

Week of July 8-14

THE WORLD'S BUFFET

Scripture Reading: Read 1 Corinthians 3

A few years ago, Golden Corral opened a restaurant buffet in the Albany area. On a typical Sunday afternoon, the place is packed with church-goers who go to fill their stomachs after having filled their souls with worship. These folks have a chance to choose from multiple salads and soups, several meats cooked on the grill, along with dozens of other food choices. After dinner, patrons can choose from close to a dozen or so dessert items. So many choices with some much healthier than others.

In Corinth, the people of the city had choices, too, as to where they were going to worship. Many chose the pagan temple of Aphrodite, the goddess of love with her 1,000 temple prostitutes. Others chose Asclepius, the god of healing or Apollo, the god of the sun. Still others chose from one of the dozen or so other temples that dotted the land. The folks in Corinth had quite a buffet from which to choose and all the choices would ultimately prove deadly to their spiritual health.

Around 50 AD or so, God chose to open up a new place in Corinth to serve the people in the city. He sent the apostle Paul to get it started. On the menu? Living water, the bread of life and the milk of the Word. Paul worked day and night for eighteen months to establish the place. It grew fabulously. More and more people came by to try out the food and drink. When Paul was reassigned, another great chef was sent by God to cook up some meat for the folks to eat. His name was Apollos and people loved his incredible cooking. They flocked to the place. Eventually, Apollos left, as well, for another assignment.

Unfortunately, over time, without Paul and Apollos around, the restaurant began to flounder. The place got dirty. There were fights in the dining room. The staff refused to talk to each other. They forgot how to serve their guests. They were losing business and fast. Finally, one of the staff decided to send out an S.O.S. to Paul to lend a hand. Paul responded by sending a letter to remind the staff of how to run the business well as well as to warn them of the dangers of failing to do it God's way: *"Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple."*

On the buffet line in Corinth, with so many choices of worship, the church of God was to be God's entrée. They were to be God's temple, his dwelling place. Instead, by walking in an unholy fashion, by failing to walk in unity, by turning their worship services into a circus, and by focusing only on themselves, they were making God's entrée a poor choice that was no longer wanted at the buffet.

Action Step & Prayer Focus: Today in our world, the choices on the buffet line are every bit as varied as they were twenty centuries ago. The church is still called to be God's tasty entrée. How are we doing? Is God's entrée appealing to our community? Do we stand out as a place of holy living, loving relationships, godly worship and mission-mindedness? If not, what is God calling you to do in his restaurant to make the food more appealing? Spend some time in prayer about this and follow his promptings.

Take-a-way: *In the world's buffet, the church is to be God's extraordinary entrée.*