

1. Do you eat to live, or do you live to eat? Today’s sermon will be all about food and meals, so I hope you had time for a hearty breakfast, otherwise your stomach may be grumbling throughout our time here together.

Software engineer Rob Rhinehart eats to live. In a move that many might consider typical of a computer programmer, Rhinehart sought to boil down food to its essence and create a drink that has all the nutrition of a balanced meal. Two liters a day will give you all your fiber, vitamins, minerals, carbs, and proteins that you need to live.

What did he name his creation? Soylent. Soylent, named after that 1970s sci-fi film with Charlton Heston *Soylent Green*. For those of you who remember the big reveal of *Soylent Green*, maybe Soylent isn’t such a good name for a food slurry. Nonetheless, Rhinehart’s Soylent advertises itself as vegan and gluten free, so no need to worry about the origins of its ingredients.

Despite finding popularity in some circles, I don’t see us as a population switching over to a pure Soylent diet anytime soon. Yes, there can be a place for occasionally drinking breakfast in a bottle if you’re in a rush, but Rosie’s Café down around the corner from me isn’t closing anytime soon. Rhinehart might understand we eat to live, but he doesn’t necessarily understand that we live to eat.

2. Do you eat to live, or do you live to eat? Our sermon takes us to another Charlton Heston movie, not *Soylent Green*, but *The Ten Commandments*. Moses ate to live, but he also knew a meal isn’t just food—it’s something more.

In the book of Exodus, the Lord set the table for two important meals: the Passover and the manna and quail in the desert. In these meals we can see Isaiah’s words fulfilled: **“Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.”**

The Passover had a simple enough menu: herbs, lamb, and unleavened bread, and it was a meal of necessity: you ate it to live. Fill up before the big journey out of Egypt. You had to pour blood on the doorposts and lintels for the angel of death to pass over. I’m guessing if you were a Hebrew in those days and the Moses told you that, you would use the whole bucket of blood to make sure the angel of death didn’t miss it.

Year after year the Israelites would re-enact the Passover, gathering around the table, telling stories, and recounting the Lord’s faithfulness. At that first Passover, the Lord made with them an everlasting covenant. A covenant is a promise that God makes to us. This quickly became a meal for which the Israelites lived to eat.

3. Do you eat to live, or do you live to eat? It comes as no surprise that Jesus’ ministry involves a miracle surrounding meals. Certainly the crowd of five thousand men besides women and children ate to live. The disciples suggest, **“This**

is a desolate place, and the day is now over; send the crowds away to go into the villages and buy food for themselves.” Likely living from hand to mouth, the crowd might starve without food.

But it’s clear that Jesus lives to eat. All throughout the Gospels you find Jesus at a dinner table. He wasn’t just going to heal their sick, He was going to feed them with bread and fish. It is in this action of Jesus that we see Isaiah’s prophecy is fulfilled: **“Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.”**

A meal isn’t just food—it’s something more. This became apparent to everyone in that crowd as Jesus blessed and broke the bread and gave it to the disciples. The text doesn’t record a lot of details. We don’t know the details of how the disciples never ran out of food, but in fact had leftovers. We don’t know the conversations that went on with the crowds as they sat down there on the green grass. But we do know it was more enjoyable and refreshing than if Jesus just zapped a stomach full of Soylent into each of the participants bellies.

There’s something about food. The table is where the family gathers for dinner. The table is where the waiter delivers your food on a first date. The table is where you make your business deals, and business works a whole lot better with a full plate of food and a full stomach. Meals aren’t about eating to live otherwise we’d all be subsisting on protein shakes. If we’re honest, we live to eat.

4. Do you eat to live, or do you live to eat? Jesus’ ministry culminates in a Passover meal. That meal that was started so many centuries ago by Moses is fulfilled in the breaking of the bread and the blessing of the wine at the Lord’s Supper.

The Lord speaks through the prophet Isaiah: **“Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David.”** A covenant is a promise that God makes to us, and it was at Jesus’ last meal with His disciples that He made to them a promise.

“Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.””

In a miracle on par with the feeding of the 5,000 or the miraculous passing over of the angel of death, our Lord Jesus gives us Himself to eat and to drink. He

gives us His very body and His very blood to make us a promise. This is a promise for which we live to eat.

5. Do you eat to live, or do you live to eat? Holy Communion is a meal which we as Christians eat to live spiritually, and it is also a meal for which we live to eat. Not only do we need this to sustain us in body and soul, but the Church lives to eat this meal as we look forward to communion Sundays to join Jesus and one another at the table because a meal isn't just food—it's something more.

At the Sacrament of the Altar Jesus renews His promise to us, and the promise is this: that the same body and blood that the disciples partook of in the upper room is the same body and blood that was shed for you on the cross. It is the same bread and wine as what we have before us today. In this meal comes the promise of receiving all that was delivered for us at the cross: forgiveness, eternal life, and salvation. At this table, the Lord makes us a deal; He enacts a covenant.

At this Holy meal, Our Heavenly Father “...**made [Jesus] a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples.**” Christ is on the menu, but Christ is also the host. Even though the pastor is at the altar leading the service, if you squint your eyes and use your imagination, you see that Jesus rose from the dead is the one handing you His very body and blood just as even though the disciples handed fish and loaves to the crowd, Jesus was the one actually behind it the whole time.

As your pastor, I live to serve you. Not just to have you over for a meal, but more importantly, to serve you Christ's body and blood in this meal. As Christ's servants, I live to eat.

6. Do you eat to live, or do you live to eat? The Passover, the manna and quail, the feeding of the 5,000, the Last Supper, and even Communion today: all throughout time, the feast goes on.

The point was never just to get food in your bellies, but to sit down with you and chat. Soy lent fanatics need not apply. Jesus knows we eat to live, so He allows us the luxury of living to eat. He gives us our next meal, and the meal after that. He keeps on fulfilling these promises in Isaiah 55 by giving us water, wine, milk, and bread for free and without price. He teaches us as His Bride, the Church, as we're gathered for a meal of bread and wine, body and blood.

The Lord speaks through Isaiah, “**Behold, you shall call a nation that you do not know, and a nation that did not know you shall run to you, because of the LORD your God, and of the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you.**” Each one of these Lord's Suppers is a rehearsal dinner for that day when people from every tribe and people and language will be gathered at the marriage feast of the Lamb in His Kingdom which has no end. The Lord has been preparing His Church for that meal from day one. A meal isn't just about food—It's something more. At that feast we will not eat to live but live to eat as we gather before Him.