

# God's Shout - Come and Eat

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[0:00] Good afternoon, church. How are we doing? Are you feeling a little bit hungry by now? Possibly, right? Unfortunately, this sermon is going to make you even more hungry. So, I'll keep things brief and short, hopefully.

So, the title is God Shouts, Come and Eat. So, we've got a lot of food and pictures today. Now, shall we start with a prayer together before we dive into the sermon? All right, let's pray.

Heavenly Father, as we receive your word today, we ask that the Holy Spirit would lead both the one who speaks and the one who listens, that we will be built up together and that our souls will be fed and filled in you. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

All right. So, I know you are feeling a bit hungry, but picture this. After church, your group, your small group will go to Yum Cha together.

And it happens that, you know, Jesus is standing, you know, at the door and you would want to invite Jesus. Please come along. We're going to take you to Yum Cha.

[1:17] So, at the Yum Cha place, right, you're holding the order slip, right, ready to take all the classics, right? Ha Giao, right, the shrimp dumpling, Siu Ma, the pork dumpling, the Cha Siu Bao, right, the pork bun.

So, but, fortunately, you know, we have, you know, Eva, you know, sitting next to you, right? And she was like, hey, what are you doing over there?

Have you not read Deuteronomy 14? Jesus doesn't eat Ha Giao or Siu Ma, right? He's Jewish. Prawns have no fins or scales.

And pork, look, it's everywhere. He's not going to eat them. So, you scramble for your Bible app, right? Shall we do that now, right? Let's have a look at your Bible in front of you, right?

Look at chapter 14, okay? So, are you ready for a quick quiz? Yeah? Okay. So, you're at the table with Jesus, right? Now, can Jesus eat this?

[2:16] What would that be? Jiu, yim, sin, yau, right? Salt and pepper squid. How many of you think we can order this for Jesus?

Okay, we've got some hands here, okay? Unfortunately, the answer is no. All right. What about this? That's black bean spare ribs. Ooh, yummy.

Who would order it for Jesus? No, no, no, no. Okay? How about this? Now, this one is a little bit trickier. Think, right?

Lor bak go, right? Turnip cake. Would you order this for Jesus? Okay, Leo just put his hand away. Yes, for everything, right?

Maybe you want to eat all those, right? The answer is actually no. Because you've got, you know, tiny shrimps and also, you know, the pork inside as well.

[3:13] So, no. But, thankfully, Pastor Williams steps in, right? He was like, you know what? Don't stress, right? Because he's got the entire chapter memorized.

So, you know what? I'm going to do the ordering for you guys, right? So, he ordered, let's see, fish congee. Yeah, good. And then we have the veggie dumplings.

Pretty safe choice, eh? And we have soy sauce noodles. Mmm, yum. And now this one is special. Or Samantha's cake.

Ooh, fancy, eh? Safe options. And then you're sitting at the table, you're like, wait, seriously? You know, I came all the way to yum cha and I'm going to have all these only?

But, for Jesus' sake, are you willing? How many of you are willing to have these with Jesus? Yes? Praise God. Now, we'll come back to this yum cha story a little bit later, okay?

[4:20] And today's passage is about something incredibly ordinary. Eating food. Deuteronomy 14 to 16 covers what you can eat, what you can't, how to eat with, you know, full-on joy during the

festivals and to eat until you are actually full.

But for those of us from immigrants' families, the word eat, here's the character, means more. It means making a living. You know, the morning, early morning commute, the late nights chasing deadlines, that quiet anxiety.

Am I going to be okay after I graduate? Now, through these laws, God speaks directly to our everyday survival. He's asking, who are you?

What is your relationship with me? And are you paying attention to those struggling around you? And today, we're going to walk through four big ideas together.

First, remember who you are before you eat. That's your identity. And second, what you can and what you can't eat, right?

[5:29] Do the food laws still apply today? Number three, feasting with God, joyful celebration and reverence. And four, everyone gets a seat at the table, generosity as a way of life.

So, let's dive into Deuteronomy 14, 1. Now, it doesn't open with a command. It opens with a declaration. You are the children of the Lord, your God.

And verse 2 continues, for you are a people holy to the Lord, your God. Out of all the peoples on the face of this earth, the Lord had chosen you to be his treasured possession.

Now, by this point, there has been lots of roles in Deuteronomy we've read, right? But notice something crucial. It is not, you know, once you take all the boxes, then you become God's children. It's the other way around. God declares first, you are my children and then he says, so, this is how you live. So, identity comes before behavior and grace comes before responsibility.

