

All Saints Sunday
November 3, 2024
Lincoln Heights Lutheran Church
Live Knowing Life Only Gets Better
Isaiah 25:6-9 (EHV)

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.

⁷On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that covers all peoples, the burial cloth stretched over all nations. ⁸He 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.

⁹On 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!"

Dear Friends in Christ,

We call it meat candy in my house. That is the morsel on the outside of something that has been smoked. It is perfectly seasoned, caramelized, and has just the right amount of fat cooked and rendered perfectly. The cook usually snags a few of these choice morsels when preparing the meat for the rest of the family just to be sure it tastes good. This meat candy has a deep flavor and just melts in your mouth. It is so good! Think of a delicious food you like to have as a very special treat. Such food brings us joy. It makes life better. We could survive on rice and ramen noodles but having something really tasty once in a while is something to look forward to.

The Lord promises his people something even better than meat candy in our future. Your whole life will be better than it is now, guaranteed. Therefore, we live in that hope, knowing that life only gets better for those who wait for the Lord.

I want to start by considering the waiting in the last verse of the portion of Isaiah 25 before us today.

⁹On 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 people of Israel who lived at the time of Isaiah had to wait for the day of God's salvation. Life for the people was a struggle against sin and the consequences of sin in their lives. Work was hard. Disease and death brought sorrow and pain. Enemies threatened them. And Isaiah is promising that life will only get better? I'll believe it when I see it, could have been the attitude of some of those living in Judah. It can be our bad attitude when we think we've waited long enough for God to make our life better. How long do I have to wait? How long do I have to suffer before God makes good on his promise that life will get better?

The situation for Isaiah's people would get worse. The enemy Assyrians would conquer one city of Judah after another and finally surround Jerusalem. Humanly speaking, the only options are to surrender or to starve to death under siege. Judah did not have the army to drive away the enemies and no other nation was coming to the rescue. It was a terrible time for the people in Jerusalem. They waited and waited, and the Lord sent his angel to kill 185,000 of the enemy soldiers surrounding the city. The enemy went back home. Salvation from the enemy! The people were glad and rejoiced in God's salvation that day!

Their life got better but it was not the complete salvation God promised. Isaiah's prophecies told the people of a time in the following generations when the enemy would win and take the Hebrews captive. He also told of the time when God would bring the people back to Jerusalem. And so it happened for the next generations of Hebrews. Life became terrible when the Babylonians captured Jerusalem, deported the people and destroyed the temple of the Lord. But

again, the Lord kept his promise and brought the people back to Jerusalem and the temple was rebuilt. The people could again rejoice in the Lord's salvation on that day. Life got better. But again, this was a small salvation compared to the complete salvation God promises through Isaiah.

As we wait for the final rescue from this world of sin and death, we can also celebrate the little salvations God provides. We can rejoice and be glad in the little times when life gets better now. Maybe it is as simple as rejoicing in a good meal or getting over a cold. We can rejoice when something goes well at work, or we have a good day with a friend. We can rejoice in the beauty of fall colors or a little rain after many dry weeks. Perhaps the rescue is something big like the cancer going into remission or an addiction being overcome. No matter how big the rescue is in this life, God promises that the best is still to come. Life will get even better than your best day of life so far. And on the other side, no matter how bad life has been, God promises through Isaiah that you will have the best life ever. Believers in Christ live knowing that life only gets better and so we wait for God's salvation.

Isaiah describes this best life ever.

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.

When the Lord says, "on this mountain" he is talking about the heavenly Jerusalem, Zion, the place where God's people dwell with their God forever. We would usually just say "heaven" for this mountain. On this mountain the Lord will provide abundantly, protect completely, and give joy generously.

You won't need to clip coupons or compare prices to afford the food you want. The Lord of Armies, the Almighty God who controls the armies of angels, will provide an ending banquet for you. And it is given freely to you at no cost. There is usually no charge to go to a wedding reception and eat the good food served there either. However, a generous gift is usually expected. That is the general understanding. But the understanding with God is that he paid the cost for you to attend the eternal banquet by the blood of his Son shed on the cross. And now the Father celebrates your salvation by giving you the best food and wine ever and forever. As we celebrate All Saints today, we rejoice that our loved ones who died in the Lord are feasting with their Savior now. And unlike a banquet here, we can be sure that the best food and drink will still be available whenever our Lord brings us to the wedding supper of the Lamb.

But there is more...

⁷On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that covers all peoples, the burial cloth stretched over all nations. ⁸He 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.

When someone dies the custom throughout much of the world is to cover them with some kind of burial cloth. The custom is for the mourners to wear something that shows their grief. Not so on the mountain of the Lord. No burial cloth will exist. No mourning clothes will be worn. For our Savior swallowed up death forever! The Gospel lesson today showed a glimpse of Christ's power over death. Lazarus was dead and in the tomb four days. Jesus simply called for him to come out of the tomb and the dead man listened to the word of the Lord and came out of the tomb, no longer dead, but alive!

In a very similar way, Jesus will call all the dead to life on the last day. Believers will be brought to the mountain of the Lord to live and never to die again. How do we know this will happen? How do we know that death has been swallowed up forever? Isaiah tells us, "The Lord has spoken." It is as simple as that. The Lord has spoken. He does not lie. He does not promise and not fulfill. When the Lord has spoken it is as good as done.

Jesus proved that to all when he spoke about his own death and resurrection on the third day. He spoke and his words came to pass exactly as he said. He was betrayed into the hands of sinned, crucified and on the third day, he came out of his tomb, no longer dead but alive forever and ever! Live in the certain hope that God's Word and promises are always true. All who believe will rise to live on the mountain of the Lord forever.

On this mountain, *The Lord God will wipe away the tears from every face. He will take away the shame of his people throughout the earth.* Can you imagine a life without tears? We even heard in one of the shortest verses of the Bible, that "Jesus wept." Jesus lived in this world that suffers under the consequences and curse of sin. He wept at the pain and sorrow that death brought to Mary and Martha. Tears well up in our eyes because of the pain and sorrow brought into this world by sin. Sometimes we weep because of our own sins that have caused pain and sorrow to others and brought shame upon ourselves. None of those tears will exist on the mountain of the Lord. No shame will cling to us on the mountain of the Lord. No sin and no guilt will remain, for the Lord Jesus has endured the shame of the cross in our place to remove our sin and guilt. While we still suffer under the consequences of our sin and still battle the sinful nature now, the saints in heaven do not. Live with the certain hope of a day without tears and without shame. The Lord has spoken, and it will be as he said.

If you ever wonder if all of this is for you, listen again to Isaiah 25:6-8...

*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.*

*⁷On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that covers **all peoples**, the burial cloth stretched over **all nations**. ⁸He 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.*

That sure sounds like all peoples, all peoples, all nations and from every face. I think we can find ourselves somewhere in those all's and every's. We can find our neighbors and friends and enemies there too. God will not turn anyone away from his banquet table because he ran out of chairs or ran out of food. There is enough for all. His grace is sufficient for all people. Christ's atoning sacrifice covered the sins of all people. Christ's resurrection conquered death for all. Live like you are one of the all...because you are.

Until we join the saints in heaven, we eagerly wait for the day of the Lord when we will say...

"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!"

Amen.