

## 8.11.24 “Taste and See” Teaching by Pastor Melissa Logsdon

### INTRO

Hello, my name is Melissa Logsdon, and I serve as Associate Pastor for New Covenant Fellowship. Join me in prayer for today’s teaching:

Jesus you are the bread of life. Help us to “Taste and See” how good you are. Let us come away from this time with a deeper conviction of your goodness, your loving-kindness, for us and for all those in our world. Amen.

For this week’s teaching, the Revised Lectionary had 2 sets each of passages from the Old Testament, New Testament, and Psalms. One of the sets: 1 Kings 19, John 6 and Psalm 34 all center around bread from heaven and the goodness of God.

It seems like we’ve had several teachings referencing bread recently. I myself was about to move on, after all, we’ve already been talking about miracles of bread, Jesus as bread, we get it. Right? But before you check out exclaiming “ugh, here’s one more!”, I challenge you, us, to engage with open hearts for what God may want to say to us today. I know what stirred up in me from reading these passages, and hope sharing my responses will help you too to say **“Taste and see how good Yahweh is!”**

### READING FROM 1 Kings 19:4-8 NIV

“...while [Elijah] himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness. He came to a broom bush, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. “I have had enough, Lord,” he said. “Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.” Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep. All at once an angel touched him and said, “Get up and eat.” He looked around, and there by his head was some bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again.

The angel of the Lord came back a second time and touched him and said, “Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you.” So he got up and ate

and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God.”

**“Taste and see how good Yahweh is!”**

#### FRESH BAKED BREAD

Reading this passage (1 Kings 19:4-8) is very comforting, if we take a moment to slow down we can see God’s loving kindness in this moment. Yes, it is a miracle: Elijah being fed bread from heaven! But, it’s in some ways easy to skip over it. I mean after all, God has a reputation for doing miracles, for meeting needs, for sending bread from heaven!

And this moment is sandwiched between 2 epic moments in Elijah’s life: a national audience showdown and God showing up and meeting Elijah in a whisper.

So, lest we miss the comfort and loving kindness God showed Elijah in that moment, let’s slow down right from the start and dwell here together.

This bread from heaven provided for Elijah, could have just been laying out on the ground, which in my humble opinion could have been pretty cool—picture that, your very own manna from heaven experience? I think Elijah would have thought that was pretty cool! But, in God’s loving kindness, Elijah didn’t have to go to the work of gathering the manna and preparing his own meal. He was physically and emotionally exhausted. And God knew it. God, knowing Elijah’s state, provided for his emotional and spiritual needs by how he provided this bread for him. An angel came to Elijah (personal delivery) and took the time to prepare a fire and bake the bread over the fire. Fresh baked bread was the bread from heaven provided for Elijah.

Let’s just pause on this scene for a moment. I want us to really picture this provision, this comfort.

Just imagine the smell and sight of fresh baked bread..the warmth...the taste...Baked just for you. With love.

**“Taste and see how good Yahweh is!”**

Imagine being Elijah in this moment of loving provision.

Elijah was on the run. Not after defeat, but after a victory.

Elijah had just stood, by himself, in defense of the One true God. Against political leaders, religious leaders, and much of the general population. For some reason anyone else that worshiped God wasn't standing up with Elijah. Other prophets of God weren't lining up to join in Elijah's declarations. But Elijah stood up, spoke up, showed up.

God did show up and reveal the power of the One True God over all the other gods being worshiped. (This was the time that the offerings were supernaturally burnt up after first being drowned out in water).

However, the victory didn't go as planned for Elijah. Even though God showed the truth, and some people may have been swayed, overall those in charge hadn't changed. And the ruling power, Jezebel, wanted Elijah dead! So Elijah was on the run. Alone. Feeling very much like he would like to be dead!

And that's where God met him, with fresh baked bread.

**“Taste and see how good Yahweh is!”**

LEAVING THE WHITE EVANGELICAL CHURCH

When I read this story, I very much related to the alone feeling Elijah was experiencing with his faith. My story is not so life or death, although at times in a heightened emotional state it has very much felt that way!

This is the story of me leaving the “White Evangelical Church” as Sarah McCammon terms it in her book: “The Exvangelicals: Loving, Living, and Leaving the White Evangelical Church”.

