

O Taste And See That The Lord Is Good!
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This was our VBS theme from Psalm 34:8 – maybe you heard it as Monica read - a week ago as kids gathered here and – thanks to Monica’s excellent leadership - had the opportunity to learn about many organizations who feed the hungry – and engage in activities that helped them do that.

We had visits from Citi-team, Loaves and Fishes, WVCS, and Cake for Kids.

We also learned the Biblical foundation of all this – how Jesus fed the hungry and helped the poor...and also how Jesus satisfies our own spiritual hunger...

after I speak we have them singing their theme song **Taste and See!**

And thanks kids – they are staying in the service today – so glad you are all here. I’ve tried to make this talk kid-friendly...so hang in there as you listen to me. I also want to thank all of the houseboat youth many of whom accepted Christ for the first time on houseboats – there is a long list, and then came and helped with VBS sharing the good new of Jesus with the children the next week..

The NIV version takes out the “O” – but I like it because it makes this statement almost one of yearning...

O Taste and See that the Lord is good!

Don’t you get the sense that he is urging people to try God...to try the Lord’s way of life...to just taste it...because when you really experience the taste of the goodness of the Lord...you just want more.

So many resist this simple command – even though it is what is most important in our lives and in our kid’s lives.

I remember sitting at the kitchen table refusing to try the blob of orange jello my Mom had made with little mandarin oranges in it – I must have been six – because it wobbled funny. Jello wobbles. It's just the way it is. Yet when I tasted it I loved it! It became my favorite thing. "Hey Mom! When are you making that orange wobbly jello with those little oranges inside it again?"

We can resist the Lord for all kinds of different reasons, but the Psalmist is saying here that when we actually experience his goodness, there isn't anything better!

Our resistance to tasting and seeing that the Lord is good, is tragic actually because this is the

Very thing that will give help our children find joy and purpose in their lives...

This psalm itself says, "**Oh, the joys of those who take refuge in him!**"

Just the teachings of Jesus alone develops moral fiber, An understanding of God's love and forgiveness gives our kids a sense of grace in their lives – instead of a performance quota

The importance of belonging to a community of faith – so important - when more and more we read that there is no sense of belonging in our culture/kids drifting around with no grounding

The development of character and integrity happens here... And most important a personal relationship with Jesus Christ that will be them all their life...for all eternity

As important as these things are as adults we can ignore it. We don't invest in it..

Yet when asked this question, "**What would you prefer – your child gets into Harvard, Princeton, Yale, or Stanford but has no moral character, or gets into a lesser school but has moral character...**" most all parents chose the latter option.

Even so, the child's relationship with God often gets sidelined due to "busy-ness" for less important things that eat up our family time – that in the end don't create the kinds of kids we want anyway.

And yes, it is very difficult to stand against the tide in this area – the Bay Area – where less than 2% of the population attend church.

I challenge you all as parents...be different than the majority. Be part of the 2%. Make it a 3, 4 or 5%!

The psalmist reminds us this morning,

O taste and see!

We were created for a deep lasting intimate relationship with our Creator!

Taste and see that this is most important and very good!

Give the Lord a chance in your life and in your kid's lives...let your taste buds swoon in the flavor of his presence

Pay attention to the living truth of God's presence...taste it, try it give God a taste...

We had wonderful children here at VBS – who did just that – Over 20 kids asked Jesus into their heart...

We can learn so much from our kids

They have so few defenses up...

Less criticisms about the institutional church

Less experiences of life that have bogged them down and made them cynical

They simply receive the good news gladly and rejoice

These kids did taste, with eagerness, at VBS, and saw that the Lord was good

The decisions this past week that were made were eternal decisions, That we as a congregation need to support now and nurture and grow

Parents bring your kids to church!

You can't expect them to make a decision on their own later in life if you have never given them a chance to taste who the God of Jesus is...to experience community with his people

"Taste and See!"

I'd like to quote from one of the late theologians of our time who also talked about tasting and seeing in his own way...

