

Rebellion to Tyrants is Obedience To God

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Preacher: Chris Oswald

[0 : 00] You can be seated and if you'll open your Bibles to the book of Exodus, we're going to be in chapter 6 again today, Exodus chapter 6. Now, before I forget, I do want to mention that this is officially the last Sunday for Michael and Marissa Metter sitting right over there.

And after the service, a number of us are just going to pray for you, so don't run away. And if you'd like to join us in praying for Michael and Marissa as they leave Kansas City for the swamps of Florida, no, we have every confidence that the Lord's in this and are grateful that he has provided that.

Well, we are not that many days away from the 4th of July and this date, this holiday always looms large in my family because that's also the day that my mom was born.

She said that as a little girl, she thought the fireworks were all just celebrating her birthday. And so, in a few days, we'll celebrate my mom's 70th birthday, but we'll also be celebrating something like 248 years as a nation.

It could be said that the church exists as a love training center. The church exists to teach people what to love and how to love those things and how much to love those things, including the love of a nation.

[1 : 24] You know, it's good to love your spouse. It's good to love your children. It's good to love your job. It's good to love the Chiefs and Chick-fil-A. But only so long as those loves are properly ordered according to God's word.

And it's good to love your nation. It doesn't have to be perfect to be loved. Your spouse and your children and your football team aren't perfect either. And so I want to talk a little bit today about the story of Exodus in both the history of the United States and the story of Exodus in what I believe will be the future, what I hope will be the future of the United States.

I was reading a book called *The Empires of Dirt* by Douglas Wilson this week. And I think around chapter five, I read a series of paragraphs that made me just want to stand up and applaud to no one in the room.

I felt like he just nailed this particular issue that comes up when we deal with the subject of patriotism.

He writes, we are constantly and regularly subjected to a false alternative. Either we must believe that America is the last best hope for mankind, or we must be muttering ingrates who don't recognize or appreciate any of the advantages of living here.

[2 : 42] America is emphatically not the last best hope for mankind. What perfect nonsense. Jesus is Savior. He is the last Savior. He is the best Savior. He is the blessed hope.

But America is emphatically not a dingy little tawdry place to live in. It is a great nation and has accomplished many great things as other great nations have before us and yet others will after us.

Martin Luther once wrote that the minister's work is to make saints out of sinners and living souls out of the dead and children of God out of servants of the devil.

And part of that involves just teaching folks what to love and how to love it. I think all too often pastoral ministry from the pulpit fails to give the saints instruction on how they should exercise their citizenship for the glory of God.

And I think that that's because these false dichotomies are presented to us as if we must either assume that America is the last great hope for everything or that it is nothing. It's like, well, that's just not right on either hand.

[3 : 53] So today we are in Exodus 6 and it allows us to look back into American history and see this incredible, the incredible potency the story of Exodus has had in the history of the United States.

We won't spend too much time talking about this. But I want you to know that there's a very significant link between our history as a country and the story of Exodus.

And then we'll pivot from that to looking at what I think ought to be the role of Exodus, the Exodus story in our future. So you can break down our relationship with Exodus nationally into three particular moments in history.

The first one would be the pilgrims. So something around 1620. One author, Bruce Feeler, who wrote *How the Story of Moses Shaped America*. And if you're interested in learning more about this subject, that'd be a great book for you.

He writes, when they embarked, the pilgrims, when they embarked on the Mayflower in 1620, they described themselves as the chosen people fleeing their Pharaoh, King James.

[4 : 56] On the Atlantic, their leader, William Bradford, proclaimed their journey to be as vital as Moses and the Israelites when they went out of Egypt. And when they arrived in Cape Cod, they thanked God for letting them pass through their fiery Red Sea.

In fact, William Bradford said the following. William Bradford was known as sort of the Moses of Plymouth. And Plymouth at the time was routinely called Little Israel. William Bradford said this, Our fathers were Englishmen who came over the great ocean and were ready to perish in the wilderness.

But they cried to the Lord and he heard their voice and looked on their adversity. Yes, let them who have been redeemed of the Lord show how he has delivered them from the hand of the oppressor.

