in a more holistic way of being in the world

I don't know who is next I'm so sorry I'd just like to share an experience that I had and I'd be interested in your comments on we were in a church about 15 years ago and I had an Iranian friend and she said to me one day you know every culture has a time when they sing and dance and celebrate and eat and drink she said when do Christians do that and I thought about this and I thought well the time to do it would be Easter because that's the greatest festival in the Christian church yet but the church was a block off Fraser Street and some of you may know that the big event on Fraser Street at Easter is the Sikh parade celebrating the wall and they celebrate and they have a parade and they have food booths and it's just a really big party yeah free food and I said to one of my ESL students who was a

Sikh I said in India do you do this it's Kals I think do you do this at this time of year every year she said oh no in India it comes at a totally different time but we do it on Easter here because it's a long weekend and I thought what have we done and realizing that revelation happens understanding happens even as we're not cognitively or not consciously aware of it there's a lot of learning that we do and we're not aware of and I think that happens when we you know are in a place of wonder what we gaze at birds or we sit with a glass of wine you can't sort of summarize it I've learned this and this and this and this but I think there's an underlying sense of wonder and then perhaps also trust that God means good he means well with us when often even though we say oh yeah God loves us do we really believe that do we really believe that that God is benevolent towards us that he loves us well it's a struggle isn't it that's thank you for doing that in a

Protestant tradition I have been suspicious of eloquence eloquence in a sermon they thought that obscured maybe the apostle's doctrine did you ever reflect on that is there if I enjoy a sermon because of its eloquence does that compromise my hearing of the word of God I mean there's a kind of sensual Protestants live by hearing that theologian you quoted at the beginning said famously you are what you eat and that's very powerful but I've been proud of the tradition that says faith lives by hearing so is hearing a sensual spoken word not music but a spoken word should it be eloquence well that's a good question because it brought it brings you into the bigger question of beauty and how eloquent speech being poetic it's bringing in the dimension of beauty and I think that can be very powerful but it can also be distracting so you can't just say it will always distract or it won't but for example I come from a Lutheran tradition where we revere

Bach in classic music so people go to church but it's more of a concert you know it's not a worshipful experience because people are just there to oh he's so beautiful and it's not really bringing the spiritual and aesthetic together in ways that they should so I don't think I can give you an answer of yes or no but I think it's sort of a dance and I think someone who works with aesthetics has to actually learn how to do that well so that ultimately our heart are drawn towards God and don't get stuck in the beauty of an eloquent sermon and say oh that was so beautifully spoken and you can't remember what he said yes I think you're yes you have a good point about Bach and people you know I think it all depends on where your heart is and where your personal attitude is when you come to church sure you can be distracted by beautiful stained glass windows and the beautiful music and incense that would be nice but we should use all our senses especially those of us who are have maybe more heightened senses and I think those things that might distract some people could actually encourage some of us to you know just to embrace that whole

[49 : 40] God's beauty God's beauty is like it's multifaceted you know and he did create us with all these senses and to deny ourselves some of those senses because they might be distracting I think is wrong so I really enjoyed your talk thank you so much I thought that after your official presentation and your entertaining questions and what not you've given a more nuanced approach maybe than in the talk not so much in either or but there's a both and because I like the way you talked about alcohol and said well actually those prohibitions were a response to something I wonder about when there was looking down on the senses of taste and smell would you think that there was the same there was a reason for that as well that our church fathers looked down upon those senses and what those reasons might be like why were hearing and sight more elevated than others now a lot of

Christian spirituality was first developed by the desert fathers whom I like very much if you learn a little bit more about the desert fathers some of them come from very brutal backgrounds whether that's sort of a very indulgent lifestyle some of them very violent I remember one of my professors in Germany told us a story about a former he was a desert father but he used to sort of be in a very barbaric sort of context and he once came across a pregnant woman in the forest and he thought oh I wonder what that baby looks like and he just slid her open because he wanted to have a look at the baby and then when he was in the desert he could not I think he felt God had forgiven him for killing the woman but he could not he didn't think that God he could not receive forgiveness for having killed that child and some of the stories are so brutal so the desert fathers developed already a very deep suspicion towards the body even they did craftsmanship but you know you can already see the roots there in the spirituality that they developed

