

# Awe for a consumed world

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[ 0 : 00 ] I think about food all the time. I didn't realize it, I've always suspected it, but I didn't realize it until recently when I started the spiritual discipline of fasting.

I'm not sure if anybody here has fasted before or if you can remember doing the 40-hour famine. I did that years ago. But I spent a little bit of time fasting. I spent a day fasting where I only consumed liquids and used the time to focus my mind and my heart on praying to God.

And it was really helpful. But I didn't realize how much I thought about food until I took the food away. Because I spent pretty much all day thinking about food.

I would wake up and my first thought is, I need coffee. I don't know if anybody else here is like that. I'm desperate for coffee. And then it's breakfast. And then when I get to work, it's more coffee. And then when I'm working, I'm thinking, morning tea is coming up soon.

I can't wait for morning tea. And then I have morning tea. And then it's like, how long till lunch? Lunch is certainly around the corner. Food, can't wait. And then I'll have the food.

[ 1 : 16 ] And then there's the afternoon snack. And there's another coffee with that often. And as soon as I get home, I'm thinking, all right, what's for dinner? And then after dinner is done, while I'm cleaning the kitchen, I'm looking around.

Where's my little after dinner snack? I need some kind of dessert situation for me. Is there some kind of little treat? Taking a day out of eating and fasting actually helped me realize how much of my life is run by food, how much of my joy I get from food, how much wonder I place in my anticipation for eating.

I was looking to food as this thing that would satisfy me, as this thing that I hold up with awe. We are all wired for awe.

Now, awe is A-W-E, not the thing you row with, not O-R, but A-W-E, awe, which is reverence with fear and wonder.

We all have awe for things, but also all have awe problems. Things that we worship and chase that aren't God, the one who is deserving of awe, all awe.

[ 2 : 36 ] And an issue for many of us is that we live in a material world, we are dependent on material things, and we end up holding these material things in awe. But nothing in our world can give us peace or meaning or purpose.

And so what happens is street-level materialism captures our hearts and it eats up our time and energy and resources. For me, it was that issue of gluttony, not necessarily over-reading, but holding food in awe.

We're all physical, material beings, and we need to consume to survive. But often we can chase consuming things instead of the one who gives us good things.

Even for Christians, God, the one who we should be in awe of, we end up just being in awe of the things he gives us and chasing those. We all chase awe.

Whether it is the child who has ice cream for the first time and they get that buzz of sugar and they're like, oh, this is amazing, I need that again. Whether it's the person going to an art gallery, seeing beautiful works of art and being in awe, or the person who climbs a mountain and looks at amazing vistas.

[ 3 : 51 ] We are all wired for awe, but awesome stuff doesn't satisfy. Only the one who is deserving of all awe does.

We are in our Easter series, which is called Awe. As we head to Easter in two weeks' time, we're going to be reminded of Jesus' death and resurrection.

But over these next couple of weeks, we'll be called to have awe in God, to direct our sense of wonder and fear and reverence back to the one who deserves it.

And the challenge for us today as we start this series will be to be made aware of the material things that we have awe of and how we are to restore our awe of God.

So as we seek to do this, let me pray for us. Heavenly Father, I thank you for all your many gifts that you give us. Thank you for sweetness of food and for wonderful views and that you have made us people who can enjoy these things.

[ 5 : 01 ] But Heavenly Father, make us aware of the things that distract us and take us away from being in awe of you, Lord, that we would see how awesome you are.

Amen. Three points. This morning you can find those in the St. Paul's app as we go through this. And to help us as we seek to restore our awe of God, particularly the challenge of being people who consume things, today we're looking at the Lord's Supper, which Anne read for us this morning from Luke chapter 22, where Jesus commanded us to be consuming him in contrast to the things of the world for us.

The Lord's Supper is Jesus' final meal with his disciples before he is taken and crucified, which we'll see in two weeks' time. Jesus knew he was about to be killed and he prepares his disciples as he's about to walk this road to his crucifixion.

And so he gathers his disciples to celebrate the Passover together. And this meal is significant and we need to understand the Passover before we can understand the Lord's Supper.

So Luke 22, we're going to start in verse 14. Have your Bibles open with me. Chapter 22, verse 14. When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table and he said to them, I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.

