**Waiting for the Lord:**

**To Swallow Up Death**

**Isaiah 25:6-9**

Resurrection of Our Lord

04.17.2022 – Sunrise

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.  Amen.

This past Lenten season, during our mid-week services, we examined Old Testament passages. We looked at those passages to see what the believers before Christ took on human flesh in the womb of Mary, were waiting for the Lord to do. Today, we will examine Isaiah’s prophecy and see that he indeed understood who God’s Christ was and what He would accomplish as we are *Waiting for the Lord: To Swallow Up Death.*

You are familiar with the 23rd Psalm, especially the 4th verse, *Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil*? Isaiah also knew that well!  He alludes to it in our text, he calls it *the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations.* He defines that covering, that veil, as death.

We also know full well that death hovers over all mankind. In fact, people say that death is the one thing that none can avoid - that and taxes. Funny that tax returns needed to be filed by Good Friday, with this as our text for Resurrection Dawn. But I digress.

Nobody likes death. It is natural to fear it. In fact, God does not even desire that men should die. Death is however the result of sin. As Paul informs us, “sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.” (Rom.  5:12) It is a fact of which he will remind us again a few verses after our Epistle that, “in Adam all die...” (1 Cor. 15:22)

We are born in sin. Sin is our inheritance of being born into the flesh and lineage of Adam. Sin manifests itself in us all. A careful examination of your lives according to God’s Law, will show that each of you have been disobedient to God in your thoughts, words, and deeds.

Many try to escape that Law. Some excuse their sins by claiming they are no worse than anybody else. While it sounds nice, you know the old adage, “If Johnny jumped off a bridge would you do the same?” Just because others do it doesn’t make it right – and certainly does not make it acceptable to God.

Some try to say that the times have changed, and so what was true long ago is not true for today. After all, we are more enlightened. This of course assumes that the One who declared, “I am the Lord, I do not change,” (Malachi 3:6) has changed His mind and changed His Word. I don’t think so.

Some try to deny the eternal consequences of sin, claiming there is no hell. Hoping to escape that one aspect of death that terrifies them most – the unknown. And since, nobody has come back from the dead to tell us what it is like, they justify their thoughts in making such a claim.

There is another huge problem with these thoughts, our conscience! Your conscience nags you. Ever notice that when you think about doing certain things, there is something inside that makes you think twice? Maybe there is the impulse to look around and see if others are watching? You know right and wrong! Your conscience is nothing more than God at work, He wrote His law in your heart. It was there long before you learned it as His commandments.

So, no matter how we try to excuse it, our conscience will not let you rest. It does not matter what we claim, nor does it matter how loud we shout.

That veil through which we are walking enfolds us, and in doing so, gets heavier and heavier. The fear of death is oppressive and weighs us down.

I suppose I could simply say, “He is risen!” And you all could respond, “He is risen indeed! Alleluia!” Then we could all go home happy, claiming that we’ve heard the good news. We could sing all the Easter hymns that rejoice in the resurrection of Jesus. We could then forget about sin, death, and find our Easter bunnies.

But in truth, I would not have proclaimed the Gospel to you, and you certainly would not have heard it. All that would have happened is that we would all have denied that there was a veil – the veil of death – and that it is covering us all.

Dear friends in Christ, I will not rob you of the joy of Easter. I will not play down your sins. And more importantly, I will not play down the mighty salvation of God in Christ Jesus our Lord – who is most importantly – our Savior.

Neither will Isaiah let us overlook our sin so quickly. He would not proclaim that God destroys the sheet that covers all nations, but that He swallows up death forever.

If you and I could do all that is required of God, if we could live a life without sin, then none of the Christian Church year would have been necessary.

We would not have needed to celebrate Christmas, the day that God’s only begotten Son, conceived in the womb of the virgin named Mary, was born.

We would not have four Gospels which examine His sinless life.

We would not have to consider His pain, His abandonment by His friends, His suffering, and finally His sacrificial death upon the cross on Good Friday. On that Friday called Good, the dearest friends of Jesus were gathered beneath the cross. As His blood soaked the ground beneath, they wept.

But it was on the cross that Christ swallowed death in His own body. In the Jordan, a few years earlier, He was baptized into your sins and mine. On the cross, He removed the disgrace that is our sin, and the sins of all the people.

Today we rejoice. Today we are glad. Today we celebrate in Word, and song, and hymns of thanksgiving for the deed accomplished upon the cross. It was on Isaiah’s mountain where victory over sin was won. And today we know that death was swallowed up forever on that mountain by Christ’s death. How do we know it happened? Christ rose from the dead!

Later today, in Mark’s Gospel, we will hear what an angel proclaimed to the women who went to the tomb, “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!” (Mk. 16:6)

The stone had been rolled away. That tomb was empty.  Nothing remained, but the linen burial clothes He had worn, and the face cloth neatly folded.

Christ swallowed up death. He took your sins into Himself, swallowing in His own flesh your death.

Today, you swallow life. You get to eat and to drink of your resurrected Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Here on the table before you lies His very flesh which was pierced for you. Here sits is the cup of the new testament, a testament sealed in His blood shed for you. It is the new covenant which says, “By my stripes you are healed for life eternal.”

As Christ lives and now reigns to all eternity, you too shall live. He gives to you His life and salvation. He gives you His Holy Spirit that you may trust in Him. Today and every day we may rejoice and be glad in the salvation He gives.

But we do still wait for Him to swallow death. We wait for the day when He returns, the day the graves will be opened and those who have fallen asleep in Him arise. Then all who have their hope in Christ will join Him in His kingdom, death fully swallowed up for all eternity.

So we wait, but we wait with the cry of hope in our hearts and on our lips. He is risen....  (wait) Alleluia! Amen.