

Rev. Shaun Arndt
Sunday, November 3, 2024
Isaiah 25:6-9

*“Oh taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed are they who take refuge in Him.
Amen. Dear friends in Christ,*

A birthday. A wedding. A graduation. A reunion with old friends. How do we celebrate such special occasions?

Almost without fail, we eat! We have a family meal, go out to a restaurant, get coffee or have a special treat like cake or ice cream. This has been the case down through history and across cultures. When we celebrate, we feast.

This is the imagery the Lord uses in our lesson from Isaiah, where He invites **all peoples to The Feast.**

On this mountain the LORD of Armies will prepare for all peoples a banquet of rich food, a banquet of aged wines, with the best cuts of meat, and with the finest wines.

Perhaps think of the Thanksgiving table groaning under the weight of that ridiculous amount of delicious food and then multiply it by 10,000. Actually when we consider **the LORD of Armies** is the Chef and Host maybe we should multiply by 10 million or more!

Now this is no uncomfortable, stodgy **banquet**. Nor is there any arguing over politics with your uncle here. At **the Feast** there is only joy: **Let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation!”**

The Hebrew word for **be glad** literally means to dance around with joy. If you’ve ever seen the movie *Fiddler on the Roof*, think of how the lead character dances as he sings. Or think of a little child so excited that they bounce around as they talk, that’s this Hebrew word.

The reason for this celebrating is **His Salvation**. The rescue the Lord has carried out. God has pulled us from the brink of disaster and has carried us not just to safety, but to so much more!

Much like on Easter, on *All Saints' Day* we are called to rejoice at the good news that the Lord has saved us from a most horrible feast. **The Feast** where we are the ones on the menu.

The book of Proverbs describes that horrible feast: **Death and Destruction are never satisfied... and the grave... never say(s), "Enough!"**

Like a terrible beast and most real monster, that is always hungry, never resting, so death keeps **swallowing** up lives.

Death eats it way through our human story, gobbling down rich and poor, young and old. It swallows down nations, happiness, dreams, hopes, careers, riches and achievements.

Have no doubt this monster also stalks you, for our reading calls death "**the shroud that covers all peoples, the burial cloth stretched over all nations.**"

In ancient times, and in many places still today, they wrapped a dead body a **burial cloth**. Still today, a sheet or covering is often placed over the person who just died, much like on the TV shows.

Notice it says: **all people, all nations**. So sooner or later death's suffocating blanket will fall on each of us.

One reason we seek to cover up death, either literally with a **burial cloth** or by just trying to not think about it, is deep down we are aware of Scripture declares, we are not innocent victims.

Death is the penalty for **sin**. Sin and death go together and have gone together ever since the first man and woman swallowed Satan's lie and rebelled against God.

So death has the right to come for us, for we share their sin and rebellion. I only read part of a verse from Proverbs before, listen to the whole thing: **Death and**

Destruction are never satisfied, and a person's eyes are never satisfied (Proverbs 27:20).

Of course our eyes aren't the real problem, but rather our hearts that always look and long for something else to satisfy instead of God. In a lack of contentment we always want to think that if we just had more -- a little more money, or a little more time, or better relationships, or more accomplishments, or whatever, then we would be satisfied.

And so we grasp, we want something more instead of finding rest in the Lord and end up like what the book of Isaiah describes: **we waste our labor on that which does not satisfy.**

This happens when our eyes long for and our actions follow what is sinful. This also happens when we long for satisfaction in that which is not God. As the ancient Christian teacher Augustine once put it: *"whoever is not satisfied with God alone, is much too greedy."*

And so we have indeed, swallowed down sin in lethal amounts. The proof is found in achy joints, wrinkles, greying hair and the fact we cannot stop death, neither our loved ones' nor our own. And so **death** should swallow us down, not just consuming our bodies but our whole being in hell where there is nothing to eat but dust and ashes and hopeless tears.

So what reason do we have to **rejoice?** Only this: **On this mountain (The LORD) will destroy... the burial cloth stretched over all nations. He has swallowed up death forever!**

Look... our God has turned the tables on death. In pure and amazing undeserved love, He has torn in two the **burial shroud**, the **Lord** has **swallowed up** that monster **death** that sought to **swallow us up!**

No wonder the prophet says **be glad and rejoice!** We who deserved to be executed have been set free and now are sat down at the most marvelous **Feast.**

Our lesson tells us it all happens **on this mountain**. **This mountain** the prophet speaks about is **Mount Zion**. It is the name given to Jerusalem where the Old Testament temple stood, where God Himself came to dwell with His people and to save them.

