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Sermon

June 21st, Third Sunday after Pentecost

To Jesus Christ, who washed our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen! The Word of the LORD which forms a portion for our sermon text this morning comes from Isaiah, chapter 25, verses 6 through 9:

**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. 7 On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that covers all peoples, the burial cloth stretched over all nations. 8 He has swallowed up death forever! The LORD God will wipe away the tears from every face. He will take away the shame of his people throughout the earth. For the LORD has spoken. 9 On that day it will be said, “Look, here is our God! We waited for him, and he saved us! This is the LORD! We waited for him. Let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation!”**

#### **A Never-Before-Seen Feast**

- I. Everyone is invited
- II. The LORD takes the first bite
- III. Your place is already set

This is the Word of The LORD!!! The congregation may be seated...

Mercy, Grace, and Peace ARE YOURS from your God and Father and from your Savior from sin, Jesus Christ. Dear fellow Redeemed

What is the best dinner you have ever been to? Possibly there has been a thanksgiving feast in your past that comes to mind, or a wedding banquet that you have attended, or maybe even a special trip to a fancy steakhouse... No matter what the meal was, you probably had to let the host first know that you planned on attending. If it was Thanksgiving, your presence would have been counted on. If it was a wedding, you probably had to RSVP. If you ever been to a high-end restaurant, you most likely had to make a reservation beforehand. It would be extremely frustrating if you planned your whole day around attending this meal, only to be stopped at the door with an “I am sorry, you're not on the list”.

But what if everyone was invited? What if everyone had a reservation for this lavish banquet, what if it was available to all? What if you went to one of the best 5-star restaurants in the world, on their busiest day?

You simply walked into the restaurant without a reservation, walked up to the maî-tre d', told them your name, and that you expected to be seated immediately. Would it shock you to get turned away? You didn't even make a reservation and you expect to walk in on the busiest night? But what if you did all of those things, and the worker said, “Absolutely, right this way. Also, by the way, everything you will order tonight is compliments of the house”? Wouldn't that be even more shocking?

Yet, that is what we have been promised by our God. Our text this morning speaks of that glorious banquet which our LORD has invited us to. Isaiah paints with beautiful detail what this meal contains. It is a feast the likes of which have never before been seen. It is a feast that awaits us at the end of our days, it is something that we await with all anticipation, and even now, our table is being prepared for us!

LORD, SANCTIFY US BY YOUR TRUTH, YOUR WORD IS TRUTH, AMEN!!!

**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.**

One of the first questions is what exactly is Isaiah referring to here? Isaiah was a prolific prophet of the LORD. His writings are prophetic in nature, so the subject matter is not always clear to us. For instance with this text, what mountain is he talking about? He says **“this mountain”**. He also says, **“On that day”**. Which exact day or mountain is he talking about?

The fact of the matter is that we are not entirely sure. There are a number of options that make sense. Usually, when it comes to Isaiah’s prophecies of restoration, he is looking ahead to 1 of 3 things. He could be talking about the restoration of the nation of Israel, specifically after the exile into Babylon. He could be talking about the restoration due to the coming of the Messiah. Or, he could be talking about the restoration of the spiritual nation of Israel due to the end of the world, the final restoration if you will. What makes it hard to always narrow down is that sometimes a prophecy has several different fulfillments simultaneously.

The real question is “is this talking about what Christ would do on Good Friday or what the LORD would do at the end of days”? Again, it can be hard to differentiate between those two events because they shadow one another. I think that here Isaiah is talking about the last final restoration. Certainly, it could be possible that the subject is the redemption of mankind found at the cross, that took place at a mountain also. But due to the note of finality that he is talking about it makes me think more of the end times.

This feast that the prophet is advertising is one that is meant for all people. This text mentions that fact several times. It is a feast meant “for all peoples”. There **the shroud that covers all peoples, the burial cloth stretched over all nations** will be destroyed forever! The cross of Christ has everything to do with that. It was there that Jesus finished what

He had set out to do, namely take away the sins of the world.

Jesus died for you. That is important to know, it is vital to your own personal salvation. But it is a principle that is based on a much larger truth. Not only did He die for my sins, but Jesus also died for the sins of the whole world! For everyone of all time. Our subjective justification is based on the world’s objective justification.

