

A Deadly Sin: Gluttony

Scripture Reading — Philippians 3:12-4:1

Do not join those who ... gorge themselves on meat, for ... drowsiness clothes them in rags. Proverbs 23:20-21 —

We typically think of gluttony as a matter of caloric intake. Simply put, a glutton is someone who eats too much. In North America, we are becoming increasingly concerned about the problem of unhealthy eating and obesity. But the sin of gluttony is not first of all about weight gain and dieting. Gluttony cannot be diagnosed merely by stepping on a bathroom scale. A better definition focuses on overindulgence in, or preoccupation with, food and drink. That means I can be in fine physical shape and yet struggle with this sin.

Gluttony has to do with our attitude to things that satisfy our stomachs and our "tastes." It has to do with how much attention, time, and money we spend on things that satisfy our physical hunger and thirst. In North America it means asking how fussy we have become about food. How extravagantly do we eat, especially compared to what we give to world hunger? How much do we consume? Are we addicted in any way?

We need to ask about our attitudes to food and drink. We need to wonder about how much our appetites may negatively affect our relationships with God and our neighbor. A day of fasting may be the best way to become aware of that, and it can provide a time to focus again on God. Jesus assumes we will find the time well spent (see Matthew 6:16-18).

Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank you for food that nurtures and for the gift of taste. Help me to use and enjoy these as you intend, and to help others experience the same. In your name, Amen.

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