I mean sometimes they were took wine in the Eucharist are exceptions but in general from very early on you can see the suspicion towards taste and touch and smell and just you know to completely remove yourself you can see when you come from a very extreme lifestyle it's like when you are an alcoholic and you go to a rehabilitation center you have to be in a very very different context to sort of step out of addiction because what addiction does neurologically it's like a furrow in your brain and it's very very hard once you are addicted to step out of that so you really have to remove people out of their context into a very different context to sort of heal and sometimes I look at not all of the desert fathers were like that but there were quite a few of them who had very very rough lifestyle it also became really fashionable to go into the desert but I can you know as I said yes there is and yet there was another strand in the church that wasn't like that you know that emphasized at the same time they taught about the Eucharist and in the more mainline church where they developed the theology and they talked about the senses and touch and all of that so there were parallel movements but I think ultimately because we got the framework of you know the framework that emerged in terms of spirituality are the seven vices and the seven virtues and the believer is sort of in the middle and sort of battling along so if you have that sort of tight framework it's easy then to sort of say oh I have to be very it's only negative and the other thing and I've talked to a

Catholic scholar about that who just wrote a book on food and he wants to say rather than you know having the opposite of gladdenly being temperance we should really should be saying no it's savoring we should have a virtue that is called to savour or in German we have an even stronger word that's genus it's a real intentional enjoyment and appreciation not a rejection not an indulgent but a real enjoyment that brings beauty and joy and delight to us so that's sort of a long answer to your question isn't it it kind of reminds me in C.S.

Lewis' sermon the weight of glory he talks about how we are not being perpetually solemn but now I kind of forget what goes after that but the response to that is to first of all to take one another seriously so there's interplay there between the two opposites being perpetually solemn no you've got to be joyful but where does it start with taking one another seriously so there's dangers on both sides I guess there's a danger that you can be flippant and joyous is your god as it were or perpetually solemn and no enjoyment whatsoever yeah and I think that's the so to really understand joy and a sort of a Christian understanding of joy you have to be quite nuanced you know in Babette's feast you see Don Giovanni you know seduction that's not the joy that we're looking for you know the joy is something much more beautiful and communal and that's why Babette's feast is so great it's so tied in with the redemptive work of God you know how this meal that is so sacrificial

[55 : 22] Babette you know gave all that she had to make this meal and it's not just the beauty of the meal but it's the sacrificial nature of that meal that moves this community towards forgiveness and healing and reconciliation so the joy that's developed is both rooted in creation but it's also rooted in how God redeems and that's why I think this film is so iconic and I was asking what do Pope Francis and Alice Waters I don't know if you're familiar with Alice Waters but she's a huge person in the food and wine world in the US what do they have in common their favorite film is Babette's feast and Alice Waters from what I know is not a Christian and still she sees the power of it I was just wondering I appreciate the fact that there needs to be a change in the savoring idea and education but I'm just going to say it seems that there's high priced wine and spirits and become a sort of currency and it was sort of exported in some ways even to places gathered places like Asia a sense that price and rarity is worth something

I was in a liquor store here not long ago getting some wine and the lady at the cashier said that's the most expensive bottle of wine I've ever sold and it wasn't mine it was the one \$3,700 and I said where is it from what's going to happen she said it's in France but it'll probably be sold for more money probably to Asia and sold for more money oh yeah yeah and that's a cheap that's really in the high end wine I don't want to say high end wine the problem is in our sort of world free market world consumerism wine has been hijacked into that sort of system of marketing consumerism and has now become an object of speculation which is unfortunate and even when you hear talk about wine traditionally people have not talked about wine the way we do you know people have you know they are now sommeliers and masters of wine and the excessive use of adverbs and adjectives to explain wine is really outrageous and a lot of vintners just shake their heads and say you know but it's again you just look at wine as something that we consume and what it does to me rather than looking at the whole reality of wine that there is a place that there's a vine that there's sun that there's rain there's a vintner that he makes choices about the wine that there's a whole community involved in making the wine and though you might not taste it directly that still matters it's not just what we taste but the whole reality of wine and where it comes from so this is and I talk about that in my book the biblical vision is so beautiful when the prophets you know it's a very very rich theme but when the prophets talk about

