

“More Sizzle, or Steak?”

Acts 2:41-47/Matthew 5:13-16

June 14, 2026

1st Presbyterian Church of Sharon

By Rev. Dr. Glenn Hink

I. Introduction

Steak. I rarely have steak. And it’s even gotten rarer nowadays with the price. But when I do I expect it to be good; Ribeye, Filet Mignon, New York Strip. I like it medium-rare, served hot, with just enough salt and pepper, onions, and mushrooms. I like the taste of the steak to “shine through.”

I get a little nervous grilling steak myself on my grill. I’m much more comfortable with boneless skinless chicken thighs. I feel like I can’t mess up chicken thighs. But steak, well, I get a little worried. I really enjoy the smell and sizzle when it’s cooking. And I’m right there to enjoy it all. But I get concerned with over-cooking it. So I’m tempted to cut into it a little to see how red it still is inside. But when I do that, the juices run out. So I trust the You Tube videos I’ve watched about grilling steak...and worry.

It’s much more enjoyable for me to order steak at a restaurant known for good steak. I just order it how I like it and trust the chef. And if we’re sitting close enough to the kitchen, I can smell it and hear the sizzle. And then when it arrives hot and steaming, I take a bite, and I remember how good steak can be. Smell, sizzle, look, taste; it’s all part of a wonderful experience.

But I’ve also had other experiences with steak. These experiences are not so good. There’s the smell and the sizzle; that’s good. But the look and the taste are off. Maybe it’s over-cooked. Maybe it’s too many seasonings. Maybe it’s dry. Or maybe, it’s just not a good cut. And even if the smell and sizzle are great, but the taste is off, it’s a disappointing experience. The sizzle is not the steak.

Sizzle and steak. It’s where we get the saying, “More sizzle than steak.” It’s the idea of great promise and expectation, but then disappointment because the product or experience or person is much less. Similar sayings are “More hat than cowboy” and “More costume than actor.” “More sizzle than steak.” We use the saying sometimes to describe a house, or a school, or a company, or a job, or a leader, or a person, or a...church. “More sizzle than steak.” In a way it’s about integrity, or the lack of integrity. I like things and experiences and people to be more than they initially seem. I like pleasant surprises. I expect integrity. I want “more steak than sizzle.” How about you?

I received a packet in the mail from the belongings of a former 1st Church member. Her POA mailed it. The former member had moved to Florida years ago but kept the 1st Church stuff over for over 50 years. In the mailing was a church picture directory from 1976. It was fun to see current 1st Church members 50 years ago. And there was a booklet that explained the history and art of our windows. I had seen that before.

But most interesting was a booklet that was put together for the 50th anniversary of this building in 1977. There was a big celebration. The booklet shared a detailed history of the church, its pastors, and its lay leaders. There were descriptions of the various remodel projects and capital campaign. There were lots of pictures of 1st Church groups and activities and classes. And what I found especially interesting was the list of all the non-church groups that used this building. Included in the list were; the Wee Wisdom Preschool, the Playhouse 600 theatre group, the graduations of high school and nursing classes, the American Red Cross emergency site, College Club, Music Club, AA, and many more. Over generations 1st Church members have believed that our building was a vital part of the community.

Our building is beautiful and well maintained. In short, it has a lot of “sizzle.” And that’s good. As I’ve said a number of times, the beauty of the 1st Church building and yard are gifts of art we give our community. It’s all a type of “working museum.”

And as I read that long list of groups and activities at 1st Church over the years, I was pleased to see it has been more than “sizzle.” We have a great history of “steak” here; people and programs and events and celebrations and discussions and art events for the community. 1st Church has impacted the Shenango Valley in many wonderful ways. I’m pleased we are still able to do that through Chorale concerts, the annual Boar’s Head Festival, Black Sheep Players plays, amateur radio meetings, line dancing classes, the open gym program, hosting a Sharon Head Start program, hosting a summer program for at-risk youth, our Alanon group and Boy Scout Troop 3, a poetry group, and more. And of course, added to that are all the events and people that are a part of 1st Church activities. It’s “steak and sizzle.”

II. Text and Brief Exegesis

“Steak and sizzle.” In Matthew Jesus calls it “salt and light.” It is a familiar text. Jesus is saying his followers are to be distinct like salt. The faith in Jesus they profess is to be demonstrated in a way of life. It’s to be lived out both in how Christians are with each other, and how they are out in the world. Christian faith that’s just “sizzle” is of no interest to Jesus. He teaches that Christian faith should shape a pattern of life; the Jesus pattern of life. “Steak and sizzle.”