[6:42] Now, verse 2 uses a very interesting word, a Hebrew word called segula, meaning treasured possession. In the ancient Near East, this word described the king's personal collection, not just the gold, you know, in the national treasury, but his very own treasures, the things that make him light up.

Now, think about it. What is your most treasured thing in your life? Right? Would that be for the parents? Would that be your kids? Maybe a hobby that you would drop everything for?

Maybe gaming, possibly, right? Or, you know, a pair of sneakers? I don't know. Okay? Now, just think of it makes you smile and you will hunt it down without hesitation.

And this is exactly how God feels about every single person in this room. Now, verse 1 also says, do not cut yourself or shave in front, the front of your head for the dead.

In ancient canonized culture, cutting your body or shaving your head were morning rituals meant to appease the spirits of the dead. And now God is saying, your life is not under the power of death.

[8:02] Your strength comes entirely from the living God. Don't mess things up. And for us, as Chinese Christians, this actually matters a lot.

Many families observe, you know, ancestral veneration at, you know, the lunar month markers, maybe at grave sweeping at, you know, Qingming festival.

Rituals at weddings and funerals sometimes involve seeking blessings from those who have passed. And we genuinely honor remembering our elders and ancestors.

This is a good tradition to uphold, but if we believe that our ancestors' spirits hold more power over us than God, then we would be seeking protection from them, than from the life-giving God.

And that's wrong-headed. So, when family pressure comes, let's respond with gentleness. You know, I have my own way of honoring those who have gone before, but we can still adapt to our family customs, but we don't need to do idol worship.

[9:17] So, ask God for wisdom and love as you navigate your situation, your family traditions. And remember, you are God's treasured possession.

You know, any questionable practice should be avoided. So, we come to point two. Deuteronomy 14 tells us about clean and unclean animals, right?

Why can't we eat pork? Why only fish with fins and scales are considered clean? And why some of the birds are okay, some not. But here is the honest answer.

The Old Testament doesn't fully explain each law. Here's the key. Deuteronomy is structured like a covenant between a king and his people.

The king sets the terms. It is not a negotiation. We obey because we know who the king is, that he's loving, he's faithful, and he's good.

[10:25] We don't obey because we fully understand everything first. And this is an important lesson for us. Sometimes faith means trusting without demanding a full explanation.

And here is a couple of interesting points here. But all clean-wing creatures you may eat, that actually include this.

Would you eat that? Grasshoppers. And also verse 21, we have a rather puzzling verse there. Do not cook a young goat in his mother's milk. Why? Because milk was created to sustain life and never to destroy it.

That points to a basic respect for life and creation. Now, chapter 15, verse 23 adds, Do not eat the blood.

[11 : 29] Pour it out on the ground. Blood represents life. Even in slaughter, there is a baseline of respect. So, the big question, do we, as Christians today, need to follow these laws?

The short answer is no. Now, Mark 7, 19, tells us, you know, Jesus already declared all foods as clean.

And Acts 10 shows Peter in a vision with unclean animals, and he was told to eat by God. And God says, do not call anything impure that God has made clean.

The food laws have been lifted, and what gets lifted alongside them is the barrier between Jewish and Gentile peoples. But Jesus breaks down the divisions that once separates all nations.

Now, there are still points to learn from this. So, we can respect other people's food boundaries. we have brothers and sisters, you know, with different dietary practices.

[12 : 37] We don't mock, we don't pressure. Second point, we also treat food and creation with basic respect. Don't be wasteful at your table, because behind every meal, there was a life sacrifice.

organized. Yeah, the next two pictures, actually, I invited one of the members from the Sunday congregation.

He works in a Jewish organization, so these are food that he will eat, and there is a lot of, you know, restrictions of the food that he can bring to his office.

So, let's carry on. Now, on to point number three, feasting with God.

Now, after the food laws, the text shifts into tithing and festivals, and structurally it's like a sandwich.

Now, chapter 14 and 16 are like, you know, the breast slices, and 15 are the filling in between.

[13 : 47] The debt cancellation, the servant laws, and firstborn laws, and so on. Because of time, we won't be diving into the firstborn law today. Now, about tithing in 1422 to 26.

Well, when people hear tithing, right, you would think about tax, burden, obligation. But Deuteronomy says something different.

God tells Israel to bring grain, livestock, wine, and oil, and then eat it in the presence of the Lord your God and rejoice.

