

Have you ever experienced too much of a good thing?

Teddy Roosevelt is one of my favorite President's. He had a reputation of being incredibly energetic. He was always on the move. He was always giving orders. He was a terror to anyone who was a slacker. He fired brisk commands to anyone he wanted to see active: "Get action, do things, be sane, don't fritter away your time, don't just sit there, do something."

On one occasion, the French Ambassador came to him with a pressing issue. Roosevelt said, "Let's talk after we play tennis." The Ambassador was a good tennis player, so he said yes. They played not one, but two sets of Tennis. When the tennis was finished, Roosevelt suggested they talk about the issue, while jogging. Following the jogging, the two continued talking while working out with the medicine ball. The president, who was not even panting, then slapped the suffering Frenchman on the back and asked heartily, "What would you like to do next?"

The ambassador was heard to reply weakly, "Mr. President, I find my issue to not be so pressing anymore. If it's all the same to you, I would like to lie down and die."

The French Ambassador experienced too much of a good thing. Have you ever experienced too much of a good thing? Today we are continuing the sermon series on *Why the Seven Deadly Sins Are So Deadly*. We are talking about Gluttony.

This sin of gluttony is really about having too much of a good thing. It is about excess. It is about taking more than we need. The irony is all you have to do is look at me and you know that I struggle with this sin. But I am sure I am not alone in that struggle.

The challenge around this sin of gluttony is how can we learn to live with the freedoms and the pleasures we enjoy, without overdoing it. In our scripture for today, Paul is talking about a problem that we don't face in our society anymore. He is talking about the issue of what should we do in regard to eating meat that has been sacrificed to idols. While we don't have people sacrificing to idols very much in our North American Society, the way in which he talks about it is one that I find really helpful.

In this scripture, Paul understood that while we may have the freedom to eat this meat, because it isn't a faith statement for us. He also understood that some people might actually be hurt; their faith may suffer if they see us eating this meat. Out of our love for our neighbor and our neighbor's faith, therefore, we should avoid taking advantage of our freedoms, so we don't hurt another.

Paul's words remind us that we are connected to other people. This is a good first step for us to remember in bringing our excesses under control. If we can remember that we are connected to other people, maybe we can remember what our parents tried to teach us along the way, sharing is a good thing.

If we continue to take more than we need, it reduces what the rest of the world has at their disposal. If we can learn to take what we need and no more, then it makes more resources available for the rest of the world.

I had the opportunity to listen to Francine Prose tell a delightful little tale of how easy it is to let our excesses run amok and embarrass us. She tells a tale of how she was invited to a friends' poetry reading.

She went with her husband and another friend. They sat through the long poetry reading, which was rather boring. When they were invited down for a reception featuring beer and oysters, they decided to get a beer, have some oysters and leave.

They went downstairs. They got their beer. Then each one had about a dozen oysters. She had a dozen. Her husband had a dozen. Their friend had a dozen.

All of a sudden they heard someone exclaim, "Oh, you ate all the oysters!"

Out of embarrassment, they left rather quickly, feeling bad that they had eaten so many oysters that no one else could have any. That is the problem of acting like our needs or our desires are the only ones that matter. We get what we want, while others go without or even suffer.

God has placed us on this earth to be with each other in community.

The second thing we need to remember is that how we deal with the resources at our disposal is a spiritual issue. It tells a great deal about who we are and what we believe.

In a world that is struggling with high energy costs, those of us with vehicles that use more gasoline than they should, may want to think about how gluttonous we are. We need to take an honest look both at the food we eat and the resources from our earth that we use.

I learned a long time ago, that eating too much for me is really a spiritual issue. When I eat too much I am really saying that I don't trust God to provide for me. When I eat too much, what I am really attempting to do is fill an emptiness deep within me; an emptiness that only God can fill.

In all honesty, I haven't been doing a good job of taking care of myself physically since I have become your pastor. I am not yet at the highest weight I have ever been, but I am close enough to see it from here. I have not done a good job of eating (because I have been eating too much) and I have not done a good job of getting regular exercise.

Today, I want to invite each of you here to feel free to ask me, "Scott, how have you done this week? Are you taking care of yourself? Are you eating well? Are you getting the exercise you need?" I am going to allow you to help me, be accountable to taking better care of myself. We need each other to stay healthy and focused on God.

Maybe we need to gently ask each other, does our living honor God? Maybe we need to help each other make better choices around how we use the resources at our disposal. Maybe we need to recognize our need for God.

I am convinced that the key to experiencing healing in our life, the key to experiencing God's wholeness in our life, is to come clean with God and ourselves. It is to recognize how much we have a need for God. It is to realize that we don't have to over eat or over use the world's resources. It is in realizing that we can trust God to provide what we need. Is there anything in your life you need to come clean with God over in your life? What is stopping you?

(Pause)

In the mountains of Tennessee, there are frequent revivals. In a small community, there was one gentleman that was known to be a sinner. But every time there was a revival, he went. Usually he came forward during the revival and was saved.

During one of the revivals that had gone on about 10 days, this man was in attendance, but he didn't come forward at all. As the revival moved towards its end, each night he sat closer and closer to the front. On the last night, he cried out, "Lord, fill me! Fill me!"

One of the women who knew the man well said in the back, "Careful Lord, he leaks."

I love that. At some level, we are all like that man, all of us in the room leak. We all stand in need of God's love and grace. And at some point in our lives we need to be honest with ourselves and with God. At some point in our lives we need to come clean. We don't have to keep living gluttonous lives.

May God help us live faithfully.

Amen