

PRAISE FOR *COME AND BE FILLED*

With *Come and Be Filled*, Kristopher Whitby has taken a unique and compelling approach to the grand narrative of salvation history. The theme is so common: meals, an everyday event. At the same time, the theme is so profound: how communal eating and drinking are woven throughout Scripture, highlighting important aspects about God and His covenant people. Carefully crafted with well-chosen illustrations and insightful biblical analysis, *Come and Be Filled* is a deeply satisfying read. Bon appétit!

Christopher Kennedy, senior pastor, Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church, School, and Child Care; author of Equipped and Unfailing

Rev. Kristopher Whitby draws on meals, tables, and food to bring us some rich teaching (Law and Gospel) from the inspired stories of Scripture. He writes as a caring and thoughtful pastor with an engaging style, relevant illustrations, and his own personal wit. As I was reading the book, Psalm 34:8 kept coming to mind: “Taste and see that the LORD is good!” Again and again, Whitby takes us to the goodness of the Lord in food, tables, and meals, always enlightening the promises of God in Christ, even when we make a mess. The Lord is good, and this book is good. You’ll be glad you read it!

Rev. Dr. Allan R. Buss, president, LCMS Northern Illinois District

The chapters of this book will open your eyes—and heart—to what it means when you pray, “Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest . . .” As you read and consider how meals shared in Scripture affected the participants, you will also be invited to consider how they affect you. Come and be filled with the bounty of our Lord’s grace, told in an engaging and relatable way. Thank you, Rev. Whitby, for this invitation to linger at the table. And don’t skip dessert!

Eden Keefe, president, Lutheran Women’s Missionary League

Come and Be Filled is a profound exploration of the spiritual significance of shared meals. This book beautifully illustrates how Jesus’ presence transforms ordinary gatherings into moments of grace and connection. Through biblical accounts and personal reflections, Rev. Whitby invites readers to experience the joy and depth of dining with Jesus, making every meal a sacred celebration. A must-read for anyone seeking to deepen their faith and relationships around the table.

Rev. Dr. Byrene Haney, assistant to the president for Mission, Stewardship, and Human Care, LCMS Iowa District West

COME
AND BE
FILLED

FEASTING WITH JESUS
IN HIS WORD

KRISTOPHER R. WHITBY



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*To Marguerita,
for the joy and love
at our table*

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INTRODUCTION

IT WAS A COLD JANUARY day off during my pastoral internship in upstate New York. I was in one of the local malls doing some shopping, but I was mainly just passing the time. At lunchtime, I made my way to the food court, grabbed a fast-food meal, and sat down at one of the tables. I had removed my coat and hat and had bowed my head to give thanks to God for the meal I was about to eat when I had the sense that I was being watched.

I looked up from my serving tray and locked eyes with an elderly woman sitting one table across from me. When our eyes met, she said in a thick New York accent, “That was a very nice thing, young man!”

I smiled and was about to say something to the extent that I always seek to give thanks to God for every meal, assuming she was complimenting the fact that I had paused to say grace.

Before I could say one word, she continued, “You took off your hat before eating. You don’t often see manners like that in young people today!”

I smiled again, changed my course of thought, shared with her that my parents tried to raise me with some manners, and dove in to whatever food was in front of me.

I thought it funny that the woman had completely missed that I had prayed—or at least didn’t mention it. Reflecting back, I wish I would have taken the opportunity to tell her that, for me, the more significant thing was that I was thanking Jesus for the meal before me and inviting Him to “be my guest” at the table.

Perhaps I was seeing that lunch the way we so often see meals today—as just a way to get nourishment into our bodies so that we can move on to the next thing in our day. And let’s face it, in our busy lives, that is what meals can become. We grab a doughnut or a piece of fruit (if we’re mindful) on the way out the door in the morning, and that’s breakfast. We push through lunch to get a project done, maybe scarfing down a sandwich at our desk or in the car. Dinner is a hastily consumed event, rarely with the entire family together, so that we can get the kids off to different places for their practices or rehearsals. In our culture today, meals are frequently reduced to their basic task of merely fueling us for what’s next.

When we habitually do this, something vital, something God-given, is lost. Meals can offer so much more than the mere consumption of food. As friends and family gather for a meal, we can deepen relationships, celebrate special occasions, discuss important matters, and experience fun and laughter around the table. In short, we can share life itself. For followers of Jesus, yet another dynamic occurs at meals. The common table prayer that many Christians pray before a meal not only invites our Savior to bless the meal to be eaten but also requests that He come among us at the table as the guest of honor. When followers of Jesus are present at a meal, Jesus draws near and takes His place at the table. He comes both to

bless the actual food and to bring His Word of witness through us to touch the lives of those around the table with His abiding grace and presence.