There at Jerusalem, God's saving work was beautifully previewed in Old Testament Sacrifices. Sheep and goats and bulls would die in the place of sinners that they would be forgiven and live with God.

With many of the sacrifices there was a meal – sinners eating in the presence of the Holy God because He rescues them all a preview of that day, when **the LORD swallowed up death forever**.

It was literally on **Mount Zion** where **the LORD** would **swallow up death forever** – on a little hill with a cross. For that is who Jesus Christ is! He is the LORD God who came into this world to dwell with His people and save us. He is God the Son of in our flesh and blood.

On that hill outside of Jerusalem, the holy Lord God and sinless Savior took onto himself the poison of our death deserving sin.

On the cross, Jesus swallowed down what we deserved, just as Hebrews 2 says: **We look to Jesus... who... by God's grace he might taste death for everyone)... because he suffered death**. For us, Jesus drained the cup of God's judgment against sin on the cross. For us, Jesus stepped into death's gaping jaws.

Yes, Jesus bowed His head to death to take away all sin – even yours, even mine. You can be sure you are included because you are part of **all peoples** and **all nations!**

But you know, the old monster death bit off more than it could chew when in swallowing Jesus Christ, death swallowed **the LORD of Armies**. The grave could not hold the Living God.

On **Mount Zion**, in a garden tomb near Jerusalem, Christ's heart beat again. His lungs filled with air and death split open at the seams. The Rising Savior **swallowed up death forever!**

There was once a group of children arguing about who would get the last cookie. But then one of them shoved it in his mouth. Now the others could not have it. This is what Jesus has done, He **swallowed up death forever** to save us from it.

Oh, yes, death remains, but now death is a like a monster with its teeth and claws pulled. It's like a bee without a stinger.

For those who trust in Jesus, for the saints of God, and that's what you are with your sins forgiven by Jesus- for God's people, death has been tamed. Now death cannot swallow us down to hell, but must serve as the doorway to heaven.

And yet there will come a still greater day at the resurrection, when **death** will have to release our bodies just as it had to release Jesus. Christ will speak the word, and our graves will be as empty as Jesus own tomb.

And we will rise, body and soul to joy and dancing, feasting and fellowship of that everlasting victory celebration where: **The LORD God will wipe away the tears from every face. He will take away the shame of his people throughout the earth.**

Oh how we long for the joys of that day! To be able to serve and sing to the Lord free from sin and selfishness like the new hearts He gives us have always wanted. To be reunited with those believers who have gone before us, to see those loved ones in Christ again, to speak with prophets and apostles, to sing with the holy angels, to experience life free from sorrow, pain, **shame and tears**. But above all this: **Look, here is our God! He saved us. This is the LORD!**

Of course, we don't actually have to wait. Yes, we have to wait still for the resurrection and the New Heavens and New earth, but you do not have to wait for the best part of this glorious feast.

Already this morning, by God's grace and the Spirit's faith giving work, we stand upon **This mountain** mentioned in our lesson. You see the Bible tells us God also uses **Mount Zion** as a name for His Church of all believers. Hebrews says: **you have come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God; to the heavenly Jerusalem... to the church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven...**

And so the **LORD saved us on this Mountain** when at a baptismal font, He had the fruits of Jesus' saving work poured out on you.

Whenever we hear the pastor announce your sins are forgiven in the absolution and hear the Scriptures read, we can indeed say: **Look, here is our God** – for Christ Himself is present in His Word to absolve us hold us with His mighty hand.

And each time we come to communion, we get a foretaste of the heavenly **feast** – where the Holy God eats with us sinners and takes our sins away!

Dear friends, continually eat and drink the goodness of your God He sets for you here in Word and Sacrament. In the strength He gives you, pray and work together to call still others to **The Feast**, until the day Jesus welcomes you to that place He has prepared for you at His banquet table! Amen.

The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears this say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come. Let the one who wants the water of life take it as a gift. Amen.

We confess our faith in this feast of life everlasting set by Christ as we use the Apostles' Creed on p. 12 in the worship folder.