

21<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Pentecost – Year A  
Lutheran, Radcliff, KY  
Isaiah 25:6-9  
Pastor Paul Horn

October 5, 2008

Faith

### **Come to the Banquet Feast of the LORD!**

*<sup>6</sup> On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine—the best of meats and the finest of wines. <sup>7</sup> On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; <sup>8</sup> he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth. The LORD has spoken. <sup>9</sup> In that day they will say, “Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the LORD, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.”*

Tonight you are invited to a party. This is a black tie only event, but don't worry, your tuxedo or dress will be provided for you. Please be ready by 4:30pm because a limousine will pick you up at your home. The driver will drop you off at *The Galt House*, the posh hotel in downtown Louisville. After you enter the doors the maitre d' will promptly escort you to your table. Your waiter will immediately bring you a bottle of *Chianti Reserva*, a vintage red wine from Italy, aged to perfection. Right behind him another waiter will lay in front of you a plate chateaubriand prime grade beef, prepared just the way you like it, juicy and tender. The banquet hall at *The Galt House* will be filled with family members and friends and you can eat and drink to your heart's delight. It sounds like a lot of fun...but... before you can attend the party tonight, your house will be burnt to the ground, you will be struck with the stomach flu, your best friend will die and your dog will run away, then you can go and enjoy the party. You might be thinking, “But why can't I go right now? Why do I have to go through all those horrible things first?”

In our lesson this morning the prophet Isaiah describes the struggles, heartaches and sufferings we will experience while we wait for the wedding feast of the Lamb, the great banquet of heaven. In vs8 he talks about **the disgrace of [the LORD's] people**. Isaiah was writing to the people of Israel whose capital city would be decimated. He was speaking to the people of Israel who would be marched off into exile, a nation who would be ridiculed and taunted by the nations, “Where's your God now?” As people of the LORD we will suffer insult and dishonor for being God's people. Jesus talks about this disgrace in his sermon on the mount, Matthew 5:11, “**Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.**” Jesus was a man familiar with shame. His whole life people insulted him and spoke evil against him because he claimed to be the Son of God, the One promised of old, the Messiah, and they wouldn't believe it. He reminds us that we should expect the same disgrace before we enter the great banquet hall of heaven.

Through high school and college a friend and I worked in a restaurant in Milwaukee, WI. Many of our coworkers made fun of us because we were both virgins and when we were asked about it (this happened on numerous occasions), we always professed that we were

willing to save God's gift of sex until we were married, as God so clearly outlines in the Scriptures. Disgrace comes to God's people. Maybe you support the presidential candidate who supports the life of the unborn. Maybe you support that same presidential candidate who also defends the Scriptural principle of marriage between one man and one woman. Maybe you've had coworkers or neighbors rip you to pieces because you support that candidate based solely on those issues. Disgrace comes to God's people. I know that some of you here today have friends and even family members who taunt you when you take time to read your Bibles at home asking, "What good will that do you?" They ridicule you for wanting to gather with other believers for public worship, "Do you really believe all that stuff? It's the same thing every Sunday anyway. Why go?" They even try to make a statement by refusing to worship with you. Disgrace comes to God's people. I don't know about you, but it makes me yearn, "When can I get to the banquet feast of the LORD?"

Before we get there...we must go through many hardships. Before we get there...Isaiah speaks about the **shroud that enfolds all people, the sheet that covers all nations**. In the Hebrew language the last part of this sentence is actually translated, "**..the veil of mourning that is woven over all nations.**" A veil is worn at a funeral to hide the sadness; the puffy, red eyes, the tear-stained face. The prophet paints a picture of a giant black veil that completely covers over all the people of the earth and then is sewed down tight. Unless Christ comes again, the black veil of death will someday cover over you... and over every single person on the earth.

For the world, death is a natural part of our existence. We read about it everyday in the newspaper. Death was never meant to be natural. In the beginning God created man and woman to live forever. Death was God's threat of punishment for disobedience. Because Adam sinned all people have become infected with sin, and now all will suffer the final consequence of sin; death. Folks are trying to do everything they can to stay out their graves through science or nutrition. But they will not escape it. The grave does not discriminate between age, race, sex or skin color. Death does not care how near and dear you were to the individual lying the casket or urn, which is why death brings those tears that Isaiah talks about in vs8.

Jesus wept as he stood before the tomb of his dear friend Lazarus. Mary wet Jesus' feet with her tears, tears that flowed because she knew her Savior was going to die. The women of Jerusalem wept as they watched with horror the Savior of the world tattered and torn by whips and many blows to the face, marching to his execution. If I were to ask you to reflect on the death of a spouse, friend or parent, no matter how long ago it was, tears may still stream down your face. Death causes tears. So does the prelude to death; the pain of the cancer that eats away at the body or the bones; the suffering of the lungs that heave, gasping for more oxygen, the heart that beats wearily, blocked by hardened arteries. I'd like to attend that banquet feast of the LORD now, please, where he will wipe away my tears and take away death.