Scripture records accounts of many significant meals, and amazing things happened especially when Jesus sat at meals with people during His earthly ministry. I invite you to journey with me through some of these biblical meals. We'll stand at the doorway and peer into some of the turning points in the story of God's plan of salvation that take place over food. We'll take a seat around the table where our Savior dines and witness what He does and says. Our Lord extends the hospitable invitation to us through His Word to come and be filled, both with the daily bread He provides and with the grace He freely gives. May the Holy Spirit guide us in this journey, deepen our understanding of the grace our Savior extends to those who dine with Him, and show us how He continues to set a place for us all to come and be nourished in His love and in community around the table.

When followers of Jesus are present at a meal, Jesus draws near and takes His place at the table.

Bon appétit!



FALLING THROUGH EATING

Then the eyes of both were opened.

— GENESIS 3:7 —

A GOOD MEAL CAN HAVE a powerful influence on a person's decision-making process. In his book *The Course of History: Ten Meals That Changed the World*, Struan Stevenson writes about the importance of a good meal and persuasion:

This is why executives regularly combine business meetings with meals, why lobbyists invite politicians to attend receptions, lunches, and dinners, and why major state occasions almost always involve an elaborate banquet. Churchill called this “dining diplomacy,” and sociologists have confirmed that this principle is a potent motivator across all human cultures.¹

¹ Struan Stevenson, *The Course of History: Ten Meals That Changed the World* (Arcade Publishing, 2017, 2019), ix.

Such meals can actually influence world history and, on one occasion, did so to disastrous results.

It happened at a hotel just outside Sarajevo on June 27, 1914. Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and his wife, Sophie, Duchess of Hohenberg, were scheduled to visit the city, but reports of a possible assassination attempt moved the archduke to consider forgoing the visit and heading straight home to Vienna. However, that evening, the Ferdinands were served an amazing state meal, which included nine succulent courses and six choice wines, and he decided there at dinner to keep his original plans. Perhaps the sumptuous meal convinced the archduke to continue with the visit to Sarajevo, where he and his wife were indeed assassinated.²

This event served as a catalyst for World War I, which resulted in an estimated fourteen million deaths (military and civilian), with another twenty-three million wounded, and exacerbated the spread of the great 1918 influenza pandemic (which may itself have claimed a hundred million lives) through

The simplest of meals for one couple brought disaster for all of humanity for all time.

the massive movement of troops around the world. Had one great meal not been eaten by one couple, what disasters might have been avoided! Yet the consequences of this meal pale in comparison to

our focus in this chapter. The simplest of meals for one couple brought disaster for all of humanity for all time.

God had made humanity in His image and endowed Adam and Eve with His righteousness, giving them life and the ability to further make life that would also reflect His image. He had

2 See Stevenson, *The Course of History*, 115.

provided His creatures with the means to sustain their lives, and that sustaining—at least in part—would come through eating. “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food” (Genesis 1:29). In fact, the Lord had given Adam a role in cultivating the means through which He would graciously sustain their lives. Yet, with all the plants and trees God had given for food, He had also set a boundary for His creatures, who perfectly bore His image. “The LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die’” (2:16–17). The way they participated in the sustaining of their lives was also the way by which their lives could be taken from them: by eating.

Enter Satan

And so we come to Genesis 3—the encounter between Satan and Eve. Everything that follows happens as a result of the simplest of meals, eating one piece of fruit.

Moses, the author of Genesis, describes the serpent as “more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made” (Genesis 3:1a). In other words, what Satan is about to say is deceptive. Jesus will later call Satan “the father of lies” (John 8:44), and here we see the first record of his lying. It would be easy to conclude that Satan’s goal is to wreak havoc on humanity and bring us all down to the eternal condemnation that awaits him. However, his purpose is even more sinister. Satan desires to rob God of the joy of

His communion with the crown of His creation, the love of His life, His created children who bear His image, humans. Satan's strategy? Create separation.

So the serpent opens his mouth and asks Eve, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" (Genesis 3:1b). Notice what Satan is doing. He's opening a dialogue with Eve based on a false premise. It's an obvious lie; God had said they could eat from any tree in the Garden of Eden except for the one in the middle of the garden. On the

Making humans question the Word of God is Satan's key strategy in his attempt to rob God of the crown of His creation.

day they ate from that tree, they would die (2:17). Yet in asking this question (which should've easily been dismissed by sinless Eve), Satan presents to Eve the possibility that, whatever God had said, it could be questioned,

perhaps even changed. Making humans question the Word of God is Satan's key strategy in his attempt to rob God of the crown of His creation.