[ 6 : 35 ] For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God. Just to give us context of what the Passover is, the Passover was a meal that the Jews would eat every year to celebrate and to remember how God saved them from Egypt.

God used Moses through 10 miracles to save the Israelites out of Egypt across the Red Sea. And the most significant aspect of the Passover was the final miracle or the final plague, where after nine plagues, God would show that he was powerful over Pharaoh and over the Egyptian gods. And God sent an angel to kill the firstborn, except for those who had sacrificed an animal, sacrificed a lamb, and put the blood of the lamb over their door. And so that day, God passed over those houses which had an animal sacrificed.

And every year after that time, God's people would remember that day. They would remember that Passover. They would continue to do that with a special feast to remember what God did.

And they would feast with lamb and bread made without yeast, with bitter herbs. And they would remember this feast and remember who their God was.

[ 7 : 59 ] They weren't remembering, so it slipped out of their memory, so they didn't just forget what happened. They were remembering it because of who God was. One of my favorite parts of being in Chatswood is learning about the different cultures around us and eating different foods.

One of my favorite seasonal foods has been Eight Treasures Duck. I don't know if you've eaten that one. That's a really good one. There's another festival coming up that's celebrated as part of the, I think it's the Chinese calendar.

It's the Dragon Boat Festival. Where historically they remember a famous poet called Chu Yuan who was celebrated by the people but committed suicide by jumping into a river.

And so the people rowed their boats out as quickly as they could and they threw sticky balls of rice into the water so the fish would eat the rice and not the poet. And so that from that time we eat zongzi, these sticky balls of rice wrapped in, what are they wrapped in, John?

Is it bamboo leaves? Banana. Banana leaves. Thank you. Bamboo leaves. Bamboo leaves. Okay, there's a fight going on here. So I know coming up on the 5th of May when we celebrate it, we're going to have different ones and we can all taste test to see what's best.

[ 9 : 16 ] And so we remember what happened. I think it was about 500 BC as well. So it's a while ago. And we have dragon boat races. Even coming up, I think it's coming up at the end of this month, there's Anzac Day where we remember those who fought in wars.

But the original Passover wasn't just an event to be remembered. It wasn't even a time just to eat food and remember something. It wasn't just an interesting piece of history.

It was something that continued. It was remembering who God is. A meal to celebrate God's character, that he is loving and he is forgiving.

He is good. He is patient with his people. He has power to defeat the enemy and that God made a way to save his enemy through death. The people at the Passover remembered who God was back in the Passover, who he continues to be and who he would be in the future, that he would save his people.

And Jesus is picking up that in Luke 22. He didn't just want his people to mark on the calendar, oh, this is when we have the meal with lamb and we have bitter herbs and we have to cook bread in this particular way.

[10:41] It was actually far more significant than just recalling an event. And so second point today, remembering and proclaiming the Lord's Supper, Jesus picks up on this that the Passover was more than just a historical event and he celebrates it in a new way.

No longer is it about lamb and bread made without yeast and bitter herbs, but there's a new meal. There's a new way of celebrating. Verse 19. He took bread, he gave thanks and he broke it and he gave it to them saying, this is my body given for you.

Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way, after the supper, he took the cup saying, this cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you. Jesus gives the wine and bread as a new Passover meal.

Jesus is the sheep. He's the one who's going to be sacrificed, but he is bringing in a new and everlasting covenant and there is a new way to remember it. And so today, when we celebrate the Lord's Supper or communion, which we'll do a little bit later, we're not just remembering something that happened 2000 years ago.

We're not just remembering a historical event. We're not just calling it to mind. It's not just a feast. And I'm actually really thankful. I've got a hot cross bun here. You can't see it. I'll slide it over here for those on screen. I've got a hot cross bun.

[12:06] I've never used a hot cross bun in communion, but it's literally got a cross on it. So I think that is a wonderful bread to use to celebrate communion. But it's not just remembering a historical event that formed a cultural identity.

We continue to participate in the Lord's Supper now. Jesus didn't just save us then. He is continuing to work now.

When we celebrate the Lord's Supper, it is to be a wonderful ceremony for us where we adjust our lives based on what we remember.

