

# Selecting Your Appetites

A sermon presented by The Rev. Philip A. Rodgers presented Sunday, January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018  
at Trinity United Church in Malton, related to 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

"What's it going to be for your appetizer today?" our server asked. When my wife and I dine out, we usually pass on the appetizers – although when the family gathers at a restaurant everyone digs in with their favourites. That's because I'm left with the cheque.

Today the apostle Paul speaks passionately about appetizers: notably *food and sex*...and since we are rather passionate about food and sex ourselves, *our ears perk right up*. It's talking about it in church that makes us uncomfortable. I'll respect your comfort level...

Paul is talking about more than that though, and we know what we're really dealing with here is *appetite*...food comes first (who doesn't like a well prepared and presented meal), then desire, longing, and then yearnings of the flesh. And we also know – and we don't need Saint Paul to tell us this – that we mostly get it wrong when it comes to the latter. We find ourselves yearning and longing for the wrong things, in the wrong ways. We do not quite know when, where, why, or how we can allow our appetites to express themselves and because of this, it all goes wrong.

Of course, it's all the fault of marketing genius', television and other main media who know full well that sex sells anything. When we watch television, we discover that there is a great industry out there creating wants for us that we have absolutely no desire whatsoever for this or for that, but after a number of seductive advertisements on television, the desire for the heretofore unwanted item becomes compelling.

Children make easy prey. Year after year, there's another toy that children simply must have. A few years ago it was "*Tickle Me Elmo*". "*Tickle Me Elmo*" was absolutely necessary. Today, who remembers that? These things come and these things go. Adults cannot laugh at the children though, because adults fall into this trap on several levels, from the new car to the new smart phone, to the new stock that is flying off the markets data sheet, to that new, young, handsome politician...

A number of years ago, politicians promoted themselves because they thought they were capable of governing. Now, they promote themselves because they are attractive, so much so that we've turned politicians into celebrities, and celebrities into politicians. Some people's veiled claim to political astuteness is simply that they are known. So now actors and other entertainers assume that they have the ability to be Prime Minister or President simply because they have been well packaged. We live now in a world that manipulates our appetites and our wants.

So we do not need Saint Paul to hold up food and sex, which still tend to dominate. Our own experience demonstrates quite strongly the power of appetites gone wrong. When we covet, our longings and our yearnings have been horribly miscalculated. So as Christian people, we then ask, "How can my encounter with God – specifically with God in Jesus – begin to do something about my appetites, so that I will get all of this in some sort of balance, some sort of control?"

Today we first read from 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians the discussion about sex. Then, in John's Gospel lesson Jesus calls to Nathaniel and Philip, saying, "*I want you; follow me.*" So God has an appetite for us and wants a relationship. God yearns for you. So desire is of God. Desire is the stuff of the universe. Desire, longing, yearning and appetite are what make the whole universe stay together. The law of gravity is a law of attraction. Love makes the world go 'round, but this love is not a sensual love or of having and possessing and owning; rather, it's a love that is embracing, sharing, celebrating, and entering into union. It is love couched in respect and honour and trust.

Our culture, unfortunately equates desire with the sensual, possessing, and we know it does not work because our appetites are inexhaustible; and if we have one thing, we'll want two, and when we get two, we'll want the whole set, and when we have the whole set, we want the whole collection, and then we want the greater collection. We want to have more than anybody else, and when we have all of that, we still want more...and then we're trapped.

A new film was released a few weeks ago called "*All The Money In The World*", focused on the critical incident of the kidnapping of G. Paul Getty's grandson. G. Paul Getty was said to have been the richest man in the world. It's a fascinating film on many levels, but there is one scene where Getty is asked about his money and why he wouldn't pay a ransom for his grandchild and what with all his money what he wanted. His answer was simple: "*MORE!*"

God calls to me; God calls to you. It's not to own us; it's not to control us or abuse us or turn us into some kind of robot. It's not to make us part of a collection. It's not to put us on a shelf somewhere and say, "*another notch in my belt*". It's to enter into communion. It's to allow the same spirit that motivates Jesus to motivate us. The same power that is alive in Jesus, the same love that is alive in Jesus can become a love and a power that is alive in you and me.

And so we learn the nature of yearning, the nature of appetite, and that it is okay to have yearnings. I would like to ask Jesus though, "Why were inexperienced and unknowing Philip and Nathaniel asked to follow you? What did you see in them? A good manager? A good cook? You're a good worker? Do they teach well? Do they write well?"

When all is said and done, what is God going to see in you, that you are a good manager? A good worker? No, it's exhausting. Is it because you're a good cook? No. "*I'm all cooked out!*" an elderly friend of mine said the other day. Jesus is yearning for you because you can love, because you have the ability of loving back, because you have been made in the image and likeness of God. You are capable; you are **response-able**. You are able to love, and this is what the eternal is all about.

"*And what's your appetizer going to be for today?*" our server asked. Saint Paul was right in sounding a note of caution. I (we) get it all wrong. Our appetites go crazy. Things dominate us. Passions dominate. But yet, this is precisely why God wants us because we are such lovers, and therefore how do we find a way of getting those loves under control? We listen to what Jesus said to Philip and asked Nathaniel, "*I want you. Come follow me!*"

We will follow him so that we can learn how to desire rightly and fully, to allow our appetites full reign, knowing that they are in the hands of God. Follow him so that we can love in a way that brings joy and peace, not just now, but through eternity. Follow him in a way that will be just as fresh on the day we die as it was on the day we were baptized. Follow him so that we can, in Saint Paul's words, earthy as they sound, sexy as they sound, glorify God in our bodies, in our appetites, in our yearnings, in our loves. Follow him.

***Let us pray:*** Almighty God, whose Son our Savior Jesus Christ is the Light of the World, grant that your people, illumined by your Word and Sacraments, may shine with the radiance of Christ's glory, that he may be known, worshipped, and obeyed to the ends of the earth. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns one God now and forever. Amen.