It's like God is hosting a massive feast and asking everyone to bring a plate. That's the ancient potluck, right? Bring your best food, come together, and celebrate in His presence.

Have a look at verse 23. Now, this practice of feasting has a purpose. It's about letting God's people learn to revere the Lord your God always.

[15 : 00] We're not revere out of total fear, but out of gratitude of His generosity. Now, carry on words.

Chapter 16 introduced three great festivals, and the word rejoice appears again and again. God is saying, come into my presence and celebrate.

And honestly, when was the last time you truly felt that? You know, genuine joy in celebrating a festival? Barely, possibly. Now, think about Chinese New Year, Christmas.

In Chinese, we have the mid-autumn festival as well. There means to be celebratory, but we often come out more exhausted. Why? Because there are shopping lists to do, obligations, family gatherings.

Sometimes what is supposed to be festive feels like weight. And even church during Christmas time or Easter time can drift into routine and we would forget, you know, why we are here.

[16 : 12] That's not God's heart for us. God's heart for us is to regularly come into his presence and genuinely enjoy being with him. And let's start with food, shall we?

Yeah? Now, the three festivals each paint a scene from a great redemption story. Passover.

dive in. Passover. The Israelites eat the bread of affliction, remembering the night they flat-edged.

They have to rush off, right? The message is this. We were once slaves and God brought us out.

And for us as Christians, Passover points to the Good Friday, Jesus as our Passover Lamb.

This festival is about redemption. It's like someone has paid a debt you could never pay off yourself, no matter how hard or how long you work. The second one is the festival of weeks.

[17 : 22] So, seven weeks, seven times seven, 49, on the 50th day, Israel celebrates the harvest. That's why later, Greek translate the term as Anticost.

Now you understand why. And God reminds them, remember you were slaves, so be generous with those who work for you. That's what we saw in chapter 15.

And let everyone celebrate together. And for Christians, Pentecost happens to be when the Holy Spirit comes upon the disciples, right?

That's from Acts 2. So, this festival ultimately is about equipping. It is about the one who rescued you also sends a helper to walk alongside you every single day.

and finally, the festival of Tabernacles. The final harvest, after the final harvest, everyone builds temporary shelters for seven days.

[18 : 31] It's like going to camping. It is supposed to be the most joyous festival, and God literally commands His people to, again, rejoice. And for us, Christians, check this out.

John 1.14, says the word tabernacled among us. That's the original meaning. Jesus came to live with us.

And it's also pointing to the final chapter of our human history. Revelation 21.3 is the ultimate promise that one day God will dwell among His people.

So, this festival is about hope. hope. And one day, the one who rescued you will be with you forever, and we will never be separated again. Three festivals, one complete story.

Redemption, equipping, and hope. The Israelites rehearse this every year, and so does the church today.

[19 : 38] Now, on to the fourth point. Everyone gets a seat at the table. So, here is the key.

Genuine worship of God will always produce generosity towards those in need. This isn't just good ethics. It's a natural overflow of goodness from people who truly worship the living God.

And the question is, who does this generosity flow towards? Chapter 14, 27, 29 says the tithe includes the support for the Levites.

In today's term, those are the full-time ministry workers. Also, the foreigners, the orphans, widows, all must eat and be satisfied, not just scraping by, not barely surviving.

Eat and be satisfied. God's intention isn't for the vulnerable to hover just about the poverty line. He wants to see them with full stomach. Now, 16, 11, and 14, at both the weeks and the Tabernacle festivals, the same invitation appears, right?

[20 : 59] Look at the list there, the list of people. The sons, the daughters, servants, Levites, foreigners, orphans, and widows, all together rejoicing before God.

We are witnessing an open table, not reserved for the wealthy, but wide open to the society's marginal people, and everyone gets to eat their fill.

And then, chapter 15 introduces something very interesting, called the year of release. every seventh year, the creditors release their hold on debts.

Scholars suggest it's not about wiping debts completely, right? Imagine you buy a house, right? You pay certain mortgage up to six years, and then seven years, and then, oh, you can own this house now, because, and also all your mortgage for 30 years got wiped out.

that wouldn't be the case, even back then, right? Because that would not be fair as well, okay? So, scholars suggest it is not about wiping out the debts completely, but to give the debtors room to breathe, by, it's a chance to start again by giving them the collectorals back to them, right?

[22 : 21] So that they can maybe make use of the tools, the equipment to build their wealth again. In today's term, think about it as like a mortgage holiday, right?

Maybe you run into some really difficult financial situation, and you have to ask the bank for, you know what, can we suspend the payments for a certain amount of time?