It's Dr Seuss, my favorite kid's book author
He wrote this book called **Green Eggs and Ham**
How many of you have heard of Green Eggs and Ham?
Probably the best known of Seuss's work

(First pic)

There is **"Sam I am"**

On the first page is our resistant character who begins with a huge bias against Sam I am – before the book even gets started! We don't know why...Seuss doesn't tell us...

Sometimes we can start with a huge bias against the things of God, the spiritual life, the church...before we even taste and see the truth of God's goodness...we put up these walls

(second pic) So the lines here are **"That Sam-I-am, That Sam-I-am, I do not like that Sam-I-am"**.

This guy whose name we never know starts with huge resistance, huge bias..right up front

Then Sam-I-am appears on the stage (third pic)

Do you like green eggs and ham? He asks (well you might not like me but maybe you like this lovely plate of food...)

Again...(fourth pic)

**I do not like them, Sam-I-am
I do not like green eggs and ham**

And this becomes the running chorus through the book as Sam-I-am tries to get this belligerent, resistant, adult to taste and see.

You've got to admire Sam-I-am for his pluck...he keeps at it

(fifth pic) **Would you like them here or there?**

O taste and see!

But the response is a stand off

(Sixth pic)

I would not like them here or there

I would not like them anywhere!

I do not like green eggs and ham

I do not like them Sam-I am!

Sam-I-am of course never stops smiling.

Almost like the Lord he pursues, and keeps at it...trying to convince and connive and create a scenario that will appeal to our negative cynicism.

Almost like God saying, if you reject me, if you go after other things, I am going to become like you...a human being...and die and rise...so that you can taste and see that I am good...that I love you that much...I am going to go to every length I can to reach out to you and convince you that if you just taste and see...you will find me very good...

(seveth pic) **Would you like them in a house?**

Would like them with a mouse?

(eighth pic)

(Now he is really mad!)

I do not like them in a house!

I do not like them with a mouse!

I do not like them here or there

I do not like them anywhere

I do not like green eggs and ham!!

I do not like them Sam-I-am!

So now I am skipping pages and pages of this story...this stand off continues as kids hopefully are learning to read...and then finally we get to page 53 where Sam I am says to his belligerent friend who is now exhausted by his relentless pursuit...

(ninth pic) **You do not like them
So you say.
Try them! Try them!
And you may.
Try them and you may, I say!**

(tenth pic)
**Sam! If you will let me be,
I will try them.
You will see.**

Look how beleaguered this guy looks.

It reminds me of what Ann Lammott said about her own conversion to Christ. She kept resisting his call, his claim on her life. She said the Lord was like a kitten at her heels who would not leave her alone. Finally, she knelt in her livingroom and said, "Okay God. I give my life to you. You win! I can't resist you anymore."

Here we have this guy finally giving in to the relentless pursuit of Sam I am...

What happens next? Many of you know...(give me a chance to ask the children what happens next before putting the next slide up!)

(eleventh) **Say!
I like green eggs and ham!
I do! I like them, Sam-I-am!
And I would eat them in a boat
And I would eat them with a goat...
And I will eat them in the rain
And in the dark. And on a train.
And in a car. And in a tree.
They are so good, so good, you see!**

**So I will eat them in a box
And I will eat them with a fox
And I will eat them in a house
And I will eat them with a mouse
And I will eat them here and there
Say! I will eat them ANYWHERE!**

**I do so like green eggs and ham!
Thank you!
Thank you, Sam-I-am!**

You get the sense don't you that this guy is totally bought in – that no matter where he is green eggs and ham will be close by.

Are you totally bought in to making your child's spiritual life a priority?

And then he thanks Sam-I-am for his relentless pursuit, that finally paid great dividends – that what he thought was not important, or what he thought he didn't like – or was a turn-off - actually satisfied him and brought him joy in the end;

As we too are meant to thank God, for his relentless pursuit of us, to taste and see that he is good...that his steadfast love endures forever...and his faithfulness to all generations.

I wish all of you could have been in the room as kids one by one, or in small groups came and talked to me about their relationship with Christ during VBS week!

