

## INI

Isaiah 25,6-9

All Saints' Day — 1 November 2015

**Greeting:** To those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ; mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you. Amen.

We hear a portion of the Old Testament lesson from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, which was read earlier:

He will swallow up death in victory,  
And the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces,  
And the He will remove the reproach of His people from all the  
earth;  
For the LORD has spoken.

**So far the reading. Let us pray:** Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of our hearts, be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, our Strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

**Introduction:** Isaiah gives us a picture of the heavenly banquet – where believers in Christ will be able to eat regardless of earthy dietary worries – no worry about cholesterol, no worry about sugar, no worry about fats of any kind, no worry about salt. No worry about warnings from the World Health Organization that caffeine in coffee will give you cancer, much less processed meats – O bacon, where is your sting?

But to get to the banquet, someone on our behalf and the behalf of all believers had to have meal that we might say was not only difficult to swallow, but from our human point of view, impossible to swallow. That which would be swallowed up had been swallowing up

humanity since time immemorial.

Isaiah the prophet speaks about this swallowing act; however, it wasn't an act. It was, in fact, death defying. This brings me to today's sermon theme, "**Jesus Swallowed Up Death For Us.**" I'll develop this theme in three parts:

- 1) A Feast On The Mountain;**
- 2) Death is Swallowed Up In Victory; and,**
- 3) We Wait Without Reproach For The Lord**

**1) A Feast On The Mountain.** Isaiah prophesied between 740 and 681 years before the birth of Jesus, but throughout the Book of Isaiah, God gave the prophet words to speak about not only the coming of Jesus, but also what Jesus would do.

When we read of a banquet on "this mountain" we first ask may ask: what is the mountain about which Isaiah is speaking?

Earlier in Isaiah, the prophet clearly describes "the mountain of the House of the LORD" to which people will go so that the Lord may teach them that the Law will go forth from Zion, and the Word of the LORD from Jerusalem" (Isaiah 22,3).

The mountain of the Lord, therefore, is Mount Zion, which is also another name for Jerusalem.

On Mount Zion, then, the Lord says that He will prepare a banquet for "all peoples." What is meant by "all peoples"?

A hint of that is given in a parable of Jesus, in which Jesus speaks about a "certain man" who was giving "a big dinner," or we might say a feast or banquet. But the people whom he first invited all

made excuses. So the man told his servants to round up “the crippled, the blind and the lame”; and when that wasn't enough, he told the servants to get anyone they could find outside the city.

The people who were first invited were the Jews, God's Old Testament people. When they refused, then the invitation went out to everyone one else – people of every nation, tribe and tongue.

Here we are reminded of John's words about Jesus:

He came to His Own – literally, His Own possession –, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as did receive Him to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe on His name. (John 1,11-12)

In other words, God's Own possession, His Own people, did not receive God the Son, so the Son invited all others to become God's children on account of what He would do for them. For us and in Christ God expanded the definition of who are God's Own possession.

And what of the banquet, the feast?

The banquet is finally realized in its completeness in heaven. Here we hear the voice from the throne of heaven speaking to John:

Write, “Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb” – which of course is the Lamb Who takes away the sin of the world, Jesus. (Revelation 19,9)

And what a feast it shall be. Only the best. No need to worry about diet or cholesterol. The best aged wine and choicest pieces of marrow are served, which are also figurative of the best God has to offer.

We then are presented with a picture of the heavenly Jerusalem, Mount Zion, in which God will dwell and banquet with His people at the Lamb's high feast.

All this will occur because:

**2) Death is Swallowed Up In Victory.** Two thousand years ago on the earthly Mount Zion, in the city of Jerusalem, Jesus confronted death as He went to the Cross.

Jesus had been betrayed by one of His disciples and the rest fled in fear as He was arrested. He was tried, suffered under Pontius Pilate, and nailed to the Cross to die.

Ordinarily, death by crucifixion was agonizing, and dying should have taken a day or two. Jesus died in three hours.

Why so short a period of time?

Jesus died in three hours because He was not dying for Himself. Rather, Jesus was dying with the weight of the sins of the world on His shoulders – and that includes your sins and mine.

Before He died, He said, "It is finished!"

The life He lived as the sinless Lamb of God was over. He was the final sacrifice God demanded as a punishment for sin. The payment for sin had been made – paid in full! Paid, once for all! Finished, indeed!

