

We are here to worship God, to give ourselves a spiritual tune up, to be in closer communion with God - the spirit of hope and peace, grace and truth, goodness and beauty! We hear in Psalm 34, "Taste and See, that the Lord is good!" And the advice is clear: to wake up, open up, be alert to how God is present in this world, and receive and let the Holy Spirit dwell within our hearts.

Many theologians or spiritual teachers have expressed the importance of *experiencing* God, versus just talking about God... engaging not only the head, but the heart, and the body also. One teaching that stays with me: there are two signs with directional arrows near; one says This way to "The course about God," and the other sign simply says, This way to "GOD." Which way would *you* want to go?! To "taste and see" is to *experience, to experiment, to practice* seeking and finding God in many ways and many places.

The story of Job affirms this... he says he had heard a lot *about* God, but that finally his eyes began to "see" God, as the amazing Creator in whom Job can trust. We could say something similar about our relationship with the risen Christ... Do we want to spend forever in typical debates *about* Jesus, about the way that he saves or atones for sin, the way that he heals, how he is bread or wine to us, a virgin birth, about the exact nature of his resurrection appearances.... or can we finally just choose to open our hearts to his presence, pray for his spirit to walk with us.

So we come here to have *experiences* of God, to "taste and see!" Most basically, and logically, Taste and See can mean "Use all your senses" to experience God. Let's spend just a few minutes thinking about the 5 senses, and how God, as Goodness, or as Mercy, or as Beauty, might come to us.

Let's start with TASTE! (Taste and see that the Lord is good.) The fruits of harvest time have so many great, yes, even heavenly tastes! Apple Pie (with cinnamon and slices of cheese!) ... Pumpkin Spice Muffins, fresh out of the oven... We all have favorites, and people are

already planning what to cook for November 25... my mother use to make her sausage crepes with a dab of sour cream on top! Yes, the Goodness of our Creator God.

Let's move on to SIGHT! (Taste and SEE that the Lord is good.) Such gorgeous, beautiful sights of fall in New England; "bursts of red, yellow and gold," we want to simply go for a drive, and find long stretches of trees! We see the beautiful V-formation of geese in flight. One song explains it well: "I see trees of green, red roses too, I see them bloom for me and for you." ... and then it adds human love... "I see friends shaking hands, saying how do you do, they're really saying I love you." We see smiles on many faces if we keep our eyes open.

Moving on to SMELL! (Taste and See... and Smell that the Lord is good.) I'm back to apple pies. Who has not immediately broken into a smile if entering the kitchen to the smell of apple pie baking in the oven. I've even started enjoying just a lone baked apple, a tip from one of our elders. And the smell of onions simply sautéing in butter, Wow! I know that whatever is added next, it's going to be a great dish!

On to TOUCH! (Taste and See, and Touch, that the Lord is good.) God made so many things that are pleasant to the touch. The Sun actually touches us to warm us, the wind touches us, crisp fall airs touches and invigorates us. Water, as a warm shower or a cool refreshing swim touches us. Surely pets are comforting to touch and pat... and of course human touch, Massage is a wonderful healing therapy... who could turn away from gentle, caring human touch? Love that is embodied is truly how God comes into the world... (The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.)

And finally the sense of HEARING. (I think I left the best until last!) Taste and see.... and Hear that the Lord is good.) Yes, that's part of why we come *here*. Many people love the sound of our large pipe organ... yes the sound can be large, and it reverberates around the whole room. Andrea gave us the gift of concerts called "healing" concerts; there is a whole field of medicine called Vibrational Medicine. I think the vibrations

of music really do penetrate us, down to our bones! While it has taken a long time to appreciate “drums in church,” I think it is clear that drums can add a lively beat, can get our hands and feet moving on the more upbeat spirituals! My first church in Brentwood NH now has a choir member who regularly adds drums to appropriate song, especially celebrate their connection with a sister church in Africa. When we are not in church or at a good concert, we can simply take a walk in the quiet woods, or sit in our back yards, and hear the amazing calling of birds and the rustle of chipmunks or squirrels through the leaves.

Yes, there are bitter tastes, annoying sounds, rotten smells, prickly things, and ugly sights also, but we trust they are much less than the sensing of beautiful things, in the Creation that God called Good. And some of it comes down to what we *choose* to see, hear, smell, taste and touch. Remember the famous story about the two hungry wolves inside of us... one can increase beauty and goodness, the other can increase ugliness and evil. And the question is of course, which one will we feed? We can focus on the good, we can “taste and see.” We can open our hearts and eyes and ears to all that is good and beautiful. We can find the good and beautiful things of God in holy scriptures, in fellowship with others, in worship and prayer, just by being open, by tasting, by exploring, by trusting... then finding the love and peace and joy of the Holy Spirit!

I would be remiss if I did not add the idea of a 6th sense, a spiritual sense. It could be called ESP, or Intuition, or listening for the “call” and guidance of God, through prayer or meditation. Yet one of the deepest, most profound callings of God is when God leads us in the way of Mercy, the way of forgiving and being forgiven. This is Grace, Grace that truly saves and gives new life!

As the choir sings the song Taste and See, please hum along or sing quietly on the refrain!