

A Banquet to Satisfy Your Soul

Isaiah 25:6-9 (Pentecost 21)

As some of you know, the last week or two have been really difficult for me. Two weeks ago, my brother was diagnosed with COVID. He was doing okay and his symptoms were under control until last Sunday when he couldn't breathe. Ever since he has been hospitalized in Intensive Care where there were times it wasn't looking good. Thankfully over the last few days he has been steadily improving. All glory certainly goes to God for that, but honestly the first part of this week it was a struggle for me. I may have been here, but I didn't really want to be here. I really didn't want to go to meetings on Monday night. I didn't want to be in my office even just to work on today's message. All I was focusing on was the situation, how helpless I felt, how useless I was, and how I couldn't be there with him. Little did I realize that here in Isaiah's picture of a banquet (which I had planned out weeks ago to focus our attention on this week) is where I actually needed to be.

We could focus on the pandemic and the disturbing numbers put out there every day for us to see. We could talk about how terrible this virus is along with all the other problems we might experience because of it or anything else. We could complain about how helpless and useless we feel sometimes. We could ignore the invitation God has given for us to enjoy the banquet he has prepared for us. We could pull ourselves from the table and neglect feasting at his banquet completely. Yet by doing all or any of that leaves souls that are hurting from sin and how sin affects lives hungering to be satisfied. It is when you think we don't need to be here at the banquet, the Lord reminds you that his banquet is exactly where you need to be. He invites you to a wondrous feast that satisfies your soul in every sin, every uncertainty, every hurt, every struggle, every fear. My friends, you are invited to God's banquet. So let's sit at the table and feast to satisfy your soul.

Isaiah writes, **“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.” (vs. 6)** Whenever you get an invitation in the mail for things like weddings or birthday parties, it's usually an exciting thing especially if it is given by someone close to you. Yet it's even more exciting if you weren't expecting that invitation. The banquet of salvation God invites all people to is one of those invitations. It isn't expected. We know that we don't deserve it. We aren't worthy of such an invitation. Our sins make us undeserving of anything from God. It is only by God's grace that you are invited to this banquet he has prepared for all people, a banquet filled with the very best his grace could offer you.

The picture Isaiah paints for us is one of a banquet filled with the richest food and drink the ancient world could imagine. The wine was aged in order to increase its color and quality. The meat was the best that the ancient world could provide. It was fat and rich. Think of the most expensive cut of meat and the finest of wines money could buy and you understand this picture even more. The one preparing a feast like this was holding nothing back and giving his guests the best of the best.

God has prepared the best his love could offer: rich compassion, wonderful forgiveness, and every satisfying food for the soul. It is at this banquet of grace, God's people would feast and be satisfied. Every time they hear God's Word they are feasting on his grace. Every time they reflect on their baptisms, they are feasting on his grace. Every time they receive the Lord's Supper, they are feasting on his grace. Every spiritual bite of Word and Sacrament is God giving you and I the very best, the richest food and finest wines his grace could offer, grace that satisfies our hungry souls with salvation. **“On this mountain he (God) will destroy the shroud that covers all peoples, the burial**

cloth stretched over all nations. 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.” (vs. 7-8)

Shroud, burial cloth, and tears are all things which are often associated with sorrow and death. Culturally speaking, there was a practice of wearing a veil or a shroud of some kind when mourning the death of a loved one or when confronted by great misfortune and calamity. Burial cloths were used to wrap and cover dead bodies. Tears were shed when one faced sorrow and shame. Nothing has changed. The shroud of sin which causes sickness, troubles, and sorrow covered us. Death is the ultimate end in this world causing tears of grief and of shame to run down our faces. Yet at God’s banquet of salvation the best of his grace given to us satisfies our hurting, sorrowful, shame-filled, hungry souls.

