

The Pastors Connection

Dec. 2009

How Much Cheese Cake?

“For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer.” I Timothy 4:4-5

Some first century believers were forbidding marriage. Others ordered abstinence from certain foods. I’m imagining the forbidden diet was the equivalent of the second piece of cheese cake I’m tempted to indulge each Thanksgiving Day☺.

In verse three Paul says “ordering people to abstain from certain foods” is an example of teaching that “comes through hypocritical liars”. Whew, now may I feel better about my sweet tooth excesses?

Actually it’s not that simple. Integrity to the text requires us to go deeper. Don’t you just hate it when a useful excuse gets dismantled?

The foundational issue Paul was addressing is legalism. People have a hard time accepting the grace of God as pure gift. We want some credit; even in our salvation story. So, on a regular basis religious folk have added requirements. In our faith tradition, that tendency took us from being revivalists relevant to societies challenges; to withdrawing into cultural enclaves defining acceptable and unacceptable outer garments.

Legalism repeats original sin with its fruit. It was against such realities that Paul was pushing back to declare that “everything God created is good.”

But let us also note that Paul does not say “everything is good.” There are two qualifiers. The first defines as good “everything **God** created...” The second qualifier is “if consecrated by the word of God and prayer.” Just because we begin holiday feasts with a prayer consecrating the meal doesn’t mean the cheese cake can be eaten with unlimited excess. God created the original ingredients. We make the cheese cake.

We are again in the holiday seasons. Thanksgiving Day and the coming celebration of Christ’s birth give us much for which to be grateful! Let’s indeed enjoy the feast! But let’s also be good stewards of the bodies God has entrusted to our care by limiting our consumption, not only on holidays, but as a lifestyle.

By so doing, we can be privileged partners in God’s redemptive purposes for His creation. Our decision to accept responsibility for the Twin Valley Food Pantry gives us one more such opportunity. It flows in our long tradition of mission that lives Christ’s story to benefit others.

And now, having defined the boundaries; please pass the cheese cake. I'd like to practice my resolve to limit my serving to one helping!

Joyfully living Christ's story with you, Pastor Bob