This book is being called “The first definitive book that names the growing social movement of people leaving the church: the Exvangelicals”. It is a book that mixes research with the author’s own experiences. And for me it was a highly autobiographical read. Sarah McCammon reports on the unraveling of her and others’ known worldviews through the “deconstructing” of their faith and shared how there is a need to “reconstruct” but many are still feeling alone as they are looking for “another way”. Another way of following Jesus, loving God, the Bible, and the Church, but NOT embracing the morality focus and the political agenda of the “White Evangelical Church.”

When I left the “White Evangelical Church”, one, it was not a planned decision. In some ways, it happened instantly. And in other ways, it had been building for about 15 years. And, two, when I left, I didn’t physically go anywhere. I still lived in the same town, same house. Overall, my family and friends still very much remained unchanged in their beliefs, values, political perspectives. No one “left” with me. I’m the one that changed. I’m the one that left. The sense of being so utterly unmoored increased with each step I took and continue to take away from that once secure, had-all-the-answers sub-culture I once called “home”.

As unsettling as that feeling of being adrift is, I can’t go back. Scratch that. I don’t want to go back. I am so convinced of the vastness of God’s love, the pouring out of God’s Spirit here to guide, comfort, and empower ALL OF US who seek to follow Jesus; the unearned gift of relationship with God as dearly loved children and an unbreakable dwelling within God’s love.

When I left my last ministry position (for several reasons that I’m not getting into today), I intended to find another place to work as a minister in our community—right away. What I knew and didn’t fully know, was that I had

changed more in that year than I had realized. I was about to jump right into working for an Evangelical organization and was just completing all my new hire paperwork. There was just one “little” problem—I couldn’t check a box or two or three on the employee handbook agreement! I knew my tattoos are a problem in some Evangelical settings—cover them up for work if need be...sure...but is that really what I want to do...hide who I really am...what I value...how I express myself. I was willing to for the job, but...and that’s how it went down the checklist, until I came to one that I just COULD NOT, DID NOT, want to check. There was a box affirming that God intended marriage to only be between a man and a woman and for the purpose of procreation. What I knew they were getting at was a stance against same sex marriage, which at the time, I would have been able to go along with and check the box (after all, I thought I was still a card carrying member of the “White Evangelical Church”, had been all my life. Nothing new here...except there was and I just hadn’t realized it yet).

See, earlier that year I had just gone through a hysterectomy; after 12 years of a very physically and emotionally painful season of infertility.

And so, while I KNEW what this organization was intending to say in this statement, I couldn’t help but feeling completely excluded. Not right. Not enough. I was already struggling through all my feelings around God and healing and prayer and miracles and my sense of self-worth as a pastor, as a person. So to throw that statement at me, was like throwing salt into an open wound. I’m sure I could have talked to the director and HE would have of course told me that they weren’t in any way excluding ME in that statement. But then, I thought about the ones they WERE intending to exclude in this statement. And then it hit me—I couldn’t check that box...not anymore.

**“Taste and see how good Yahweh is!”**

A WHISPERING GOD

What led up to Elijah feeling like he just wanted to die after seeing a victorious miracle? Yes, he was on the run from Jezebel wanting to kill him,

but he had just seen the One True God show up in a mighty way. Which was a direct answer to this prayer Elijah prayed:

“Answer me, Lord, answer me, so these people will know that you, Lord, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again.” (1 Kings 18:37)

I think maybe Elijah wanted to see everyone, including those in power, to turn their hearts back to God, immediately. Isn't that what we all want? And when Elijah didn't see that, he felt discouraged, and was in real peril for his life.

And that is where God met him.

**“Taste and see how good Yahweh is!”**

Fast forward 40 days, and we find Elijah hiding out in a cave.

God finds Elijah, calls out to Elijah, and meets with Elijah. Of all the ways God could choose to represent the presence of Yahweh in Elijah's midst, God chose not the wind, earthquake, or fire, but a gentle whisper!

**“Taste and see how good Yahweh is!”**

God reveals to Elijah a succession plan for placing good kings to rule, a like-minded prophet to mentor/partner with and the fact that a remnant of at least 7,000 have remained faithful to God. Elijah was not, is not alone in following God.

