

Sermon Summary
4th after Epiphany
29th January 2012

- 1 Cor 8 addresses the problem about food.
- Paul's correspondents were most likely accustomed to eating in the dining rooms/restaurants/cafeterias (none really is quite right) attached to the pagan temples in Corinth. This was an established social practice.
- They appear to justify their practice by recourse to a contemporary philosophy, Epicureanism, which held that, although there were gods, they did not have any power or influence in this world. Eating at the temple would do no harm, or good.
- Paul counters this by arguing that, even if that is so for other deities, God the Father and Christ are real and work in this world. Their argument is flawed.
- He then moves on to another approach. Many people do not share this refined philosophical view, and believe that gods do have power.
- When they see Christians eating at the temples, they see them putting themselves under the authority of those gods- and effectively saying that they belong to them.
- Even if such views are a mark of weakness (1 Cor 8:10), Christians need to be aware of their public profile and avoid the misleading messages they are sending out.
- Paul here advises that the Christians should not be eating in the Temples (in 1 Cor 10, he will return to a similar theme: food which has come from the temples and is being sold in the market)
- Even if such a debate is alien to our context, Paul has a message for us: Christians must not compromise their witness to Christ by being seen in the wrong places.
- But there is also a positive side: think of the witness that even walking into a church gives to those who see it happening....

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