Because there's a number of things we celebrate in the Lord's Supper. When we celebrate the Lord's Supper, we remember Jesus' death for us. Our actions give us a picture of his death for us. When the bread is given out, we remember that Jesus' body was given for us. And when we hand out the juice and when we drink the juice, we're remembering that Jesus' blood was spilt instead of mine, instead of yours.

[13:18] We remember that when we get a benefit from his death, we get life as we participate. And it's not just an individual reminder that Jesus' death was for me.

It's a corporate mind reminder. It is for us as a church. We are giving a clear sign that we don't do this just at our homes.

We do this when we meet together. Because Jesus did die for me, but he died for you and he died for us. And so this is a family meal.

The meal reminds us that Jesus loves us. And while we remember a historical event in the Lord's Supper, we continue to do it now as we look forward to the final meal, the feast with Jesus when he returns and we are with him forever.

And what a feast that will be. And when we celebrate the Lord's Supper or communion, we affirm our dependence on Jesus. And we say, Jesus, I need you so much more than this food and this liquid.

[14:27] I need these things to survive for my body to continue to function. But I need you far more than that. I need you to forgive me. I need you to give me life because that's the only way I can have life.

And so communion helps to remind us that we should be in awe of our God or a mixture of fear and wonder.

Fear because the Lord's Supper reminds us of how deeply in need of him we are. And yet God in his goodness loves us.

He makes a way for us. He brings salvation because of his great love for us. It is so much more than just a symbol of a historical event. It calls us to respond with our hearts, to continue to praise him as we look forward to the meal we will have.

Paul talks about the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians 11. He says, for whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death. So when we actually eat this, when we drink this, we're actually preaching the gospel.

[ 15 : 32 ] We're saying we are in need of Jesus. You are in need of Jesus. And anybody who's watching at home, who's part of church online, we together are in need of him.

We get to proclaim the good news of the gospel by eating and drinking together. And when we do this, when we remember our desperate need, it leads us to awe.

It's our final point today. Communion or the Lord's Supper, it is for us. It's not just a practice that we legalistically follow. It's not just a routine.

It's not just something we go through. There's actually a benefit for us. Now, there is nothing special about the juice or the wafer that we'll have. Now, the hot cross bun is a little bit special, but there's nothing more special about that than the ingredients in it.

It doesn't physically become Jesus's body in communion, or it doesn't actually become his blood. But when we eat it, when we drink it, we're actively saying, Jesus, I depend upon you.

[ 16 : 38 ] I need you. I need you to die in my place. And I need you to have risen so that I have hope for tomorrow. Otherwise, I have no hope for tomorrow. And so when we feed on this food, we're feeding on him by faith.

It's a reminder that we are physical and material, and we depend upon food, but we depend upon him so much more. I think it's also really wonderful that Jesus gave us food and wine to symbolize the new covenant, the new testament.

Jesus could have replaced the Passover with anything. It could have been anything. It could have just been a prayer. It could have been an action. But he gave us a new meal because we are physical beings who consume things.

And I think this is so helpful for us because this is just part of who we are and how we are wired as people. Tastes and smells trigger memories for us because this is how we're wired.

I remember sitting in the back of the car as a kid on long family holidays and smelling my mum's perfume. So when I smell this particular perfume, it triggers these wonderful memories for me.

[ 17 : 59 ] Do you have these similar things? Maybe you smell something that reminds you of a family member. When you smell a particular type of food and it takes you back to your hometown. It's just the way our brains are wired.

Our brain connects foods and smells to memories. And there's a longing of our heart. Jesus tells us to eat and drink in remembrance of him.

It's just plain food we're having. Grape juice, a fairly plain wafer. But it is significant and special for our hearts and our souls.

It connects deeply with who we are as people. And it's a wonderful moment to be reminded to be in awe of God. God, you are so good.

You've loved me. You've provided for me. I can be in fear of you because you are so much bigger than me. I can wonder at you because I'm small and I'm in need of you.

[ 19 : 02 ] But you do provide. And we need this. And we need this regularly. Because we are also regularly consumed throughout the week by other things.

