

SCRIPTURE READINGS AND SERMON

Easter Sunday

April 4, 2021

Psalm 16:1–11 (ESV):

1 Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge.

2 I say to the LORD, "You are my Lord;
I have no good apart from you."

3 As for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones,
in whom is all my delight.

4 The sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply;
their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out
or take their names on my lips.

5 The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup;
you hold my lot.

6 The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;
indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.

7 I bless the LORD who gives me counsel;
in the night also my heart instructs me.

8 I have set the LORD always before me;
because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.

9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices;
my flesh also dwells secure.

10 For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol,
or let your holy one see corruption.

11 You make known to me the path of life;
in your presence there is fullness of joy;
at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

First Reading: Isaiah 25:6–9 (ESV):

6 On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples

a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine,
of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.

7 And he will swallow up on this mountain
the covering that is cast over all peoples,
the veil that is spread over all nations.

8 He will swallow up death forever;
and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces,
and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth,
for the LORD has spoken.

9 It will be said on that day,
“Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us.
This is the LORD; we have waited for him;
let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.”

EPISTLE: 1 Corinthians 15:1–11 (ESV):

The Resurrection of Christ

15 Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, 2 and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.

3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 6 Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. 7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. 8 Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. 9 For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. 11 Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

THE GOSPEL - Mark 16:1–8 (ESV):

The Resurrection

16 When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. **2** And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. **3** And they were saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?” **4** And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back—it was very large. **5** And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed. **6** And he said to them, “Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. **7** But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.” **8** And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

Easter Sunday

Sunday of the Resurrection

“This is the Feast”

Isaiah 25:6-9

Dear friends,

In our Old Testament lesson today Isaiah puts pictures to things, something he is particularly good at. It is the day of our Lord's resurrection for sure, and Isaiah is ultimately talking about that, but he is putting it in different terms which is why I wanted to look at this today. Old Testament terminology means something specific to the people that its being spoken to, but what we can learn from those words is something different. Jesus makes the Old Testament what it is. We hear His story from the Gospels, Paul in His letters explains those Gospels well, but the Old Testament isn't excluded either. Jesus helps us understand and appreciate the Old Testament, helps us see these words in a new light.

For these particular words, for this passage, we'll explore what this meant to the Israelites and what it might mean for us, and why we think so.

This section of Isaiah is all about cities, that's what you hear over and over again. Sometimes it is a specific city, chapter 23 of Isaiah for example is all about Tyre and Sidon, sometimes it pictures the earth, the world, as one big city, a picture of how together humankind is. The chapter before this, chapter 24, talks about a judgment of some kind. It could be the judgment at the end times, it does sound an awful lot like an earthquake, so it could also be something that happened just at that time. So something is happening on earth, but there's also the overarching human condition, like the problems all human beings have. Isaiah kinda switches between the two on the fly without a lot of explanation. I think what he's doing is reminding us that, yes, we are all sinners, we human beings, and we all suffer the consequences of sin on this world. While he does that, he also is showing that those sinful consequences are different for different people, that one nation may suffer this, another nation may suffer that, and so forth. He talks about the problems in Israel, but he also talks about God's judgment on the whole world for its sins. After that, our text begins.

“On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.” This is an example of what I was talking about. Notice Isaiah does not say that Jesus was raised from the dead. Isaiah does not say the word sin, at least not yet. He does not talk about much that we would recognize as Easter-like. What does he talk about? Food. Good food. Rich food. On a mountain. He spends more words than seems necessary describing it, but this is poetry, and he is showing rather than telling. Isaiah isn't telling people that God is good to them, he's showing them *how* God is good to them, and he chooses a feast as a way to do that. This happens in the Bible, and feast is a pretty common way that God's goodness is shown. Lots of food, lots of water, lots of green growing plants, not much danger, these are the pictures that God uses to describe His favor. Food terms especially,