God's redemption especially when the people are in exile they say you know God's redemption this is what we will look like you will be able to return to the promised land and you every man will live be able to live under sit under his own vine in fig tree and they will live in peace and safe and they will be able to work the land and harvest it through and have their wine and so the vision is wine is not something for the upper class wine is something that everyone should have you know in modesty but enough for to have a little extra for celebrations and I think that's what wine should be and that's what wine can be and that's still what wine is in Europe and so that's another conversation that I'm trying to have with the vintners I've interviewed some fantastic vintners one of them the family pioneered the Pinot Noir in Oregon they now make world class Pinot Noirs and so for them to offer wines that don't start at \$40 because who can afford buying a wine for \$40 I have sometimes paid that much because I felt like I needed to be exposed to it and I have friends who allow me to sample wines that are a lot more than that but they really should be starting at \$15 my family makes wine and our least expensive

I'm not going to say cheap because it's not cheap wine starts at you know about just under 6 euros and it's a beautiful wine it's a simple wine but it's beautiful but everyone in our village can afford coming to the winery buying a bottle of wine and enjoying something local you cannot say that of the high end wineries in Oregon or in Napa or Sonoma not everyone can go to the winery and I think that's something you know again there's a history that you're catching up as more and more people are growing vineyards there will be more wine and hopefully that will bring the wine down for well crafted wines and by well crafted I don't mean necessarily these high end wines that I do not think are worth what people are paying for but with speculation you always end up with that reality for me wine or alcohol drink

I find it's besides joy besides enjoyment of life it does free me I find that growing up either because of culture or because of your upbringing you have this sense of polar conduct I find that I can only feel very afraid to cry and to laugh like to be who I am how I'm created it's kind of under alcohol influence for years I feel horrible about it and I feel is there something wrong with me so I thank you for the presentation I think I'm going to ponder over that but probably on a different level can you please tell my wife the lemon about drinking wine well okay I'll stop off with a little saying that we introduce at every wine tasting that my family does and it goes like this

[61 : 46] I'll say it in German first to drink is to pray to binge drink is to sin and as we all know the line between praying and sinning is sometimes a little blurry but it's important and the other thing that I say to people we are given wine to bring us joy and to enhance our joy when you have a loss if you're depressed if you're struggling with something that's not when you drink wine that's when you seek help our culture does not know how to grieve that's something that we that's I think one reason why addiction is on the rise just as much as we need to learn to lean into joy we also need to learn to learn how to grieve again and how to walk those journeys and do that homework and as we do that we can come to a deeper understanding of joy but we must not take a shortcut by suppressing it and numbing our dark emotions with alcohol or food or anything else so it's not just joy it's all the other things that come with it that's why I have a whole chapter on healing and how we as a community we need to embrace grieving that we're not always upbeat but we have to give people space when they go through difficult times to grieve that's just as important as learning how to lean into joy have you brought any of your books you know one of my little sermons

I give because I'm arguing for craftsmanship and that we need to support family businesses whether it's small wineries small bakeries small butchers we also need to support the local bookstores so Bill has a fantastic bookstore on campus for family businesses to survive in this world where you have big corporations that make a lot of money it's very very hard and as Christians I think we have a responsibility to support them so even on my website I have no link to Amazon I have a link directly to my publisher one of the very few independent small family owned publishers left or a link to find a local bookstore so you can go there and that's also how you create community