With the sorrow of death, the sufferings of pain and the disgrace you would think that everyone would want to be eager to attend the banquet feast of the LORD. But listen to

these lyrics from a recent hit country song, *Everybody want to go to heaven, But nobody want to go now. I'm comin' but there ain't no hurry, I'm havin' fun down here, Don't you know that. Someday I want to see those streets of gold in my halo, But I wouldn't mind waiting at least a hundred years or so, Everybody wanna go to heaven, But nobody wanna go now, I think I speak for the crowd.* No, Mr. Kenny Chesney, you don't speak for this young man. I wanna go to heaven and I wanna go right now. It's not much fun down here.

But God says to you and me, "Not yet. Just wait." While we wait he comforts us along the way with his promises. In vs7 he guarantees, "**On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; he will swallow up death forever.**" The city of Jerusalem and the temple sat on Mount Moriah. Oftentimes the writers of the Old Testament referred to it as Mount Zion or the mountain of the LORD. New Testament writers borrowed this language to describe the new heavenly Jerusalem, the new Mount Zion. On this mountain, heaven, the LORD promises that he will swallow up death forever. Defeating death was no small feat. First, God had to take care of our sin which causes our deaths. To swallow up your sin, Jesus had to be swallowed up by death. Christ Jesus took the punishment for sin that God prescribed for all people. Your sin was swallowed up completely when Jesus shouted from the cross, "It is finished!" All punishment for sin is complete! Death, that great swallower, was itself swallowed up by Christ three days later when the icy chains that held his cold body in the grave were shattered. Blood began to circulate through his veins, his lungs breathed in the cool Sunday morning air, his eyes opened and a smile no doubt drew across his face, knowing what he had just accomplished for you: your victory over the grave.

Because let's be honest. Your grave is wide-eyed, opened mouth, waiting expectantly for you. You can confidently walk into it saying, "**Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?**" (1Cor 15:55) My victory is through my Lord Jesus Christ. This is why death for a Christian is so much different than anyone else. As Christians, we know that death has lost its sting. We know that death is not a punishment, but a deliverance from this veil of tears to the joys of heaven. Through faith the Christian overcomes the fear of death and departs in peace. Through faith the Christian understands that death is a sleep from which Christ will wake me and you with the blast of the angels' trumpet. When Christ comes again he will show all people that death is not the end of mankind. On God's holy mountain there will be no more death.

With these promises Jesus tenderly wipes away the tears that stream down your face as you stand in front of a headstone in the cemetery. Lay your weary head on Jesus' shoulder and let him remind you, "**Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. They will rest from their labor.**" (Rev 14:13)

On God's holy mountain he will also **remove the disgrace of his people.** On the Last Day God will show the world that those who believed in his Son are the victors. Even though we were ones who were persecuted, taunted for our faith in his Son, and put to death we are the ones who will be lifted up. We are the ones upon whom Jesus will wrap

his white robe of righteousness. You are the ones who will then be brought with all the saints to his holy mountain. He will escort you into the banquet hall, where a feast will be waiting. The finest cuts of meat, prepared just the way you like it; the tastiest vintage wines, aged to perfection. And the Lamb of God will take his seat and dine with us all. Then we will say, "This is our God! He saved us! Let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation!" While we wait for that day we will confidently say, "This is our God: he took away our sins. He swallowed up death for us. He won heaven for us. We will trust in him. He will save us. Let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation!" (vs9)

As we read this morning from Matthew 22 the victorious Lord Jesus has provided this heavenly banquet on his holy mountain for all people. Sadly, some refuse the invitation. But God gives us the mission to deliver his invitation to all people. That's the reason we exist as a congregation. That's the driving force for our building a new worship facility. The building committee has made it very clear to our architects and liturgical consultant to design a beautiful building, a building which will make a statement to the community. People will see our new building and say, "Wow! I want to see what the inside looks like." People will come because you invited them. They will walk in and say, "Wow! Surely God is in this place." But more importantly, they will hear the same good news that is being preached this morning. They will hear that they too have been invited to the heavenly supper of the Lamb. They will hear that their admission has been paid for in full by the blood of the Lamb. And they will rejoice with us. We will then have the privilege of dining with them on the finest cuts of steak, prime grade filet mignon, and sip the finest of wines, *Chateau Latour*, and sit at the table with the Lamb of God who prepared it for you, won it for you, and who will bring you safely there. I don't know about you, but I can't wait. Amen