When they wandered forth into the desert wilderness, out of the way, and found no city to dwell in, both hungry and thirsty, their soul was overwhelmed in them, let them confess before the Lord his loving kindness and his wonderful works to the sons of men.

One other author says, No Christian community in history identified more with the people of the book than did the early settlers in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, who believed their own lives to be a literal reenactment of the biblical drama of the Hebrew nation.

[6 : 14] So that's the kind of first instance when Exodus plays a key role in American history. And the second one is actually around 1776. We've got the pilgrims in 1620, the patriots, you could say, in 1776.

About a century after, a century and a half after the pilgrims arrived, the story of the Exodus reemerged again into the national consciousness. And it began in various ways.

One of them was the famous pamphlet produced by Thomas Paine called *Common Sense*, in which he referred to the King of England as the sullen-tempered Pharaoh.

But in 1776, July 4, 1776, after the Continental Congress ratified the Declaration of Independence, they had one final piece of business. They said, We want to make sure that we have a state or a national seal.

And so the resolution, this is the final resolution of that Continental Congress, it just says this, resolved that Dr. Franklin, Mr. J. Adams, and Mr. Jefferson be a committee to bring in a device for a seal for the United States of America.

[7 : 22] And later that summer, about a month later, we see a letter written from John Adams to his wife Abigail in which he details the ideas that these guys had for the national seal.

Benjamin Franklin wanted Moses lifting up his wand and dividing the Red Sea and Pharaoh in his chariot, overwhelmed with the waters, with the following motto, Rebellion to tyrants is obedience to God.

Thomas Jefferson also wanted to stick to the Exodus motif, and he wanted a seal that showed the children of Israel in the wilderness, led by a pillar of fire by night. And oddly enough, the most Christian of all those three guys, John Adams, wanted Hercules as the state.

The phrase Rebellion to tyrants is obedience to God was so compelling to Thomas Jefferson that he took that and put that as his personal seal, and you can see that on his gates of his estate to this day.

And then finally in American history, the other instance that you should know about is just the slaves. This is another instance in which the Exodus story was a compelling and potent piece of our development as a nation.

[8 : 33] Starting really around 1775 and going all the way to 1870, you had the Exodus story being taken up by southern slaves as sort of the story that made sense of their circumstances, that comforted them, that reminded them that God would deliver them, and so on and so forth.

And really all of their songs, certainly all their most famous songs that they sung while working in the fields, involved some references to Pharaoh or to Moses or so on and so forth.

The Lord by Moses to Pharaoh said, Oh, let my people go. If not, I'll smite your firstborn dead. Oh, let my people go. Oh, go down, Moses. Oh, way down to Egypt's land and tell Pharaoh, let my people go.

So that's just a really quick overview of the role that the Exodus story has played in the history of the United States. And here we are in 2024, 164 years away from the Civil War, 248 years away from the Declaration of Independence, 400 years from the Mayflower.

What relevance, if any, should the Exodus story play in our nation moving forward? I think the relevance, the way that this story can and should and must be used again for our country's future, is that we ought to apply it spiritually.

[9 : 50] It's been a very long time since we've done that. We've gotten used to applying the Exodus motif externally to systems of power and oppression and so on and so forth, that we really need to get to the heart of the New Testament and how the New Testament uses the story of Exodus, because we have a spiritual problem more than anything else.

And this was always anticipated. It was always anticipated that this spiritual state of the citizens of this country would really predict the rise or fall of the nation.

John Adams wrote, So I would argue this morning that the most pressing, So I would argue this morning that the most pressing and patriotic application of the Exodus story, for this particular moment in our national history is the spiritual one.

We understand that we need Jesus to break us free from the tyranny of the devil and of sin. I think that that's fundamentally the only hope we have right now is for a group of people, hopefully many people, to embrace this spiritual motive or the spiritual motive in Exodus, which is really the true motif.

One commentator puts it, The book is not about liberation in general or about political and religious freedom in particular, but about deliverance from bad servitude to good servitude.

