

The grace, mercy, and peace of Christ Jesus, our Lord and Saviour, be yours this day. The title for today’s sermon is “The Lord’s Feast”, and is from today’s Old Testament reading, from Isaiah chapter 25. Let us pray... . Amen.

This is Thanksgiving weekend. A time when family and friends gather together and give thanks for the harvest blessings, for family, for food, and the countless other blessings we have been given over the past year. In remembrance of all these blessings we celebrate and feast on rich food, wine, and all kinds of desserts. Feasting at Thanksgiving dinners are some of the most memorable meals I’ve had in my life because of the food and people gathered together. Yet, with all earthly blessings, sometimes we can forget the source of all good things and greatest blessings. Instead we prefer to thank luck, stars, chance, fortune, or even our own hard work. But it is because of God and His tremendous grace we can celebrate Thanksgiving for all the daily bread He has provided and continues to provide.

And so, fittingly, the Old Testament reading reflects a little of the Thanksgiving spirit, one could say. There we heard of the promise of how God would prepare a feast for all people, a feast which would rival any Thanksgiving meal. There would be **“a feast of rich food, a feast of well aged wine (only the finest), of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.”**(*Isaiah 25:6*) This feast would not just be from some, but the Lord of hosts says it would be for all people. Imagine, God on the mountain, with all people standing before the mountain, thousands upon thousands, billions upon billions, and He sends for the command to “come”. This feast, promised by God, would not just feed the body, it would strengthen the soul. This feast would not just fulfill the hunger and quench the thirst, but this feast would swallow up death and remove the veil covering the eyes of all people. At this feast there would be no heartache and conflict as God promised to wipe away the tears from all faces. This feast would be one to remember for it would be perfect.

But there is only one little problem in the mix. None of us would be worthy to come to such a great and magnificent feast. None of us could afford the entrance price. No one on earth could. For at the feast God is describing, we would not just be dining with each other, rather all those in attendance would be feasting with and in the presence of God in His full majesty and glory. No one on earth could stand, or sit at that table **“For there is no distinction: <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”**(*Romans 3:22b-23*). Paul quotes the Psalms when he writes: **“None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God.”**(*Romans 3:10-11*) And so this is not a minor problem.

The just penalty for sin is death. The fair penalty for searching for other gods is death. The proper penalty for not being righteous, as we are called to be, is eternal death and the eternal separation from the Lord God almighty. And the truth is, I have sinned grievously against God. You have sinned grievously against God. And not just once... today. We’ve all sinned. Any sin, no matter how minor we might try to rationalize it to be is a capital offence against God. Every sin. Our greater problem, along with all humanity, is we were conceived in sin, born sinful, and rightfully guilty of it all. We were born enemies of God and dead in our trespasses and sins.(*Ephesians 2*) There is no humanly possible way for us to save ourselves; not by our actions, not by our words, and most definitely not by our choices. We deserve nothing good from God. Our word, our actions, and even our thoughts are not righteous, apart from Christ, instead they can only condemn us.

In sinful flesh we live under a covering and veil. God’s Law is written on our hearts and the hearts of all people. We know it, we know it a little too well. To break God's Law is to sin. Sin is real. **“The wages of sin is death.”** (*Romans 6:23*) By our power we cannot escape from either. We would be trapped under that veil of tears and death if it were not for God getting involved in human history, in our history.

In Christ and on His account we rejoice and have a reason to be thankful, we have the ultimate reason for thanksgiving. For despite our unworthiness, **“Christ came into the world to save sinners”** (*1 Timothy 1:15*). Despite our sin, **“God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”**<sup>9</sup> **“Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.”**<sup>10</sup> **“For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.”**<sup>11</sup> **“More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.”** (*Romans 5:8-11*)

Christ died to destroy death. Jesus poured out His holy, precious, and innocent blood to cover up, pay for, and swallow up our sin and the sins of the whole world. Christ Jesus rose on the Third Day to proclaim the victory and to remove the veil of sin and death from our eyes.

Through Holy Baptism we share in Christ’s death and resurrection. In Baptism you and I truly died with Christ and were raised back to new, and eternal, life in Christ in His resurrection, as Paul clearly explains in his letter to the Romans (*6:3-11*). Through the waters of Baptism, **“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”** (*Galatians 2:20*) In Christ, and only through Him, is the veil taken away (*2 Corinthians 3:14*). Our sinful unrighteous covering is replaced with Christ’s perfect righteousness. We can give thanks with Isaiah as he wrote: **“I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness”** (*Isaiah 61:10b*).

Here, clothed in the righteousness of Christ Jesus our Lord and with all our sins covered and forgiven, we are invited to the eternal marriage feast of the Lamb. We are invited to God’s eternal feast, the one we heard described in today’s Old Testament reading because of what Christ did on the cross for you, me, and all people. In Christ the promised feast is no longer just a promise, it is a reality. We will see it in the full majesty God intends when we see it with our own eyes at the Resurrection. Until then, we receive a foretaste of the feast to come in the Lord’s Supper at His altar. Here, **“In the Lord’s Supper, the body and blood of Christ are truly and substantially present and are truly distributed with those things that are seen, the bread and wine, to those who receive the sacrament.”** (Ap X, 1) In this divine feast, the Lamb of God, Christ Jesus Himself invites us to eat and drink and freely forgives of all our sins.

In this feast, the Lord’s Supper, is where heaven meets earth, where Christ Jesus Himself comes directly to us and feed us with, what some of the ancient pastor, the medicine of immortality. Why? Because death is swallowed up in Christ. The veil of the Law has been removed and replaced with the light of the Gospel. Our sinful covering is gone. Instead we are now clothed in Christ’s righteousness. As for tears, the book of Revelation tells us: **“For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of**

**living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”**(Revelation 7:17) This Lamb, the Lamb of God, is as John the Baptism proclaimed; “**the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!**”(John 1:29) With sin paid for, the accusation and penalty is gone.

Salvation is not coming: salvation is already here. Salvation is here in God’s Word and in His sacraments. As we await the day of our own bodily resurrection, we are invited to eat and drink with the Lord in His Holy Supper, a foretaste of the feast to come.

Our Thanksgiving blessings really start with Christ, the heavenly and eternal blessing. In Christ Jesus we are part of the harvest, brought into an eternal family through the blood of Christ, and invited to eat and drink the true body and true blood of Christ in the eternal marriage feast of the Lamb for the forgiveness of all our sins. There is no greater meal, no greater thing to be thankful for. This Thanksgiving weekend, rejoice, for your salvation is here. Christ has made you His own, removed the veil from your eyes, and covers you with His righteousness. Rejoice, give thanks, and praise the Lord God almighty! Amen.

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