Now, also, here is the heart of the whole chapter, so, of chapter 15. It's verses 7 to 11. Here, God uses two images, two imagery to help us understand, hearts and hands.

The scripture says, do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted towards them. Be open-handed and freely lend them whatever they need. I don't know whether you have ever lent money to a friend, okay, but it gets complicated.

Every time you see them, there's a small tension or uneasiness, you know, when will they repay you, should I bring it up, you know, but Deuteronomy is asking a deeper question.

[23:38] Is this relationship worth more than you, more to you than to debt itself? And also we would worry sometimes, right?

If we are being too generous, won't people take advantage of us? Fair enough. That's a fair enough question. But Deuteronomy's answer is, it's better to err on the side of soft heart and open hands than to become hard-hearted and tight-fisted.

Verse nine, this is why it carries a warning there. If you withhold help and the person cries out to God, God will hear them.

And none of us want to be that person before God, right? Hard-hearted, feast, close. Because the same God can also close his hand toward us.

Soft hearts, open hands, that's what Deuteronomy calls us to do. Now, finally, back to our yam cha story.

[24:47] Yam cha. So, your yam cha, having this yam cha with Jesus, you're politely making your way through the fish congee, veggie dumplings, you know, and whatnot.

And doing your best, looking like you really enjoy it. And suddenly, the manager arrives with hot giao, siu mai, you know, the black beans, bare ribs, salt and pepper squid, you know, all your favorite food, right?

And not only that, the manager also brought this. Oh, do you know what that is? Mui chai chú sao, braised pork belly.

And not only that, the manager brought lobster noodles. And not only that, he also brought abalone in superior stock.

The whole table was awed, right? And then Pastor William was like, hey manager, we haven't ordered these, right? Because our guest here, he doesn't eat this kind of food, there must have been mixed up, we didn't order anything like this.

[26:07] And then the manager smiles, you know what, there was a gentleman in white robes, Middle Eastern looking, but with perfect Cantonese, he came around and personally ordered all this food for you guys.

Oh, by the way, he also paid a bill for you. And then the entire room erupts, right? Applause, thank you Jesus. Now, there was one particular sister, you know, sitting at the table, spotting the lobster, right?

And her eye lit up. But, she tends to Jesus, Lord, I know you're keeping to your diet, right? You're eating your fish congee, I love you.

And so today, I'm gonna just go with fish congee with you. And Jesus smiles at her. And the brother next to her immediately, you know, grabbed her share of lobster.

That's brilliant. Now I can have it double portion. And Jesus, I also thank you because through the New Testament, you declared all foods as clean and I won't be holding back.

[27:22] Thank you. And Jesus also smiled at him. So, everyone is eating, everyone is full, and Jesus stands up.

Right, now you have eaten, now let's get up, there's work to do. And everyone looks confused. And Jesus continues.

Out there, outside the restaurant, there are people from different backgrounds, ethnicities, people who have never been able to afford a chance to drink tea.

And I have invited them, I bought them dim sum. Now go and set up tables outside and serve them. And then you all get up and you all become the waiters and waiters.

And table by table you set up and table by table you start serving. The guests were overjoyed and you as the one who served are filled with joy as well.

[28:24] So near the end of the meal, Jesus stands up again. He takes the bread, gives thanks, break it and pass it to you.

And you pass it to those who are willing to receive his salvation. As everyone takes the bread, their eyes lift up and they understand that was Jesus.

then suddenly he's gone. Now, having shared this meal with Jesus today, what is your life going to be changed?

That's something I would like you to start thinking about. What is it like to be having a meal with Jesus at the same table? Shall we pray together?

Father? Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for speaking through Deuteronomy today.

[ 29 : 34 ] You remind us that we are your children, your treasured possession. Lord, help us in our daily grind of work and family and the pressure of just getting by to remember that we are loved by you, refined by you, shaped into something true and lasting worth.

And Lord, may you renew our hearts toward worship and celebration. May every Sunday, every festive season be genuine encounters with your presence and real joy.

Give us eyes to see those around us who are in need and make us people of soft hearts and open hands. Help us to give freely as you gave your son freely, to us.

And Lord, we pray for those here today who don't yet know you. Let them feel that you are inviting them to the table as well. May your spirits move their hearts.

May they know that Jesus Christ has already paid the full price. All they need to do is to receive.

And one day they will come to the feast you have prepared for them.

[ 30 : 45 ] We pray all this in Jesus' name. Amen. Thank you.