For some it was a new thing, for others it was rededication, for still others they just wanted to tell me about their walk with the Lord. I was so honored. The simple faith of kids was so refreshing...

One little girl told me that she asked Jesus into her heart and felt his peace flooding her.

Another little girl, who was already a Christian, told me that a number of times she had heard God's voice calling her by her Chinese

nickname...her family called her Solomon Jr....since Solomon was the ones in the Bible who heard God's voice.

Another boy asked for a Bible after asking Jesus into his heart for the first time. Someone else told me that after asking Jesus in he was recognizing in himself more love for people.

And then there was Solomon. (video – hold first frame for a minute)
Last year Solomon came to VBS. He wanted to be a pastor then, but since that time he decided instead he wanted to be a worship director.

He told me that it's in worshipping God, that we feel his presence the most. In so many words he essentially told me that he wanted people to taste and see that the Lord was good – by leading them in a worship experience, in a way where they would know that God was good...

I asked him, "Solomon, how would you do this?"
He began to sing for me and I stopped him and asked if I could take this video. He agreed...

(SHOW VIDEO)

We have so much to learn from our kids
The simple faith
The openness to the goodness of God without cynicism or resistance
The eager willingness to receive the Lord
As adults, we have so much to learn from our kids

Jesus said, "Unless you receive me like one of these children, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven."

Robert Coles well-known Harvard psychologist who did studies on early faith experiences of children. In his writings and research he finds that kids who have experiences of God's presence when they are very young – continue to refer to those experiences all through their lives to guide them, direct them, and remind them of God's care for them. It brings them hope, and gets them through the valleys in their adult life over and over again.

If you've been resisting committing to a church community where your kids can thrive and grow – and putting that first in your family life

If you've been resisting church and spiritual growth for yourself because of bad experiences you've had in the past with churches, run by fallible people who do mess up

If you've been resisting asking Christ into your heart because you are too smart, too busy, too preoccupied, too cynical

First I want to thank you for being here today...

Second, I would invite you to give the Lord of Life a try – to Taste and See...with these children and with millions of others down through the centuries... that the Lord is very good. You don't want go through life without him...

As our VBS Psalm 34 tells us (let us read together)...

The LORD hears his people when they call to him for help.

He rescues them from all their troubles.

¹⁸ The LORD is close to the brokenhearted;

he rescues those whose spirits are crushed.

¹⁹ The righteous person faces many troubles,

but the LORD comes to the rescue each time.

O Taste and See That The Lord Is Good!

You are known by that God that psalmist wrote about, and that God relentlessly pursues you today.

Wanting you to taste and see.....

God is close to the broken hearted, the crushed in spirit, the troubled, those that know they need help...

Maybe that's you today...

If you are ready to receive Jesus as a little child in this moment together, or rededicate to putting him first in your family, in your

affairs, in the nurture and care of your children/grandchildren...would you pray with me now?

Dear Lord...We come to you today aware of our weakness; aware that our choices in this life make a huge difference – especially our choice for you, and putting you first as a priority in our lives. Lord, if there is anyone here who needs to taste and see for the first time, that you are good, and ask you into their heart – I pray that they would do that right now, simply by praying, “Come into my heart Lord Jesus. Forgive me. I need your help. I want to be your child – I want to taste and see that you are good, in my life.” And for the rest of us Lord, who have perhaps known you for a long time, but let the practice of coming to church regularly, of serving your people, of giving generously, of loving you with our whole being - heart, soul, mind and strength - go by the wayside as other things have distracted us and pulled us in different directions – we pray that you would forgive us. We recommit ourselves to you. We commit to nurturing and supporting our children and raising them in the faith and making that a priority. We commit to our own spiritual growth too, because we need you too, and we also know that when our children see us praying, reading the scripture, and serving with other Christians they will catch our fervor and passion for you...and make it their own. May we taste and see that you are good each and every day...you who are the great pursuer of all humanity... In Jesus’ we pray, AMEN....