By stepping away from God's Word, Adam and Eve step away from God. But it's more than the fact that God created by His Word in the beginning. As we read in the Gospel of John,

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and

we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (1:1–4, 14)

The Word that Satan invites Eve to question and step away from is none other than the preincarnate Second Person of the Trinity, Jesus. How will Eve respond?

She replies, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die’” (Genesis 3:2–3). If only Eve had stopped with her statement about not eating the fruit! But she adds something of her own to the instructions of God: “Neither shall you touch it, lest you die.” God had never said Adam and Eve could not touch the tree. It may seem like only a slight change. Perhaps Eve is even expressing a fear of the tree, knowing it somehow relates to death. But Satan does not need Eve to completely abandon God’s Word. He’s looking for a seemingly small step away. Just enough to make perfection into imperfection. Just enough to make life into death. Adding something to the Word of God would be like taking the incarnate body of the Word made flesh, Jesus, and deciding He needed a third arm or an extra set of ears. It departs from God’s design and leads to evil. God Himself warns people not to add or subtract from His Word both in Deuteronomy and Revelation, but of course, Eve doesn’t have the benefit of God’s written Word. Departing from God’s Word always leads to sin, separation, and death, just as it does here.

I imagine Satan’s cool coils gently wrapping around Eve’s arm, drawing her closer as he feeds her a twisted half-truth: “You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of

it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (vv. 4–5).

Wouldn’t it be great to be like God? Let that one sink in. In the past thirty days or so, have you ever once woken up with an ache or pain? Wouldn’t it be great to say to yourself, “I think I want to be without pain today,” and *bam!* You’re completely healed. Or say you woke up one morning and the weather wasn’t to your liking. Wouldn’t it be great to simply make it a pleasant day? Maybe you don’t like the view out your window, so in an instant, you’re standing on the beaches of Fiji instead. And even if the weather is a mess in Fiji that day, you’re able to make it all to your liking. Wouldn’t that be great? I think when most of us sinners think about being “like God,” we think of having the all-powerful, all-knowing, all-present characteristics of God at our disposal for ourselves, as if that’s what God is like. And in some ways, that is what Satan seems to be offering. He dismisses the truth that God has stated—that on the day they eat of the fruit they will die—even going so far as to state the opposite, that they will not surely die, and insinuate that God is the liar. Then, Satan makes an offer that is only half true at best.

He says Adam’s and Eve’s eyes will be opened and they will be like God in the sense of knowing good and evil. What he doesn’t say is that they will no longer be like God from the perspective of perfectly reflecting His image in their lives. Adam and Eve are already like God in every way possible. God had created them in His image. They are righteous, holy, capable of doing God-pleasing things. He had given them vocations that reflected their likeness to Him by making them stewards of the rest of creation, and He had united them as

one flesh in marriage, perhaps as a lesser reflection of His image as the Trinity. God had endowed the crown of His creation with the vocation of making further human life, which would also bear His image. God's perfect design was that humans were to live like this eternally. Before this conversation with Satan, Adam and Eve had been like God! Now they will be like Him in the one way God had not given them: knowing good and evil.

Moses then tells us that Eve, having moved away from God's Word and seeking to participate in Satan's temptation, "saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise" (Genesis 3:6a). How does Eve draw all those conclusions? Whatever her internal thought processes, Eve sets herself in the position to judge what is good, a position that belongs to God, as He revealed about Himself by creating life and judging that it is good. She determines that following Satan's crafty directives will bring her wisdom because she will attain something greater than the life her Creator had given her.

So we come to this simplest of meals.

Before this conversation
with Satan, Adam and
Eve had been like God!
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Him in the one way God
had not given them.

A Dinner of Death

"She took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate" (Genesis 3:6b). As God's creatures sink their teeth into the fruit of the tree of the

knowledge of good and evil, as they literally swallow the lies that Satan has told and ingest what God had commanded them not to, what do they discover? Do they discover that they now command all power and knowledge and that they had pulled themselves to a higher, wiser place than God had given them? Do they find themselves on a level plain with their Creator, addressing Him as His equals? By following Satan and departing from God's Word, are they more like God than they had been moments before? Hardly! "Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths" (v. 7).

Let's digest these verses a little more. As Eve eats of the fruit, she gives some to Adam, who was with her. Adam was not on the other side of the garden, innocently caring for some animals or tilling the soil. He was right there, watching silently as the bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh did what God had commanded them not to do, and he does nothing to stop it. In fact, he participates in it. If Eve's is the sin of commission, Adam's is the sin of omission in that he fails to do the good that would've stopped sin from entering God's creation by simply telling Eve to get away from Satan. Both Adam and Eve bear the responsibility for sin entering the world.