[11 : 32] The Israelites served Pharaoh, but were called by God to serve him instead. Now, we are not opposed at Providence in particular to seeing the Bible applied in the national world and the political world and so on and so forth.

I have absolutely no problem with applying God's word to external problems. But if we're not careful, we'll do only that and fail to deal with the internal problem.

That is really the thing that predicts the rise or fall of nations ultimately. I know that there are many great injustices out in the world and many pharaohs to oppose, and some of them are in our own government.

But before we do that, let's make sure that we have laid hold of the internal freedom that we've been given or offered through Christ. So let's look back.

That was a long introduction, but let's look back at our text today, Exodus chapter 6, verses 6 through 8. Exodus chapter 6, verses 6 through 8. This is the seven I will statements of Yahweh that Moses says, I want you to go and tell my people these things that I will do.

[12 : 42] Seven of them. Say therefore to the people of Israel, I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment.

I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.

I will bring you into the land that I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and to Jacob, and I will give it to you for a possession. I am the Lord. One way to break these statements, these seven statements down, is to see that the first two have to do with liberation.

First two statements have to do with liberation. I will bring you from out of the burdens of the Egyptians. I will deliver you from slavery, from your slavery. The third I will statement has to do with redemption.

I will redeem you with an outstretched arm. The fourth and fifth I will statements, you could say, have to do with adoption. I will take you to be my people. I will be your God.

[13 : 48] And the final two statements have to do with possession. I will bring you into a land, and I will give it to you as a possession. Now, there are obvious gospel connections to all of this.

As we've seen over the weeks as we've been in Exodus, everything in Exodus is just a whisper, a foreshadowing of a greater glory that was revealed to us through Jesus Christ.

And so these seven I wills just directly correspond to our experience with the gospel when Jesus saves us. We are liberated from sin and Satan. With the precious blood of Christ, we're redeemed from the guilt that we've incurred through our sinning.

We're adopted into the family of God, and we are given possession of a kingdom that cannot be shaken. And that kingdom, by the way, is not of this world, but it is for this world.

God means to let his kingdom come and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven. So you can see the overlap here between these seven I will statements and the basic promises of the gospel.

[14 : 51] We are promised liberation. We are promised redemption. We are promised adoption. We are promised possession of a kingdom that cannot be shaken. And we won't have time to get into all that this morning.

I'm just going to stick on the first one, on liberation, and suggest, again, we're talking about America's future. And we're talking also about your future.

And where do we go in the Exodus story to receive hope, to receive the power we need to press on? And the first thing I think we really need to get back to and understand is this sense of liberation.

We need to be liberated from an oppression we all live under. And that oppression is not external or at least not temporal. That oppression is spiritual.

Now, as we've mentioned a number of times already throughout this series, Pharaoh is a stand-in for Satan. We could go through all the verses throughout the Bible that correlate these two things.

[15 : 51] But I think you can even sense that just in a general way when you look at the story. Satan is, as we think of the Exodus story reflecting the gospel, Satan is a stand-in for Satan.

Egyptian bondage is slavery to sin and to Satan. Now, it's very important that we understand, and I hear people talk about very often. But you could say a number of things about slavery to Satan.

You could say that it is natural. That is, that it's the default state of the human soul. You could say that it's invisible. It's not something that you see.

It's vocational. You work for him. It's unfruitful. You don't get anything in return for working for him but death. And it's formidable.

There's nothing that you as an individual can do about the situation. If you are not in Christ, the Bible says that you are, in fact, in Satan.

[16 : 48] As Bob Dylan famously said, you will serve someone. It might be the devil. It might be the Lord. But you're going to have to serve somebody. John Lennon hated that song so much that he came out with a terrible response song.

This is back, like, when the folk artists were doing beef rap style, you know. So anyway, John Lennon hated that song. He hated that song because it's true.

You're going to have to serve somebody. It might be the devil. It might be the Lord. But you're going to have to serve someone. So John Lennon wrote this terrible screed called Serve Yourself. And that's impossible.