But even though His lifeless body was laid in the tomb, that did not mean that death had won, that death had swallowed the Son of God.

On the third day Jesus rose from the dead. He Whom death thought death had swallowed, had in fact swallowed death.

Thus Paul, in looking at what God had revealed to Isaiah, could write to the Corinthians:

But when this corruptible will have put on the incorruption, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, “Death is swallowed up in victory.”<sup>55</sup> O Death, where is your victory? O Death, where is your sting?<sup>56</sup> The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the Law;<sup>57</sup> but thanks be to God, Who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 15,54-57)

By living the perfect life as the sinless Lamb of God, Jesus had fulfilled the requirements of the Law down to the last little jot and tittle. Thus Jesus broke the power of sin and took away sin's wage, death.

Now the veil that had laid over mankind since Adam, the shroud of death, was taken away.

The veil of mourning and the uncertainty of what will happen after death has been removed. In Jesus we see a gracious God Who approaches us, and in Jesus death and resurrection has swallowed up death, offering us the forgiveness of sins.

In the forgiveness won for us by Jesus,

**3) We Wait Without Reproach For The Lord.** The people to whom Isaiah wrote were a people who would live long after Isaiah himself. He wrote to a people on whom God's judgment had fallen and would be taken away into captivity in Babylon after the

Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and God's house in BC 587. They were in exile and waiting for the fulfillment of God's promise: the restoration of Mount Zion, Jerusalem, the wedding feast of the Lamb, and the coming of the Savior Who would swallow death.

In some ways we also are like those people – waiting as “strangers in a strange land,” waiting and longing for that time when we shall rest in the heavenly Jerusalem, where God

... shall wipe away every tear from [our] eyes, and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away. (Revelation 21,4)

In this life, however, we still seem to be confronted by every earthly malady that causes mourning, crying, and pain, and eventually results in death. We still seem to be confronted by the last enemy who would swallow us up in the darkness of the grave.

But like the ancient Israelites, we lay hold of the words from Isaiah:

For the LORD has spoken.

When the Lord speaks, when He promises, it is as good as done.

God has spoken to us in these Last Days through His Son, He Who on our behalf went to the Cross and the grave to swallow death for us.

In Jesus, God has removed the reproach of His people.

What does this mean?

In Jesus, God has called us to be His own and live in the forgiveness that Jesus has won for us.

This began with our Baptism, in which we were baptized into Christ's death and resurrection, so that as Christ died for us we too might be dead to sin; and as Christ rose for us, we too might be forgiven to be alive to God.

This morning, we are welcomed to that foretaste of the wedding feast of the Lamb, as the Lamb of God shares with us what He sacrificed for us on the Cross: His true Body and Blood. Here we partake of Jesus' sacrifice for us, in which Christ meets us with the forgiveness of sins He won for us. This is soul food indeed – food to nourish our bodies and souls on our pilgrimage to our heavenly home.

Who would reproach us during this earthly pilgrimage? It is, as ever, the old evil trio – sin, death, and the devil. But for us Jesus has swallowed death, so on account of God's promise of forgiveness, their reproach should fall on our ears which have been deafened to their accusations on account of He Who said, "Be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven" (Matthew 9,2).

Because God has spoken in Christ, we hear the Words of our Savior:

I am the Resurrection and the Life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies. (John 11,25)

**Conclusion:** In life, it often seems as if death has the last word. Its appetite seemingly cannot be satisfied, and what it swallows goes down into an everlasting and hopeless darkness. It is the payment for sin.

But now in Christ, God has accepted another payment, the payment of the sinless Lamb of God, Who on the Cross and in His resurrection from the dead has won for us the forgiveness of sins and swallowed up death.

In this life, even though surrounded by mortality, we press on towards our true and eternal Mount Zion, where God awaits us to enfold us in His arms and seat us at the wedding feast of the Lamb.

In this life, though surrounded by mortality, we are sustained by the payment for sin made for us by the sinless Lamb of God.

Thus with Isaiah and Paul, we confess and shout for joy:

O Death, where is your victory? O Death, where is your sting? <sup>56</sup> The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the Law; <sup>57</sup> but thanks be to God, Who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Now, the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

St. Stephen Lutheran Church of the East Bay & Central Valley  
21290 Birch St.  
Hayward, CA 94541-1538

**SDG**