And yet, even though salvation is made available for all, not all chose on attending this feast. Jesus spoke to this in our Gospel reading this morning, what is known as the Parable of the Great Banquet. The banquet Jesus was talking about is the very same that Isaiah foretold hundreds of years prior. How did Jesus describe those guests who were invited to this great banquet? **they all with one accord began to make excuses Luke 14:18** They were invited to partake of this special meal, and all they could do was think of reasons not to come. One had to go see about a field, one had to go test out some oxen, and one declined because married life got in the way.

Imagine once again that you planned on going to that 5-star restaurant. We have many fine dining opportunities here in the greater Seattle /Tacoma area (at least we did a few months ago). But instead of just randomly walking up to it, imagine that you were personally invited by the restaurant owner... He called you up, randomly, and said, “I have a special night planned just for you and your family. All you need to do is show up, mention my name at the door, and you will be immediately seated and have the best meal you have ever had in your life. No strings attached, no charge what so ever. All you need to do is show up”. What would your reaction be to this?

Personally, I would think it would to good to be true. In that scenario, no one would benefit but me alone, so naturally, I would be suspicious. Yet at the same time, my curiosity would be peaked. How many chances would I ever have again to experience something like this? Wouldn’t it be worth a flier? I mean, how often do you get the chance to experience the best restaurant ever, let alone for free? All you have to do is show up? Seriously? Why wouldn’t you?

This is not just a hypothetical. This is literally the case for us spiritually. This banquet of the finest wines and only the best cuts of meat is what we have been given by the LORD. This is what was won for us through Christ. This is not just a one-time thing, this is an eternal banquet that we will enjoy for all time. All we have to do is believe that the offer is real.

Sadly, many do not. In the parable from Luke, people who had been invited to partake came up with reasons for them to be excused. But they weren't really reasons, they were merely excuses! One thought that business outranked this offer. One thought that personal property trumped this invitation. One thought that his own personal love life was more important. All of these excuses had one thing in common: They all had something more important to do!

We see the same thing to be true today. Many reject God's free offer of salvation for various reasons. But it all boils down to the same reason. They got better things to worry about than salvation. They don't prioritize what God says because they know better. They don't worry about their souls, they are focused on the things of the world. Or, they think that the offer is simply too good to be real. So, they devise other ways of coming to the feast instead of what was instructed of them. They go to a different feast instead. Or they decide that it is too good to be true, and they plan to acquire the assets needed to be able to pay to dine. The simple invitation is overlooked or over thought.

What did it take to send out this invitation to the whole world? It took Jesus taking the first bite... **7 On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that covers all peoples, the burial cloth stretched over all nations. 8 He has swallowed up death forever! The LORD God will wipe away the tears from every face. He will take away the shame of his people throughout the earth. For the LORD has spoken.**

This part of our text may sound more familiar to your ears than others. The reason for this is that Paul quotes this section of Isaiah when he is talking about the final victory that guaranteed through Jesus in 1

Corinthians. **So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." (1Co 15:54 NKJ)**

This invitation is not too good to be true. True, it is offered freely to all people. But the fact of the matter is that the cost was very real. You might be hesitant to attend such a function due to the cost. You would rationally think "Well, someone has to be paying for this great meal". And of course, you would be right!

Jesus paid the expensive price it took to put on this banquet. He paid for it with His own blood. Just because it is freely given doesn't mean it wasn't paid for. This is indeed the case when it comes to salvation.

To understand just how great this banquet is, you first need to understand what it means to go without it. **On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that covers all peoples, the burial cloth stretched over all nations**

What is he talking about here? DEATH! What else could a burial cloth be referring to? But, it wasn't simply death as it is commonly thought about. He is not just talking about temporal death, the removal of the soul from the body. He is talking about eternal death, the removal of the soul from God. That was what the whole world was facing because the whole world had rebelled against God. It wasn't just a few bad apples here and there that rebelled against God.

It was every single person. You don't know that you need what God is offering until you know what you really deserve! The banquet is not only a kind and gracious offer, it is the only way to truly not die! **Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. (Rom 5:18 NKJ)**

The word that Isaiah uses here for the "death shroud" idea is interesting. It has the idea of a veil or mask that acts to hides the face. It is a covering essentially. But it also has a different definition of being a molten face, like one used to describe an idol.

Idolatry and death go hand in hand. Idolatry brings about death.