There are two great forces in the world. That's what we mean when we talk about slavery to Satan as being natural. The Bible teaches that all people, by virtue of their own choice to sin, are caught up in slavery to Satan.

The great Puritan Thomas Watson writes it this way. See into what a wretched, deplorable condition we had brought ourselves by sin. We had sinned ourselves into slavery so that we needed Christ to purchase our redemption.

[18 : 02] But by sin we are in a worse slavery. Slaves to Satan, a merciless tyrant who sports in the damnation of souls. In this condition we were in when Christ came to redeem us.

So one thing about being enslaved to Satan is it's just the way it is, man. It's just if you've sinned and you have not been redeemed by Christ, I'll tell you whose you are.

And the Bible is real clear on that. And another issue that we brought up related to this is not only is it natural, but it's invisible. The bondage isn't visible to the person in bondage.

The hearts, the minds, the souls of people who are in bondage to the devil are not aware of their enslavement. 2 Corinthians 4.4 puts this very clearly.

In their case, the God of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God.

- [19 : 08] So in Egypt, the original Exodus story, the Hebrews knew they were slaves. And they could cry out and seek redemption from their slavery, liberation from their slavery.
- But the kind of slavery that the New Testament talks about in our bondage to the devil is not one that you're even aware of when you're under it. It's perceptual in nature. It actually affects your capacity to know that this is a problem that you have.
- So it's natural. If you've ever sinned, you've been placed in league with the one who is the head sinner, if you will. And it's invisible. You won't see it.
- You won't even know it's there. And it's vocational. What do we mean by vocational? Well, it just means like you do what he wants you to do. Ephesians 2, 1 through 3 says, And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in what you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the devil, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience, among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body.
- So it's not only is it natural and invisible, but it's vocational. You're doing his bidding. And also it's unfruitful. Romans 6, 20 says, What fruit were you getting at the time from the things of which you are now ashamed?
- [20 : 36] For the end of those things is death. And earlier in that passage, we'll come back to that passage later, he says point blank, you're either a slave to sin or you're a slave to righteousness. Those are your two options.
- And each one of those options has a head because you're going to have to serve somebody. Now, this is all very important as we talk about not only you as an individual, but also the nation in general.
- The truth is, is that even actions that we may think of as good, if we are working for the devil, turn out to not be good. They will either produce pride or some other unforeseen problem.
- You see, one of the things we've got to fight against is to think that democracy is some kind of secret recipe that will always keep us safe. No, it's just another tool.
- It's just another piece of technology, if you will. And that technology could be used for good or could be used for bad. C.S. Lewis, as he was writing Screwtape, began to be increasingly concerned that the word democracy was used as a sort of incantation to blind people from thinking about things.
- [21 : 45] He was already way back then seeing this whole save our democracy thing for what it was. And listen to how he writes in Screwtape Letters.
- He says, So one of the reasons I'm arguing that America's future depends on recovering the spiritual meaning of Exodus, is that no form of government is immune from being hijacked by satanic schemes.
- We didn't come up with the hack-proof government in 1776. John Adams let us know that clearly. Washington in his final address told us the exact same thing.
- Now, slavery to Satan is also formidable. The situation is just incredibly dire. If the situation in Exodus with Pharaoh was impossible to imagine escaping from, the situation in terms of a man's soul enslaved to Satan is even more so.
- Satan is far stronger than Pharaoh, and we are no match for him, as Martin Luther would say in Our Mighty Fortress. 2 Timothy 2.24 talks about this.
- [23 : 05] It talks about people being captured by Satan to do his will. And so we need freedom at a different level than we as a country are used to thinking of.
- We need freedom to serve God, to break out from under the slavery of sin and Satan. And this is why Christ came. John Calvin said, Colossians 1.13-14 say it simply, You can see the echoes of the seven-eye wills in Exodus 6 in this passage in Colossians.

The passage in Exodus pertains to the deliverance of a physical tyranny, and the passage in Colossians pertains to the deliverance from a spiritual tyranny.

