

Good times

With the pubs now open does that make you feel joyful, a chance for a bit of chill out and celebration? Or does the thought of it in this climate fill you with anxiety?

Perhaps there are mixed feelings about the kind of freedoms we can now have and how we can socialise. But whatever we think about the freedom to enjoy a drink or enjoy a meal out right now, we can at least value a good time - even if some of us hold back from doing it. To relax and enjoy a drink, good food and good company - that's a very good thing.

We are made by God to enjoy his creation and enjoy one another. We see in the Scriptures that so much of what God does is in the context of eating – lots of food, drink and celebration. Jesus is the best party improver - have a look at John's Gospel chapter 2 to see the first miracle for an example of what I mean.

The very best of this life's good times are a tiny, very imperfect picture of the Heavenly Banquet to come - a feast in the presence of the Father and Son with the Holy Spirit one day in a New Creation. Holy Communion – eating bread and drinking wine proclaims to our hearts Jesus and His death for us - the One who gave His life for us to bring us to that heavenly banquet.

Our God is into celebration, and giving us life.

The people of God around two and a half thousand years ago had gone through a tough time, and were involved in a big building project. They had a party and they are commanded to have good food and drink.

See the Old Testament book Nehemiah chapter 8:10 *'Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength."*

Notice all are to celebrate. And that good food and drink symbolise God's goodness, and to find satisfaction in the Lord. *'...for the joy of the LORD is your strength'* - indeed!

We are to be a joyful people and we are to celebrate real life - and at times that will show itself in good times and good food and drink. Sometimes it won't. Sometimes we won't have a good time - life's too hard, or too anxious - but even in that we should hold onto the One who in the best of times is a small picture of - Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the Bread of Life. Jesus is the one that gives us the Living Waters of the Holy Spirit. Good food and drink, as wonderful as they can be, are never to be God and *we are to fill ourselves with the relationship with the Lord.*

John 6:35 ... *Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty".*

We are told to '*Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him*'. (Psalm 34:8) Not eating God literally - of course not - but that we are most satisfied in knowing Him.

Jesus is not like some particularly boring version of health food.

Jesus is like the best feast, the most succulent food, the most enjoyable, tasty well-seasoned, delightful food and wonderful drink - that is also wonderfully healthy for us.

So often there is something in us that longs for us to want to enjoy life (and we can feel worse when it doesn't seem to work out that way).

Go to the source. Enjoy celebration when it's right to, enjoy good times - but there's always a lack of satisfaction - the good times don't last. That's ok. They are not meant to. Enjoy them - but go to the one who always satisfies, always nourishes, always gives us the kind of things the best good times simply can't.

And so, Christians are called to be a 'yes' people. 'Yes' to relationship with Jesus, 'yes' to genuine life affirming celebration and good times; 'yes' to embracing good times in this life but knowing at their very best they are a picture of the most glorious hope that we hold onto.

One day, a new creation with us feasting in the very presence of the God who loves us.

AMEN