Really when you think about it, Idolatry is the most common sin there is. There is no commandment as frequently broken than the first commandment: "You shall have no other gods." How can I make such a sweeping statement? Because every other sin is still a violation against the first commandment. You might bristle at this notion and say, "Pastor, I believe in the One True God, I do not practice Idolatry!" While I am fairly confident no one here is bowing down to a golden calf at night, that doesn't mean that we still aren't idolators.

Look at the people in the parable who made excuses. Each had their own special idol who they prioritized more than God. One worshiped possessions. One worshiped money. One worshiped people. Each was an excuse to miss out on the heavenly banquet that was specially prepared for them.

What about you? What idol do you serve? It all depends on the moment, doesn't it? It might be the same as the people in the parable. It might be some other kind of pet sin. Any time we do anything that goes against God's Word, we are worshipping a different idol. We are saying that what we are doing is better or more important than what God says or does. It may not feel like it, but that is in fact what it is! Whenever we don't fear, love, and trust in God above all things, we are bowing down to something or someone else! Our lament is the same as Paul's **O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? (Rom 7:24 NKJ)**

The answer is here! Jesus saves us from idolatry and from death! Jesus removed the burial cloth that once covered our faces, and now we see salvation, a future we did not deserve, and our place set at the heavenly banquet. **9 On that day it will be said, "Look, here is our God! We waited for him, and he saved us! This is the LORD! We waited for him. Let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation!"**

The Hebrew word there at the end of the text is important. It is the same way you would spell the Hebrew name for JESUS! That is what the name

Jesus means after all, Salvation! That is why our Savior was named the way He was, **He shall save His people from their sins.**

Why do people not take the invitation to the banquet seriously? Because they cannot see it now. This is a flaw in the human race. We like to think that we are rational, to believe in what we see. This is why excuses are made so easily, and other gods are served so readily. They can actually be seen! It makes sense to rely on possessions because you can physically touch them. It makes sense to trust in money because you actually see what it buys. It makes sense to place relationships and people ahead of God because you interact with them every day.

This is a faulty way to think because we can do all these things with the real God! We should rely on God because we can see times in our lives when He helped us when we did not deserve it. We should trust in Him because we can see what He paid to buy back our souls from sin, death, and Satan. It makes more sense to place God above everyone else because He does interact with us on a daily basis.

What is the evidence of all of this? **THE WORD!** Open it! Read it! See what God has done for you! Pour through its pages and see what God has done and continues to do for you! When you do, you will see that you have been invited personally to this glorious heavenly banquet. Even right now, your table is being prepared! You may not be able to see it physically, but that doesn't mean it's not true! **Psalms 23:5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over.** Don't excuse your self from the banquet, rather say thank you and taste and eat! Do as Isaiah prophecies, **Let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation!** Gorge yourself on the gracious gifts God has given you!

Yes, dear Christians, even now the banquet is being prepared. It will be a feast the likes of which have never before been seen. We too cannot see it with our own eyes right now, but we will surely behold it with these very same eyes on the last day, and how our heart yearns within us!

One of my favorite movies growing up was the 1991 film "Hook". That movie is about the grown-up Peter Pan returning to Neverland. But due to the years spent away from that place, Peter Pan forgets who he was and he returns to a foreign place for a rational adult. The turning point for the character is when he arrives at a massive feast with the rest of the Lost Boys. Only, it's a make-believe meal. He can't see the food, all he sees is these adolescents acting like they're eating. He sees only empty plates and tables, and this frustrates him to no end. But then, he starts to use his imagination like he once did. All of a sudden, the banquet isn't hidden anymore, and he sees this massive table full of delicious food!

We don't need to use our imagination to picture what Isaiah is talking about in this text. It's not like it needs to be imagined to be real. It is real, it is assured, and it will be what we sit down to into eternity. The only imagination required is just how different our blessed future with Him in heaven will be compared to the realities we see in this world. Can you even imagine a reality in which **The LORD God will wipe away the tears from every face.**

This feast that we will sit down to, it is one in which death is nothing more but a faint recollection, a distant haze. The reason we have this eternal banquet instead of the eternal death we deserve is for one reason only. Jesus Christ loved us and died for us! He swallowed the first bite, and in so doing He swallowed up death forever. Because He did that, on that day you and I will say with all other countless saints, **Look, here is our God! We waited for him, and he saved us!** Today we are still waiting. Today we still cannot fully see it. But one day, the promise will become reality. In anticipation of that day, let us rejoice today. Our future is secure. It is heaven. Let's eat! AMEN!!!