And so my argument is just that the role Exodus, Exodus has played a role in the history of our country at key moments, and the role it must play now is the good old-fashioned, y'all-need-to-get-saved role.

The good old-fashioned, you, by virtue of your own sinning, have joined league with the tyrant of all tyrants, and you cannot escape that tyranny without the power of Christ.

[24 : 53] First, if we don't have an internal freedom, what kind of external freedom do we imagine we would manifest in the world?

If we don't have an internal freedom as citizens, how are we supposed to build an external freedom? You're seeing this right now. We are living in what I would call a screw-tape democracy.

It's all rights and no responsibilities, and a grotesque kind of equality has emerged, the worship of equality that punishes excellence and exalts victim status.

You know, there are certain rides at every amusement park that have longer lines, and they're the most popular rides. And in America right now, the number one, the biggest line is in front of the victim ride.

Everybody knows that we live in this screw-tape democracy, with a grotesque kind of equality that punishes excellence and exalts victim status.

[25 : 57] And that's because the freedom that we're capable of building while we're enslaved to Satan is not true freedom. So we've got to double down on gospel sharing.

We've got to proclaim freedom to the captives. God told Moses to tell the people, I am the Lord. I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment.

And I really believe, friends, that God is telling us to go to our neighbors and say things like this, whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning.

But the reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. We need to let people know that they are in bondage beyond their ability to understand, but that Jesus Christ has come to pronounce freedom for the captive.

Now, people here, because we're all very similar in some of our neuroticisms, many of us would immediately think, well, that's all fine and good, but they won't listen.

[27 : 15] Friends, I want to leave you or just drop a Jesus juke on you. In John 16, 7, Jesus addresses this exact issue.

He says, Nevertheless, I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.

So Jesus is promising the Holy Spirit here, and listen to what he says here. And when he comes, He will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.

Concerning sin, because they do not believe in me. Concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you see me no longer. Concerning judgment, because the ruler of the world is judged.

We've got to double down on this spiritual, the most literal and fundamental application of Exodus. Jesus, you are enslaved to sin and Satan.

[28 : 15] You need freedom. You can't make that freedom happen on your own. Jesus came to deliver you out of the domain of darkness and into the kingdom of light. We need to double down on this, and by faith, look at Jesus' words in John 16 and say, He has promised that the helper will come and convict the world concerning these things.

I think of our friend Brandon. Some of you know him, some of you don't. I won't use his last name because I didn't ask his permission, and I just thought about talking about him this morning. I didn't have time to ask. Brandon's in some position of prominence and in a bit of a situation where maybe he wouldn't want this out there.

But he and his fiancé attended Providence for a while until he was moved for a job. He was always a political conservative. He was always a red stater. But due to his job, he had kind of a front-row seat to the Antifa hijinks of the summer of 2020.

He was right there on the front lines dealing with that. And suddenly, one night, as the crowd throbbed with anger, something hit him.

This is spiritual. This is spiritual. And it was a thought that he just couldn't get out of his head. He saw that there was a fundamentally religious nature to the thing he saw unfolding before his eyes.

[29 : 41] And he realized that while he was politically on the right, he was spiritually not right with God. He went to a Christian friend on his team, and he said, what must I do to be saved, basically?

And Brandon put his faith in Jesus as the true liberator of his soul. Now, Brandon's a Christian now, and as much as he loved freedom before, he has freedom now.

He has freedom in Christ. Does that affect his interaction with his country? Yes. He now understands where true freedom must come from, from where it must originate.

So we have to double down on sharing the gospel. And if you're here today, and you're like, oh, I don't even know if I am a Christian. Well, let me just tell you, like, no judgment here. We were all not Christians before we became Christians.

We've all got a Brandon story. And I would just encourage you, even just as an answer to some of the angst you may be feeling about the future of this country, about the condition that we're in, I just want to tell you, like, you need to give your life to Jesus.

[31 : 00] You need to get on the right team. You need to trust that Jesus has come to deliver you from darkness and into light. Get off your moral high horse a little bit because you are the problem too.

