

## “Wise Eating”

Sugar futures have almost doubled this past year. This may mean that the price of candy will go up and certainly the price of ethanol will rise. Sixty percent of ethanol comes from sugar. Much of the rise in sugar prices has come in just the past few weeks as drier-than-normal weather in India, the world's largest consumer, threatens to leave production there far short of demand. This year will be the first time that India will be importing sugar rather than exporting it.

Meanwhile in Brazil it has been too wet for the sugar crop. Brazil currently uses most of its sugar to produce ethanol, but it may decide instead to sell to India because sugar for consumption fetches higher prices than sugar for ethanol, which would exacerbate the ethanol pinch. What this means is that fuel prices at the gas pump will definitely rise and this has nothing to do with the HST.

Our reading about King Solomon is basically a propaganda piece. It is in the guise of a three wishes story that is one of the foundations of story telling. In case you don't know the genre here is an example.

Three guys are out having a relaxing day fishing. Out of the blue, they catch a mermaid who begs to be set free in return for granting each of them a wish.

Now one of the guys just doesn't believe it, and says, “Okay, if you can really grant wishes, then double my IQ.”

The mermaid says, “Done.” Suddenly the guy starts reciting Shakespeare flawlessly and analyzing it with extreme insight.

The second guy is so amazed, he says to the mermaid, “Triple my IQ.”

The mermaid says, “Done.” The guy starts to spout out all the mathematical solutions to problems that have been stumping all the scientists in various fields: physics, chemistry, etc.

The last guy is so enthralled with the changes that his friends that he says to the mermaid “Quintuple my IQ.”

The mermaid looks at him and says, “You know, I don't usually try to change people's minds when they make a wish, but I really wish that you would reconsider.”

The guy says, “No, I want you to increase my IQ times five, and if you don't do it, I won't set you free.”

“Please,” says the mermaid, “You don't understand what you're asking, it will change your entire view on the universe. Won't you ask for something else.... a million dollars, anything?”

But no matter what the mermaid said, the guy insisted on having his IQ increased by five times its usual power. So the mermaid sighed and said, “Done.”

And instantly he became a woman!

So God gives Solomon a wish. He could have asked for money. He could have asked for power over his enemies. But he asks for wisdom. So God gives him all three: wisdom, riches and power. And there you have it – Solomon the wise king. This story is pure political propaganda.

By reading the whole story closely, we see Solomon as a sophisticated, power-seeking, ruthless leader. He was not the legitimate heir to the throne, Adonijah was. Solomon gained the throne by devious means and then has Adonijah killed and gets rid of anyone else in power who might object: Joab the military general and Abiathar a high priest.

Once in power, Solomon expands his authority. He reorganizes the social structures toward much greater centralized control. He institutes a rigorous taxation policy to expand his treasury. He begins to draft soldiers,

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to expand the collection of horses and chariots into a large, permanent army with career military leaders. He accumulates hundreds of wives, many for political purposes, and amassed one of the greatest harems of all time. And he also institutes a policy of forced labor for his twenty-year building project of constructing the temple and his palace. With the building of a king-dominated religious institution he centralized authority over everything, including food that had to be processed through the temple. It was like being the President of the United States and the CEO of the multinational food corporations: General Mills and Monsanto all at the same time.

David Kessler, a medical doctor, has written a fascinating book “The end of overeating: taking control of the insatiable North American appetite”. He points out that in the United States one in every three people is obese. We are much better in Canada—one in four. Not much to boast about. Thirty years ago, one in ten Canadians was obese. “One-third of Canadians who were classified as normal weight a decade ago are now overweight. The upward curve is especially evident in the younger population, with the number of overweight and obese children, ages 7 to 13, increasing by as much as 300% in just two decades.”

This is a result of the food industry creating mixtures of sugar, fat and salt in processed foods that create a state of conditioned hypereating. In her book “Fat Gird, Judith More describes the result. “I daydream crab legs dipped in hot butter or crab cakes dribbled with garlic aioli. I consider toasted cheese sandwiches or homemade lemonade pinkened with macerated strawberries or carrot cake with brown sugar frosting that I ate once, 20 years ago, or those cheeseburgers. Foods that I ate once and liked I think about the way people think about old lovers...my mouth is dangerous. My lips and my teeth and my tongue are always ready. My mouth wants to bite down on rough bread and hot rare pepper steak and steamed broccoli sprayed with lemon juice.”

Food has become a drug that makes us want more and more. In Canada our fat intake rose 22% and carbohydrate intake by 18% in one decade (1991 – 2002). A generation ago we used to chew a mouthful of food 25 times, now the average is ten times. With an increased fat content we don't need to. Processing food removes the fiber and gristle—which are harder to chew and swallow. So it requires less effort to eat,

which means we eat more and faster without time for around the table mealtime conversation.

In John's story of Jesus there is a lot of eating. Today's reading pushes the eating/spirituality metaphor over the top—an example of the truth being overstated so it can be heard. So John says that we must chew like animals on the flesh of Jesus who is the bread of life. (the Greek word trogon—literally means to chew/gnaw).

So what is the truth that needs to be heard? First, it is that Jesus was truly human. John begins the story by saying “the Word became flesh and lived among us.” So the story, our Christian story, is that it is never about some airy-fairy spirituality, it is about the whole person—it is always about flesh and blood.

Second, our thinking about God is not like a fat laden box of Timbits. It is more like a whole grain piece of bread that we have to chew on. A relationship with God is not fast food with lots of sugar on top. It is food for eternal life—true wisdom.

Third, it is about relationships. Whatever we eat has an effect on our own bodies and it also has an effect on the poor in India and those in the downtown eastside. Whenever we eat we are in communion with God and all those whom God loves.

And just one more thing—have a nice lunch—and chew on these things.