With the reference to their eyes being opened and their knowledge that they were naked, some are drawn to conclude that this original sin is of a sexual nature. However, that's not what's being communicated in verse 7. Adam and Eve are married at the time of their first sin. Even in a fallen world, it's not sinful for husband and wife to see each other without clothing, so while the fall into sin affects humanity's sexuality, Adam and Eve's first sin isn't about sex. The reference

to knowing that they're naked connects back to how Moses describes them in their perfect state at the end of Genesis 2. As God joins Adam and Eve in marriage, Moses ends the chapter on a cliff-hanger: "And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed" (v. 25). There is no sin in their lives, so there is no sense of distrust of the other, nor is there a need to feel a sense of shame in who they are, as they perfectly reflect God's image.

Now, having eaten the forbidden fruit, they have not only sinned but also become sinful. In my years of ministry as a pastor, I've often tried to describe what that first awareness of their own nakedness might have been like for our first parents. Perhaps it was like your first time being in a state of undress before someone you didn't know very well, like when a new doctor examines you. Or perhaps it was like that first vulnerable locker-room experience in school. Adam and Eve are ashamed of what their actions have brought them. In an instant, with one small meal, they no longer perfectly bear the image of God. They realize they're different now, and neither feels quite as intimately comfortable with the other. As their shame sets in, they try to cover it (and perhaps their sin) with their own efforts by sewing fig leaves together to create their first clothing items.

In an instant, with one small meal, they no longer perfectly bear the image of God.

The first sin, then, has to do with Satan's goal of separation, and we see that separation bear its tragic fruit in their lives in the next verses.

Sinners Before the Sinless Lord

And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?”

(GENESIS 3:8–9)

When I was growing up, these were the scariest words that could be uttered in my family: “Wait till your father gets home.” When I’d hear my dad’s steel-toed boots hit the front porch after being told that, I wanted to disappear rather than face my father’s disappointment and anger and the consequences that were sure to come.

The verses above describe a similar but far more heartbreakng experience. Adam and Eve may not fully realize what they’ve done, but they know things have gone tragically wrong because they ate the fruit. As they hear their Creator drawing near, they know He will be displeased. They seek to avoid God and the consequences they fear will come. The heartbreak comes full circle when we consider God’s perspective. God has drawn near to commune with the crown of His creation, and they do not rush to receive Him and His love. They are missing. It’s not simply that God is missing out on the joy of His creation, but they are missing from being with Him, which bodes far worse for them than for God. He now asks Adam that telling question: “Where are you?”

God knows where Adam and Eve are. He's not engaging in some divine game of hide-and-seek. He's alerting them to their new reality: "You're not with Me." They have physically separated themselves from God. And as God is their only source of life, if Adam and Eve are not with Him, they will die that day. In fact, they've died in several ways. They've died to the perfect image of God they once reflected. They've died to the life that would've been theirs without sin. They've died to the perfect life they would've given to their children, who will now inherit a sinful nature. They are now in the process (for the first time in all creation) of physically dying, which will one day happen in total, and they are spiritually dead in God's eyes. God had clearly warned

them, "In the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (2:17), because their sin would separate them from Him. Now that they are not *with Him*, they have been cut off from their only source of life, and they die.

Now that they are not with Him, they have been cut off from their only source of life, and they die.

The consumption of food in the garden, meant to sustain life and bond humans together in community and in reliance on their gracious God, has now become the means of separating Adam and Eve from God and shattering their relationship with each other and all creation. We see this in their responses to God's further questioning. When God asks Adam who told him he was naked and whether he has eaten from the forbidden tree, Adam responds, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate" (3:12). Adam no longer sees Eve as "bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" (2:23) but rather refers to

her more objectively as “the woman.” Here, he tries to shift blame not only to his wife but even to God, since God was the one who gave the woman to him. Again, Adam shows he is separated from his wife and from God. Eve’s response when God questions her also illustrates how sin has alienated humanity from the rest of creation: “The serpent deceived me, and I ate” (3:13). Both Adam and Eve take no responsibility for their sin and push the blame to others. God’s creation has come unraveled, all because of a simple meal.

Promise amid Pain

God does not ask the serpent any questions. He simply pronounces the terrible results of this sinful meal. As He does so, the Lord weaves a picture and promise of salvation, and images of meals and food are a part of it.

