

# ***Food Glorious Food***

Sunday, Jan 29 2012

Church of the Advent, Colwood BC - Rev. Ken Gray

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## TEXT

Now concerning **food sacrificed to idols**: we know that ‘all of us possess knowledge.’ **Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.**

Hence, as to the **eating of food offered to idols**, we know that ‘no idol in the world really exists’, and that ‘**there is no God but one.**’

Since some have become so accustomed to idols until now, they still think of the food they eat as food offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. ‘**Food will not bring us close to God.**’

## LOADER

Paul is responding to another worry expressed in the letter from Corinth. Clearly **some in the community saw no problem in eating meat which had derived from the temple slaughtering where the animal would have been considered an offering to an idol.** It may have been difficult even to get meat which had not been through such a process. It made sense to say: we eat it and we see no problem because we don't believe in idols anyway. Perhaps Paul himself would do so on occasions and perhaps those who think like this could point to Paul's own behaviour, or, at least, his theology of freedom from such considerations.

Such **freedom belongs, for Paul, within a context of responsibility and especially of love.** Paul never seems happy with absolutes. Knowledge and insight is always relational. **People are always in focus.** Underlying his thought constantly seems to be: and what does this mean for those around me and for my relationship to God. The relation to God and to people are inseparable for Paul. In some ways it reminds us of Jesus' saying: the sabbath was made for people not people for the sabbath. **People matter most.** Correctness according to the Law or correctness in knowledge or even doctrine must be considered in the setting of the **overarching doctrine of multidirectional love.**

The problem at Corinth seems to be not that those who do not believe in idols are wrong, but that **there is always more to consider than being right.** Many people still struggle with this problem. **When getting it right (whether at the conservative or liberal end of theology and practice) is foremost, people usually get relationships wrong.** At worst we see it in fanaticism. It can also express itself in intolerance and insensitivity. There is a criterion of truth that concerns itself with faithfulness (or being true in a different sense) to my neighbour. I can be right but fail really to listen and engage. Most people in marriages and similar relationships will have had such experiences. **Winning the argument and working through the relational issues can be quite different things.** The latter often courts the scornful comment that these are irrational issues.

We need to bear in mind that **much sacrifice in the ancient world had to do with communion with the god by eating the meat of the sacrifice (as also in the eucharist).**

So the issues need assessing in each new situation. It might mean for some abstention from alcohol in communities where alcohol is a huge problem, or, at least from insensitive use. It might entail issues of sensitivity about dress, food, and a range of other behaviours.

FRED PENNER

Sandwiches are beautiful,

Sandwiches are fine.  
I like sandwiches, I eat them all the time;  
I eat them for my supper and I eat them for my lunch;  
If I had a hundred sandwiches, I'd eat them all at once.  
I'm a roaming and a rambling  
And a wandering all along,  
And if you care to listen,  
I will sing a happy song.  
I will not ask a favor  
And I will not ask a fee,  
But if you have a sandwich  
Won't you give a bite to me?

Once I went to England,  
I visited the Queen,  
I swear she was the grandest lady  
That I've ever seen.  
I told her she was beautiful  
And could not ask for more,  
She handed me a sandwich  
And she threw me out the door.

A sandwich may be egg or cheese  
Or even peanut butter  
But they all taste so good to me,  
It doesn't even matter  
Jam or ham or cucumber,  
Any kind will do.  
I like sandwiches,  
How about you?