

## What is good

*Hear my words, O ye wise men; and give ear unto me, ye that have knowledge.  
For the ear trieth words, as the mouth tasteth meat. Let us choose to us judgment: let  
us know among ourselves what is good.  
Job 34:2-4*

Sometimes we hear someone express dislike for a certain food by claiming to not “have a taste for it.” The truth of the expression is that the person’s mouth had previously tasted such food and determined that it was not good. Most of us include such judgment of the mouth in the regulation of our diets, since we like to enjoy the eating experience. We employ discerning taste buds, not only to optimize the enjoyment of our eating experience, but also to protect ourselves from unpleasant or even harmful experience. For example, we discern to not drink the soured milk by the smallest possible sample. In childhood, we may have also deprived ourselves of good experiences because we did not allow our mouth to sufficiently appropriate and appreciate the benefit of the food to our taste.

In today’s text, Elihu compared this principle of the sense of taste to actually making sense of the words that we hear, as he exhorted Job’s friends/critics to examine his own words, since theirs, though in some general sense true, had provided no remedy for Job’s situation. Just as the tongue discerns the goodness of food, so the critical ear, which metaphorically refers to the discernment of what is heard, tests and judges the goodness of the words and the concepts expressed by them. His invitation was appropriate for both their own pontifications and his own that followed. It is, in fact, appropriate for us as well.

Do we actually expend as much effort discerning what we hear as we do what we eat? Have you enjoyed a good exchange of ideas lately, as you would enjoy a good meal? Then, in addition, have you chosen to apply right judgment to what you have heard, so that you actually consume with your mind what is wholesome and pleasant to the edification of the soul before the LORD, and expel that which is detrimental? Is this not in line with the exhortation of the apostle to “prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (I Thessalonians 5:21)? With so many avenues for information to bombard our hearing in this age, there seems to be an intention for its consumption to be parallel to that of “fast food,” which is generally not absorbed in a healthy manner and therefore rarely beneficial. Let us instead put aside such temptation, and choose to us judgment: let us know among ourselves what is good.