The serpent is to eat dust all the days of his life. To some, this may sound like Moses has written in ignorance rather than by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Anyone who’s taken a basic biology or zoology course can readily point out that snakes do not have dust in their food chain. However, when we recall that the serpent here is Satan and when we consider the rest of the curses for sin, this pronouncement reflects a depth of insight. The curses for sin God announces in Genesis 3:14–19 are bookended with the image of dust. The Lord formed Adam from the dust of the ground when He created him in His image. Now Adam is to return to the ground in death: “For you are dust, and to dust you shall return” (v. 19). Satan’s appetite and diet will consist of the death of humanity. Therefore, the serpent will eat dust all his days. Yes, through one meal,

Satan has brought all humanity into the dust of death. God makes such dust Satan's diet, but it's a meal that will never satisfy. And it's a hollow, short-lived victory because, in the midst of these curses, the Lord also announces that, through Eve, He will send the One who will destroy Satan's power over humanity: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel" (v. 15). Sin and death may have come through Eve taking the first bite of the forbidden fruit, but forgiveness and life will also come through her as her descendant, Mary, will give birth to Jesus, the Savior from sin, death, and Satan!

Through Eve, He will send the One who will destroy Satan's power over humanity.

Adam's part of the curse also relates to food. God had intended that his work of tending the garden and growing food for himself and his offspring would be easy, but now that work would be hard. By the sweat of his face, he was to eat his bread. The ground itself, which was meant to bring forth only that which sustained life for Adam and his community, would be cursed because of his sin. Now the earth would also bring forth thorns and thistles, choking out the life of other plants that would have nourished the community and serving as a painful reminder that Adam's days, too, were numbered.

The Lord paints a graphic picture of what has come of His people eating a piece of fruit and thus disobeying His command—dust, death, and thorns. Yet the image of thorns also plays an integral part in His plan of salvation. In Genesis 22, the Lord calls on Abraham to take his son Isaac—his only son, whom he loves (v. 2)—and sacrifice him on a mountain.

As Abraham raises the knife to carry out the sacrifice, the Lord intervenes and presents Abraham a substitute sacrifice: a ram caught by its horns in thorns. It foreshadows the time when the Lord Himself will take His Son, His only Son, the one He loves, Jesus, and sacrifice Him on the hill of Golgotha. And when Jesus, the Lamb of God, is sacrificed, His head will be crowned with thorns—the curse brought on by Adam's sin.

There's always a nagging question that hangs in the atmosphere surrounding this first and most tragic of meals in human history. Why did God place the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the garden in the first place? If there's no tree, no command not to eat from it, no resulting sin and death, then humanity lives out history as God intended for His creation, right? Some have suggested that the Lord placing the tree in the garden was a matter of giving free will to humanity. The reasoning goes that if God's perfect creatures were to truly love Him of their own volition, then they had to have the opportunity to not love Him by disobeying His will, even if that disobedience brought death. Hence, the Lord places the tree with the forbidden fruit.

While there may be something to this in the realm of logic, I believe the Lord placed the tree, with its forbidden fruit and

The Lord places a means in the garden for Him to reveal His deepest love for people, for all creation.

His command, not to reveal humanity's free will but to reveal the depth of His own heart for the crown of His creation. It is one thing for God to love creatures who are

sinless, righteous, and able to perfectly reflect His own image. It's quite another level of love when the Lord loves creatures

who have lost it all to sin. So, the Lord places a means in the garden for Him to reveal His deepest love for people, for all creation, letting humanity fall into sin so that He might reveal Himself as the God who graciously rescues from sin by His own sacrifice, even unto death on a cross.

Satan deceitfully tempted Adam and Eve with the promise that they would be like God. And in our selfish, sinful nature, we might ask, “Well, wouldn’t it be great to be like God?” However, our sinful nature gives us a grossly warped view of what God is like. But wouldn’t it be great to be like God when we truly see what God is like? So, the Lord reveals what He’s truly like, loving creatures who cannot love Him, bringing them from sin and death to salvation and life through the One who perfectly reflects His image by not falling for Satan’s temptations and instead serving His heavenly Father, even to the point of death on the cross and the joy of an empty tomb. Wouldn’t it be great to be like Him!

QUESTIONS FOR DESSERT

What meal in human history would you like to have witnessed?

How are you tempted to desire godlike powers? How does clinging to God's Word help us face such temptation? (See 1 Corinthians 10:13; Hebrews 2:18.)

How does Jesus bear God's image perfectly in His earthly ministry? How does that affect us as His followers? (See Philippians 2:5–11; 2 Corinthians 4:3–6; 5:21; Colossians 1:15–20.)