We get distracted by things that we think will satisfy. I think it's been particularly hard for all of us in this season of COVID, post-COVID, lockdowns, just general anxieties about life.

I had the wonderful privilege yesterday of marrying two people from our church, Jessica and Oscar. Got the chance to marry them. And that was a really wonderful occasion. There's a number of people of church there.

But just walking with them as they were getting ready to be married, getting, I don't know if you've organized a wedding. I can't remember organizing mine. It was too long ago.

There are so many things to organize in a wedding. Think about how many things you need to juggle organizing a wedding in a COVID season where people are pulling out and you don't know how many people can make it.

[ 20 : 08 ] And you're just juggling things upon things. I think we are just, as Steve mentioned recently, we're still in a season a season of languishing, a season of depression and anxiety.

We're going through the normal motions and trying to do normal things, but they are hard and increasingly difficult. And worry comes into that, trying to plan, you know, anything. Our family has two school parties today and they've been canceled because of COVID and different things and the rain certainly hasn't helped. Plans get thrown into disarray and so our hearts can feel pulled to cynicism and worry and I'm not even going to look forward to anything. I'm not going to be in awe of anything because it's all too hard. And so maybe I won't plan for something because it's hard. And then not only do I not plan, I stop caring about what's coming up because it's all too hard.

And so it's no wonder for me that I'm consuming more of my phone than I ever had before. I was really, I don't know about you guys, but I get a pop-up on my phone Sunday mornings just before church starts, which is always a wonderful rebuke for me.

[ 21 : 25 ] It tells me my average amount of hours on my phone. Does anybody want to tell me their average amount of hours on their phone? No, no. I was really excited this morning when I got my pop-up because it said mine was down to five and a half hours a day.

Down to that many hours. And I was thankful but then just like, man, daddy, I'm still consuming so much of my phone. There's more TV to distract me of the challenges of life because the reality is me and you, we're chasing things to be in awe of.

I need something wonderful. Do you know what? Not even wonderful, not even awesome. I just want something mildly okay to distract me. I'm not even chasing awesome things. Into this season and into the challenges of life, Jesus calls us to restore our awe of him.

Celebrating the Lord's Supper helps us to do that. But just the regular rhythm of church is also good for us. The regular rhythm of coming to church once a week, gathering, is really good for us.

We need the weekly gathering of 60 to 90 minutes on a Sunday to restore our awe of God. I think it's indicative of how God made us to be on the seventh day.

[ 22 : 48 ] God rested. God instituted the Sabbath. It is part of who we are as physical beings. We need a weekly reminder that God is the one who we should be in awe of.

He is the one we should be consuming and not the other things we need to consume and don't need to consume throughout the week. And every aspect of church in some way is restoring our awe of God.

And so, as we get up to sing a song at the start of our service, at the end of our service, it's restoring our awe because we sing of how good our God is. Our singing calls us to connect deep theological truths with our heart and praise Him.

Over our vision series, we've been hearing different people's testimony, what it means to be on their front line, what it means to be walking, following God in a difficult workplace.

We're reminded by the awesome God that these people have been worshipping. And we get to say, I'm going to keep worshipping God. I'm going to keep being in awe of Him because I can see how it is in their life.

[ 23 : 54 ] When we sit under the Bible, when the Bible is read for us, we should be in awe that the God of the universe has made it so we can understand Him. He's given us words.

He communicates as we communicate. He's given us words so we can understand Him. Then, when somebody, Steve, myself, somebody else gets up to preach, we get to see all kinds of wonderful things about God.

His wisdom and His power. We get to see His glory, His perfection and holiness. His presence, His love, His sovereign control. Easter is coming up and we are reminded of His boundless grace to us that His Son would die for me and for you.

Brothers and sisters, we live in a world that consumes so much and we're seeking to be captivated by something that is awesome but in our distraction, we forget the one that we stand in awe of.

So a simple call, don't give up meeting together. Don't give up meeting together as a church. It's normal to miss a week of church.

[ 25 : 07 ] It's quite normal when a family member is isolated and it's a wonderful joy that we can do that online but when we miss a couple of weeks of church, we run the risk of getting out of the rhythm of being in awe of God and instead we consume the things of the material world and we think they will satisfy.

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