If you're not serving Christ, you're serving the devil. But Jesus has come to redeem you from all of that and give you freedom so that you can be someone who is working for freedom from the inside out.

The last thing I want to mention as we close is simply that freedom comes from free men. The thing you need to notice about the Exodus story is that Moses, the whole time he was working for the deliverance of the people, was himself free.

It's kind of uncanny. As I've read this story so many times over the last few months, like, why didn't Pharaoh just throw Moses into prison? And the answer is because God wouldn't let him. God just protected him.

But Christians, today, I want to not only challenge you to be more zealous and hopeful in sharing the gospel with people, but I also want you to be zealous in refraining from the deeds of darkness.

[32 : 07] I want you to walk in the freedom that Christ has given you. 1 Peter 2.16 says, Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.

Galatians 5.1 says, For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. Ephesians 5.11 Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.

So today, Christian, you may be here, and you have indeed trusted Jesus Christ with your hope for salvation. He is your only hope in life and death. But if you were honest, you would say that there are a number of practices in your life that are really oriented towards serving the other team.

Listen, we need all of you on the right team. The world needs all of you on the right team. And Christ demands that he have all of you on his team because you are not your own.

You were bought with a price. Therefore, honor God with your body, with your mind, with your heart, with your time. You may be saved, but you might be serving practically in some ways that you'd be ashamed of.

[33 : 28] And I just want to invite everyone here to freedom. If you don't have Christ, I want to invite you to hear the jail cell door spring open and receive freedom from your slavery to sin and Satan by Christ's blood.

And if you're here and you're a believer, but you are not walking in integrity, you are using your freedom as a cover up for evil. Though Christ has set you free, you keep returning to the yoke of slavery.

You continue to participate in unfruitful works of darkness. Stop. Repent. Give your life to Jesus again.

Go to people that you know will help you so that we can have everybody in this room walking shoulder to shoulder with freedom working on the inside to the outside.

I want to challenge each one of us just to live as free men and women, truly free men and women, proclaiming freedom to the world enslaved by Satan.

[34 : 32] And obviously the devil doesn't want you to do this so you can expect opposition and temptation and distraction. If you felt a little unnerved or convicted when I said, hey, Christian friend, are you really honoring the Lord?

And you thought, not in this area. Have you ever thought that he's just trying to keep you out of the game, the devil? He's trying to neuter you so that you can't be the force in this world for Christ that he wants you to be.

You can expect opposition from the tyrant as you oppose the tyrant, but I just leave you with the words we saw at the beginning of the message. Rebellion against this tyrant is indeed obedience to God.

It is the most fundamentally true way of expressing that sentence. Rebellion to the tyrant of sin and Satan is indeed obedience to God. Let me pray. Father God, we pray that you would, through your Holy Spirit, work in our hearts, bring freedom where there is slavery.

Pronounce freedom to the captive, Father. If anyone here is enslaved to Satan and blinded and their eyes are being kept from seeing the goodness of Christ, we pray that through your Holy Spirit, that Lord Jesus, you would break free, you would reveal the truth, that you would show them the way out.

[35 : 59] The way out is to trust you and who you are and what you've done, living a perfect life, offering yourself up as a sacrifice to redeem the captive. So Father, we pray for those here who need to be redeemed.

And Lord, we also just pray for every single Christian in this room. Would you give us boldness to share the gospel of freedom to an enslaved world? And would you give us zeal to pursue that freedom in every aspect of our own lives so that we can honor you completely?

Lord God, we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. For communion today, whether you're a member or a visitor here at Providence, we invite you to partake if you're a follower of Jesus Christ. And we encourage you to come in a moment and partake of these elements.

Just pick them up, go sit down, and say your prayers and do your business with God. I'll leave you for communion with this passage from Romans 6, 20 through 23. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.

But what fruit were you getting at the time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God.

[37 : 11] The fruit you get leads to sanctification, and its end eternal life. For the wages of sin is death. But the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

If you've received the free gift of God, which is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord, would you now come and partake of the Lord's table with us, celebrating and tasting and seeing that God is good.