

Romans 14:13-23 – Avoiding Food Fights

Good morning, thank you for joining us

Anecdote

Last week in our house, we woke up to find a present left at our door,....this is what it is, a toilet roll, it was a present from our 80 year old neighbour to say thank you for an act of kindness in giving her some food.....a toilet roll for food, we live in strange times.

Intro –

We've been looking at some Bible passages, that show us what it means to live as God's dearly loved, beloved people, how we're called to shine brightly in our needy world, and today we see how Christians are to disagree well and **avoid having food fights**.

Passage

You see people in the early church were obsessed with food. Today, in Bath many of us are fearful of not having enough food and queuing at the supermarkets, but then it was about what was the 'right food to eat. And in a city like Bath, there has been a revolution of food culture over the last 30-40 years, its full of café's and restaurants, different producers, supermarkets. And most of us will have opinions about the right places to get our food. Some of us might be thinking I'd never go to Lidl, or Waitrose or McDonald's or the poshest restaurant.....only local, only organic – while much of world has no choice what to eat.

Back when our bible passage was written, The Jews Christians wouldn't eat with the Gentile Christians, this barrier was food, what was right to eat or not, and it threatened to split the early church.

So what does the Bible teach us about overcoming these disagreements? Two pronged approach

1. How we treat each other
2. How we live out God's kingdom

Paul's approach to controversies

You see, the writer Paul went everywhere preaching that God's long-awaited kingdom had broken into the world in and through Jesus, completing the story of Israel. Jesus was the one person in history who lived a sinless life and through his sacrificial death, his glorious resurrection, his gift of the Holy Spirit and his future return everyone in the world, Jews and Gentiles who turned to Jesus in faith and repentance would find ultimate salvation. What the Apostle Paul didn't do was go around the Roman Empire offering an encyclopaedia length set of rules governing every aspect of life. Paul repeatedly came back to the good news of Jesus. Who is he what has he done for you. Work it out.

So Paul doesn't pick sides, in a food fight, and say. Hey, Jewish people, loosen up and have a bacon sandwich. Or, "Hey, Gentiles, what you eat for breakfast is disgusting. *He says, Think through the good news of God's kingdom more deeply.*

1 How we treat each other (Bible open) Romans 14:13

Paul says, Stop judging each other. **don't judge**. Stop looking down on people. Stop picking fights with others on secondary issues, on food, dress, politics, music etc. don't judge.

The second thing he says. **Don't hurt** each other - **Romans 14:15**

We can really hurt other Christian's by fighting on secondary issues –we push people out, talk behind their backs make cruel comments and jokes. Stop doing it if you love God and his church. 1st, do no harm.

And the thirdly Paul gives is **keep quiet** - **Romans 14:22**

In other words, you don't have to tell people everything you think about every issue. Exercise self control over your opinions. Keep them to yourself. God is perfectly able to straighten out other people without your advice and opinions. Keep quiet, stop being a stumbling block. **Don't judge, don't hurt, learn to keep quiet.**

How we live out the good news of God's kingdom this Palm Sunday

Romans 14:15 for whom Christ died. **Imitate the example of Christ**

Be willing to give up your rights, like Jesus did. Put others first. Jesus died for them.

Most of us think the way to a good life is about pushing yourself forward. Be aggressive. Look out for #1. Jesus taught an entirely different way to a full life. He said, "Only when you give up your life, will you experience the abundant life that I came to bring.

And then there's this beautiful verse here in Romans 14:17 *For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit,*

Paul tells us that food choices won't get you nearer to God. The Kingdom of God is a short hand for the rule of God, the reign of God, making God no 1 in your life. *Jesus arrival has changed everything breaking down the dividing walls of separation including of what is ok to eat or not.* If something else rules or dominates your life – food, alcohol, video games, sport, culture, leisure the Bible calls that an idol. An idol is the thing you live for organise your whole life around.

Why do we do that? Paul says, We're looking through food, **for righteousness, peace and joy.**

Paul says there is only one way to righteousness, peace and joy. That's God's Kingdom. If you organize your life around anything else other than Christ, you are always going to be frustrated in your search for perfection, and feel unacceptable. You're always going to be frustrated in the search for inner peace and you are going to be frustrated in your search for real joy and real pleasure that lasts.

This Palm Sunday we celebrate that Jesus coming into Jerusalem as a humble king, He is the only one who will supply you with the acceptance and love that you and I crave. Jesus will give us the peace inside that we so desperately need in these anxious times. And Jesus will fill your life with joy as you live under his rule.

Let's pray.

This Palm Sunday as thank you for the good news of Jesus, our humble king. By your holy spirit, gives us the power to live and demonstrate your righteousness, peace and joy in BATH Today and avoid damaging others in the church. Renew our trust in your son Jesus this Easter time, we pray Amen