reminding us that food isn't a given in this culture, it is properly seen as a gift of God. Remember how God describes the Promised Land. He tells Israel that He's bringing them into a land of milk and honey, you can grow a good crop, you can even mine the metals you need out of the hills. Think of our liturgy, where the Lord's Supper is described as the foretaste of the feast to come. Think of Jesus' parables, where wedding feasts feature prominently. God likes to wrap His blessings not in the abstract, but in things we can understand, and He wanted to make darn sure the Hebrews knew that God had good things in mind for them, so he chooses feasts, food, fun, and peace. That makes sense, but what about this, and why is this today? Today is the Resurrection of Jesus. It has traditionally been a feastday, I guess, but Jesus rising from the dead doesn't have much to do with food, does it?

Jesus is the connection, as He often is. Jesus has risen from the dead, and that gives us heaven, and heaven is described as a wonderful delight of the senses, like a feast of rich food. Jesus isn't there to give us food, He's there to give us salvation from sin, but salvation from sin is awesome, like a feast of rich food. By being given Jesus resurrected, we are given heaven, which is often described in these terms. So what do you take from this? That Jesus, His rising from the dead, the salvation that He gives you, is like a feast for you. It is full, satisfying, endless. That one day, you will lack nothing. You will not have to labor, you will not have to worry, you will not have to do any of those things. Instead, you will feast with Jesus and with His saints. That's a great picture of resurrection promise.

What about for Isaiah? Same thing. The Israelites wanted better times. God promises them not just Himself, but that He Himself will give those better times. Getting God isn't just getting God, it is getting all the things God brings to the table. A wonderful feast of lovely things in peace and safety for Israel, and for you. **"7 And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. 8 He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth,**

for the Lord has spoken.” This is where we start getting the explicit connection between the day and the lesson. Jesus died on a mountain, and the covering that is cast over us, the veil over us, is the veil and the covering between us and God. You and I cannot see God or hear Him as we are. We are sinners, and God is dangerous to us, because He is holy. We cannot just get to God, our sin stands between us. That is why we can never be good enough, we can never do enough to become good people. Yet, Isaiah reminds us, that the work of Christ tears away that veil, it ends the separation between us and God. We still cannot see Him in the strict sense of the word, we can see His body and blood in the Supper, we can see Him in the waters of Baptism, but neither of these really fit the bill for what we'd prefer. We can hear Him, though. We can talk to Him in prayer and expect that He hears us. Our reproach is our sin, and God reproaches our sin harshly as He should, because it is awful, which is why this world is awful. The tears that flow down our face are sometimes tears of what we have lost, what has just happened, but sometimes they're also tears of our own shame, our own mistakes, our own failings. Jesus came to wipe away both.

How? By wiping away death. Sin and death so very intertwined, the Bible says, you cannot have one without the other. That is what Jesus has done in dying. He has not just paid for sin, He has suffered death, our death, so that He might triumph over it by rising from it. We all go to the grave, Jesus did too, but Jesus went so that the grave would be just another stopover to the Feast, another bus stop before the trip home so to speak. All the earth suffers death, and God will take away this fate from the Earth just like He takes it away from us. Death is not the end, and that is a glorious truth, a wonderful victory indeed. It doesn't have to end with it all just fading away as if it meant nothing. Instead, it goes on, eternally, feasting at God's side, no more reproach, no more tears.

“9 It will be said on that day, 'Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.” This glad recognition is something you find often in the Bible. That when

the Lord comes to deliver His people, they'll see and know Him. This could be talking about when Jesus returns for us, I suppose, but it is seen in Easter as well. When Jesus appears to the disciples, there is this recognition, at least when He allows it. Furthermore, when Jesus gives His Word to us, when Jesus gives His Body and Blood to us, we know it. We know it is Jesus. We recognize Him in the gifts He gives to us, we see Him when He comes to us with forgiveness. We see Him in the other gifts He gives in our life, and sometimes its kind of hard to explain to others why we think God did this or God did that, we just know He did. I don't think we base our faith on that, but instead, the faith that God gives us learns to see God's working, God's hand.

Amen.