



Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

www.mzluth.org

April 12, 2009

Easter Festival Worship

Isaiah 25:6-9

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: Isaiah 25:6-9

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 118

Second Lesson: 1 Corinthians 15:19-26

Gospel: Mark 16:1-8

This is THAT Day!

We are assured of forgiveness

We respond to that forgiveness

At different times of your life have you counted down the days? You know, days to some special event, like some of you here this morning who are planning to get married in the next year or so. Have you started counting down the days already to that time when that day gets here? Maybe some of you are counting down the days until that day comes when you retire and you don't go to work anymore. A year or so back, I remember a woman about every week giving me a countdown on exactly how long it would be until she would retire.

You children that are here, are you counting down the days until the next school year starts because you're disappointed that this one is coming to an end? Probably not, right? But you're probably counting down days, right?

As we gather together here this morning as people who rejoice in the truth that Jesus lived and died in our place and took away our sins, this is that day that we've been counting down to. This is the day that we celebrate the glorious truth that although our sins killed Jesus, our sins darkened this church just a couple of days ago when we gathered here. We've seen the immensity of our sins over Lent. This day we come together and we celebrate because he didn't stay dead. He rose from the dead. That assures us that our sins are forgiven. This is that day that Isaiah was talking about some 700 years before it happened. Isaiah 25, what I just read to you, in that day.

This morning we read Isaiah 12, it said the same thing in the song of Isaiah. "In that day they will praise me." Well, this is that day because everything that God had pointed his people to before Jesus came, it's the same thing that he focuses us upon, we who live after Jesus lived and died for our sins. God through Isaiah pointed the people ahead to that day on that mountain where God would do these incredible things. This is that day that we celebrate the incredible things that God says "The Lord has spoken" told us about.

He talks about a banquet. He talks about fine wines. He talks about choice meats. They're all just pictures of things that would bring us great joy and great pleasure. He's talking about forgiveness. This is that day that you and I can be absolutely certain that every last one of our sins have been paid for in full. You and I have to offer nothing up

to God to make him love us because this is that day that we celebrate that this shroud that covers all people has been destroyed. The sheet that covers all nations is gone he says.

What is that shroud? What is that sheet? He tells us right there in Isaiah 25. Death, death has been swallowed up forever. He's not talking about physical death obviously because people still die. It's the results of sin in this world. The death that has been swallowed up forever is the death that comes as the result of sin – the eternal death in hell. The shroud that enfolds all people, the sheet that covers all nations has been removed.

Remember on Good Friday when we worshipped and we heard the reading about when Jesus was on the cross and when he died the temple curtain ripped in two from top to bottom? We talked about that in a Bible Study on a Thursday. That curtain that divided the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place, divided God's presence from even the priests who could go into the Holy Place, we're told that the curtain itself was as thick as a man's fist. It was of such a size it was about half of our basement downstairs. That's the size it was. That sheet, thick as a wrist, was torn in two from top to bottom to show that sin has been removed. That shroud and that sheet have been taken away because now we can approach God directly because God himself has taken away our sins.

We go to God directly in prayer, not through an intermediary. We don't go through the priest. We don't offer sacrifices through a priest as they did in the Old Testament. We go directly to God because our sins have been taken away. And it's nothing that you and I did.

The sinful nature that we're born with and Satan taking advantage of that sinful nature wants you and me to think we must do something. He wants us to look for our confidence that our sins are forgiven in what we do for God or how good we've been. Don't kid yourselves. We know we haven't been that good. Through Lent we've seen our sins so clearly and it hurts. It stings. And I don't care how hard you and I would try to make up for it. We can't make up for it because that sheet is too thick. It's just too thick. You and I can't break it apart. That's why Jesus had to come and live in our place and die in our place. At his death, that curtain ripped apart so that we would see that these words of Isaiah had come true.

Death has been swallowed up. We are assured of forgiveness. There is no doubt. There is nothing left to do. Even faith that makes this forgiveness that Jesus has won for the entire world our own, it's not our doing. It's not our decision. It's the gift of God. No one can say Jesus is Lord except through the Holy Spirit 1 Corinthians tells us. And the Spirit works through the water of Baptism. He works through the wine and wafer and the Sacrament. He works through the Word that we read, that we hear, to create faith, to strengthen faith, to assure us that heaven is open to us. That's what this day is all about.

It's not a countdown to family time together, which the Lord certainly can bless us with on this day. It's not a countdown to a large meal that you have to loosen your belt after you eat it, although you can certainly be blessed by God with that today and there's nothing wrong with that. But this day is a countdown to the reminder that the grave is empty. This day is a countdown to the reminder that because his grave is empty, our graves will one day be empty.

God will come with the trumpet as we heard, and we will be raised from the dead and we will spend eternity with God and with those who have died in the Lord with perfect glorified bodies. This is our confidence.

Now we see, as Christians, we have a desire to respond to that forgiveness that God has given to us. And we respond in a lot of ways to celebrate those days we count down to. We maybe plan big celebrations for our weddings. At our graduations, maybe you throw your cap into the air to celebrate. When school is out, maybe you just run home and run wild for awhile to celebrate that school is over.

So how do you and I respond to this fact that our sins have been paid for? Through Isaiah, the Holy Spirit tells us that in that day they, we are the "they" that he's talking about; we 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." Our response to what God has done for us is a simple one of praise. We praise God that he has done for us what we could not do. We praise God that he loves us with a love we do not deserve. We praise God that he has done it all and we simply receive the blessings that he has won for us. We praise him with our voices. We praise him with our words. We praise him with our actions. We praise him this day and we leave this place and go forward and praise him in the rest of our life. We praise him by living to thank him for this salvation, not to earn the salvation. It's already been earned. Jesus did it all. We praise him because we want to thank him that he has given us a gift that is beyond any gift, something that gives meaning and purpose to our lives. We're not just going through life now trying to amass the biggest account or the most toys. We're going through life now with a purpose that's so much better; to thank the God who loves us this much, who has opened heaven to us, who has made us a part of his family. To thank the God who has made us heirs of everlasting life and perfection in heaven.

That's what this day is about. And after going through Holy Week and seeing the depth of what our sins have done, after seeing the blackness and the gloom of Good Friday, this day now means something, something so much more than just chocolate, eggs and bunnies. It means blessings eternal and unending.

It doesn't get any better than that!