To make sure people understand what he is saying, Jesus says the same thing using a different metaphor, light. Christians are to be “the light of the world.” Just as a single light shines bright in the dark, so the way of Christian living is to be a light that shines bright in the dark world. The purpose of light is to give light so to see. The purpose of a Christian life is to live the

way of Jesus and give people a glimpse of God. And you don't cover up either. The purpose is to shine. "Steak and sizzle."

And so we should not be surprised that as Luke describes the beginning of the Church in the book of Acts, we see the same thing; "steak and sizzle." Acts 2 is the familiar Pentecost story. In the story the earliest followers of Jesus are in Jerusalem. All of a sudden something like a wind and flames of fire fill the room and blow around them and through them. It is the promised coming of the Holy Spirit. It is the 3rd member of the Trinity; the power and presence of God to continue the work of Jesus. And so those first followers begin to speak in different languages about the glory of God. And Peter who once denied Jesus three times stands to give his great Pentecost sermon. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, the spread of Christian faith and the early Church begin.

So what happens next? **Read Acts 2:41-47.**

In a lot of ways, all the drama of the coming of the Holy Spirit, the speaking in different languages, Peter's sermon and the first "altar call" is a lot of "sizzle." It's a lot of emotion. If you've been to a Christian camp, or a Billy Graham type of crusade, or a mission trip, or had a sermon or song touch your heart you know what that is like. It's a lot of excitement and feeling and professions of faith. And all that is good. There is "sizzle" in Christian faith. But the question is always, "Ok, so what about tomorrow? What about when I go home? What about the way of my life when I'm back to work, back to school, back to my family, back to washing dishes, back to mowing the lawn?" That's the "steak" question, isn't it? And we know it matters.

And so this story tells us about both "sizzle and steak." All the power of the Holy Spirit led to about 3,000 people confessing Christian faith and being baptized. And then they devoted themselves to the teaching of the disciples about Jesus and his way of life. They also shared regularly in caring community, gathered to share meals together that in some ways probably reflect communion, and were united in prayer. A way of life is being shaped. "Sizzle and steak."

The story in Acts goes on. There was awe in the way of their life together as the Spirit empowered those early Church leaders to do some of the miracles and healings and exorcisms that Jesus did. And the Spirit transformed their minds and hearts so they were generous, sharing with those in need. They went to the Temple to worship God. They broke bread in each other's homes (again probably a reference to a shared meal that was connected to communion). They are joyful, hopeful, caring. They are salt. They are light. They are "sizzle and steak." And so who's surprised their Christian community grew. We are all looking for something of God.

III. Theological Reflections

So, what does "sizzle and steak" look like? I believe it looks like 1st Church. It looks like a wonderful facility used by the congregation and community. It looks like ministry and mission shaped by our vision statement, "Deep Well; No Fences," and by our mission statement

“Meeting Jesus on the Corner of Faith and Life.” It looks like beautiful music on Sunday and a “Block Party” out on a vacant lot with our neighbors.

And more personally, I believe it looks like this.

Bryson is 3. He and his older sisters Sadie and Kaylee come to 1st Church regularly. I’m happy about that. Bryson sits with his family and Grandpa Larry and Grandma Terri in the back corner of the sanctuary. When it’s time for the “Good News for Kids” Bryson comes forward with the dinosaurs or stuffed puppies he’s brought that Sunday. There’s one in each hand. After the message for the kids Bryson goes off to the children’s program with his sisters. And there the kids are learning Bible stories.

Grandpa Larry told me this story after worship last week. It seems Bryson was on his grandparents’ back deck watching the birds at the feeders with his Grandma Terri. A plane then flew over. Bryson loves planes. So he watched the plane travel across the sky. It was high.

Bryson then looked at his Grandma Terri and said he would like to have a trampoline so he could jump high, higher than the airplane. He said then he would jump up to heaven and bring his Great Grandma “Gami” and Grandpa and dog Urby back down to earth so they could be here with him again. Gami, Grandpa, and Urby all died last year. But 3-year-old Bryson remembers. And believes.

The story, of course, is cute and touching and heartfelt. But I would suggest to you it is also something more. Bryson has begun to have his young heart and mind and soul shaped by Christian faith. He has begun to see and hear and experience with his family and church family living a life with hope and kindness and goodness and love. The “salt and light” he experiences are becoming the “salt and light” with which he sees the world. And that is “sizzle and steak.” May we all hope to jump high.