At God’s banquet, it is Jesus, God’s gift of grace to the world, who satisfies every hungry soul. Jesus endured the punishment of sin. Nailed to the cross he endured sin’s shame in our place. Yet that burial cloth which covered him in the grave was not needed for very long. He swallowed up death! He consumed it by rising from the dead. Jesus has destroyed sin’s shroud that covered all people. Jesus has swallowed up death forever. Jesus has taken away the shame our sins caused us. Jesus is the one who wipes every tear from our faces as he tenderly takes your hand and seats you at the table of his grace saying, “Come, look at the salvation I have invited you to enjoy and have so lavishly spread out in front of you. Because I live, you have life and a place at the banquet of heaven.” When we hear these words of Isaiah, we can’t help but think about what the Apostle Paul proclaimed, **“Death is swallowed up in victory. Death, where is your sting? Grave, where is your victory? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!” (1 Corinthians 15:54b-55)**

“The Lord has spoken,” Isaiah said. This is what God promised to do. In his grace he would prepare a banquet intended for all people that satisfies the soul. That is what he did, inviting and offering a luscious banquet of his grace to you providing the richest food of salvation through Jesus that satisfies your hungry soul in every sin, every uncertainty, every hurt, every struggle, every fear with the food of certainty for the future and the assurance of a heavenly feast no matter what life in this world looks like. You are invited to his banquet and he has seated you at the table, but are you properly dressed!

When you receive an invitation to a wedding or a party of some kind, you want to be dressed appropriately for the occasion. If I was going to a formal wedding reception, I would put on a shirt, tie, and a suit coat. I wouldn’t go in blue jeans and a polo or sweatpants and a T-shirt. If I was invited to something like a cookout at someone’s house, I wouldn’t wear that suit. I would probably wear those jeans and a polo. In Jesus’ parable, he talked about one guest who was invited but didn’t bother to put on the proper clothes for this wondrous wedding banquet this king provided and graciously invited people who seemed unworthy to be there. As we hear about this banquet of salvation our Lord invites us and sets before us, listen to how those properly clothed for God’s soul-satisfying banquet respond to what they see. Isaiah writes, **“On that day it will be said, ‘Look, here is our God! We waited on him, and he saved us! This is the LORD! We waited for him. Let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation!’” (vs. 9)**

God’s people trust him and are saved. Their delight does not come from the fact that they had enough sense to trust in God. Their joy is his salvation. It isn’t that he saved us because we trusted him, but rather that we trust him because he saved us. We acknowledge that it is God alone who saved us by his grace in his time and in his way. We are glad and rejoice in that salvation. That’s faith! Clothed by the Holy Spirit with faith, we are properly dressed to sit at the banquet table that God’s grace has provided and invited us to enjoy. In faith we consume this feast set before us hearing and receiving the blessings of God’s salvation. In faith we rejoice that God’s salvation in Jesus has

destroyed sin and swallowed up sin's curse of death. Feasting at God's banquet of salvation our hungry souls are satisfied in the best of times and even in the worst of times.

When the week began, I maybe didn't want to be here. Faced with the reality that this week may not end well, it was hard to be feeling so helpless and useless. I really wanted to be there with my brother and my parents but, of course, quarantining prevented all of that. Yet as I learned over the course of the week, I was exactly where I needed to be. I needed to hear his invitation. I needed to be seated at God's table feasting on his banquet of grace to rejoice in the salvation I have, my brother has, you have in Jesus, and to patiently trust the Lord.

Isn't that where you need to be too? Whether COVID has affected you directly or not, whether you are struggling with problems in your own life or not so much right now, isn't feasting at this soul satisfying banquet the place you need to be all the time. The world may say that isn't where you necessarily need to be or should be. It says you should be afraid and live in fear of what may happen. Yet, God's invitation is still being sent out for you and for all to come to his banquet, a feast of his grace that he lavishly has prepared through Jesus. Sitting at the table feasting on Word and Sacrament your trust in him is renewed even as things like this pandemic continue to wreak havoc on our world and you experience so many other struggles in life. Clothed with faith, let us continue to hear his invitation to the banquet of his grace. Let us feast at his soul satisfying banquet day in and day out with salvation in Jesus until we feast together with all believers forever in the great wedding banquet of heaven. Amen



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