

That first potato chip.

What is it? The crunch? The salt? The greasiness? The potato flavor? All of them together?

Whatever it is my brain tells my hand to reach for another. And another. And another.

Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread and your labor for that which does not satisfy?

The first glass of wine. The world is a little brighter – conversation more interesting – shoulders more relaxed – everything is better. But add more wine, a second glass, a third, a fourth, and soon more becomes less. I'm feeling no pain but tomorrow there will be consequences – broken pieces that can't be glued back together.

Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread and your labor for that which does not satisfy?

That first extra hour at work. More was accomplished – more profit, more praise, more esteem from the boss. But soon the extra becomes a habit, an addiction and brings not more but less, less energy, less joy, less care in your work. Soon you are working all the time – work has become your life – everything else is being sacrificed to this god.

Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread and your labor for that which does not satisfy?

Good gifts of God, everyone of them – potato chips, wine, work. And we could add so many others – entertainment, sexual desire, taking an interest in what is happening to others, having money. But every one of these good gifts of God can take charge of us – become an addiction. This one is sacrificing time with others for time in front of the TV – the next one is secretly filling up on pornography – still another is hungering for juicy morsel about her neighbor –gossip, another one is sacrificing everything for more money.

Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread and your labor for that which does not satisfy?

Why indeed? Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money come, buy and eat! Come buy wine and milk without money and without price. Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to me; listen so that you may live.

Your Lord does not offer empty calories here but food that truly nourishes, truly satisfies.

It takes no great talent to get addicted to cocaine – no great discipline to snack on potato chips through the day and into the night. But to feast on what the Lord gives for free requires that you focus your ears, your heart, your life on God's word. That first nibble of what the Lord offers will not bring with it the same thrill that sexual fantasy does. Inclining your ear to the Lord will not lift up your low self esteem the way gossiping about your neighbor's failings promises to. The latest smash hit from Hollywood will entertain you far more than Lenten plays on a Wednesday evening. But in time your deepest hungers will be satisfied.

Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; let the wicked abandon their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts; let them return to the Lord that he may have mercy on them, and to our God for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.

Let the wicked abandon their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts.

God is not talking to people out there – but you and I right here. The very one who preaches God's word to you has thoughts and ways that are not worthy of God. The very people who listen to this sermon have thoughts and ways that need to be abandoned. Our ways are not God's ways - that is the truth. Our thoughts are not God's thoughts.

But God has made this promise: My word shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I intend, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

God's word that your ears hear, that your heart embraces shall not return to God empty. God's word that you come to feast on this day in the bread and in the wine shall not be empty in you but will make you new.

Do you believe it – that you could be new? Do you believe God has the power to claim you? You no longer belong to your addictions and your nibblings but to the Lord.

This day begin to hear – begin to trust – begin to hope in God. In God’s word is power to rescue you from every master that enslaves you.

Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money come, buy and eat! Come buy wine and milk without money and without price. Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to me; listen so that you may live.