**“Taste and see how good Yahweh is!”**

A DEAR FRIEND

A dear friend came alongside me in my state of “hiding out in a cave” so to speak, and helped me see that I was not alone either. He helped me process my thoughts around why I couldn't check that box on that form that day. And where I might find other followers of God that were like-minded. And that is a very, very short explanation of how I came to be part of New Covenant Fellowship.

**“Taste and see how good Yahweh is!”**

#### THOSE EXCLUDED / THOSE INCLUDED

As we reflect on today’s scripture reading from the gospel of John, Jesus said: “I am the Bread that came down from heaven,”

“I am the Bread of Life. Come every day to me and you will never be hungry. Believe in me and you will never be thirsty.”

Jesus goes on to say: The only way people come to me is by Abba God who sent me—God pulls on their hearts to embrace me.”

Jesus’ invites, “Unite your heart to me and believe—and you will experience eternal life! I am the true Bread of Life...Eat this Bread and you will live forever.’

**“Taste and see how good Yahweh is!”**

Jesus doesn’t have a list of people that he excludes from this invitation.

Neither does New Covenant Fellowship.

I am glad to be part of a fellowship of believers that extend Jesus’ loving invitation to ALL, including fully-affirming people identifying as LGBTQ+.

#### EXTENDING THE INVITATION

It’s been quite a few years now since NCF made a decision to be a fully-affirming fellowship. I wasn’t here at the time, but I’m guessing that journey, although easy for some, was difficult for others, and perhaps even a “hide in a cave” “I wish I were dead” moment either during the process or even after the “victory” of the working out of this belief. And today, you may feel a sense of comfortability around this value and this place and people that share this value.

So, why am I talking about it today?

In a word: the Olympics.

For those of you who don't know, there was a considerable stir—worldwide—in the faith community over a segment of the opening ceremonies in Paris for the 2024 Olympics. The controversy centers on a scene portraying a group of drag queens gathered at a table. The artist explains it as a nod to part of Greek Mythology, which makes a lot of sense since it was the opening ceremony for the Olympics—which originates from Greek culture. No matter the intent of the artist, the religious community saw it as a mockery of the last supper. What transpired next was a slurry of boycotting around the Olympic Games and a ton of hate speech from “Christians”. It all at once made me extremely embarrassed to declare myself a Christian and extremely mad at these Christians declaring an exclusionary stance on God, on the Lord's table.

What can we do? What should our response be?

After this incident, I shared with Pastor Renee my heart and some thoughts. Her and I have been discussing some next steps and have been working with the Leadership Team on some ideas as well. I'll share a bit with you now and I encourage you, if interested, to engage with LT members and Renee and me.

New Covenant Fellowship has good news to share!

We take Jesus at his word and want to partner in extending Jesus' invitation to come to the table, to partake in the bread of Life.

**“Taste and see how good Yahweh is!”**

Therefore, we want to be more intentional about raising our visibility to our CU community. We believe there are other people in our community feeling alone in their faith and looking for a community of like-minded believers. We also believe there are people in our community that have been excluded from God, from the church, and from Christian fellowship, that



may have won a personal “victory” but are feeling isolated. We want to let them know we are here and they are all welcome.

As such, we now have our church added to the News Gazette’s Church Directory that appears in print every Friday. With that addition, we now appear in their online directory as well.

Along with the basic info about our church, we have shared that we are a “Fully affirming LGBTQ+, Social Justice, Biblically-Focused Jesus-Centered Community.”

The way Google algorithms work, because we are on the local newspaper’s list, we will start to appear more often when people Google “churches near me”.

Each fall, NCF runs an ad in the CU Pride Fest program. This fall, we have also registered for a booth in the Pride Fest Fair. It’ll be the afternoon of Saturday, September 21st. We want to be present to bring this good news to the Pride Fest of an open invitation, to ALL, to the table, to the Bread of Life.

Join with me in inviting our community to

**“Taste and see how good Yahweh is!”**

May you be blessed from the Word.

And may you come to the table with a renewed sense of awe and appreciation in being included in God’s loving-kindness to you, to us all.

Amen.