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

**He Swallows Death**

**Isaiah 25:6-9**

*Easter Dawn – 04.09.2023*

It is truly a joy to examine Old Testament passages and find Christ being foreshadowed. What did those who had faith in our God believe before Christ took on human flesh in the womb of Mary? What were they expecting? This bright and early Easter dawn, we will examine Isaiah’s prophecy and see that they indeed understood who God’s Christ was and what He would accomplish.

I pray that the 23rd Psalm is familiar to you. You know the fourth verse, “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil?” Isaiah knew it well! He alludes to it in our text, he calls it the sheet, or the shroud, that enfolds all people. He further defines it as death.

Yes, death is the shroud that covers all mankind. Death is the one thing that none can avoid. Of course, there is that other one as well, taxes. It is April, so that too is on our minds. But I digress.

Nobody likes death. It is natural to fear what we do not know, or to be afraid of what one might have to endure during the process of dying. It was not a part of what God desired for men when He created Adam. He *KNEW* it would happen! You see, with God’s breath invigorating Adam unto life, there was no death in him. Instead, death is the consequence of sin. If our Epistle lesson from Paul were to continue further in that chapter, we would learn that, “since death came through a man,... for as in Adam all die...” (1 Cor. 15:21-23)

We are born in sin. Sinfulness is the result of being born into human flesh, it is our lineage from Adam. Of course, sin also manifests itself in each, and every one of us. A careful examination of your lives according to God’s Law clearly shows that each of you have been disobedient to God in your thoughts, words, and deeds.

Of course, many try to escape that Law. Some excuse their sins by claiming they are no worse than anybody else. While that sounds nice, your parents told you, “If Johnny jumped off a bridge would you do the same?”

Some excuse their sins by claiming that God made them that way. While it is true that God creates each and every one of in the womb, we are no longer born in that perfect image of God. We also bear the image of Adam, sinfulness is passed on to each generation and manifests itself in our fleshly desires. This means that we look at our lives, and our desires, not through God’s eyes, but through sinful human eyes. God does not look at us that way!

Some try to deny the consequences of sin, by claiming there is no hell. Or by saying that a loving God would never punish anybody. Many want to continue blithely in their sinfulness because they enjoy it so much, so they deny any negative consequences – especially those which are eternal. 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 one problem with any of these thoughts! Our conscience! Our conscience is God’s law “written on our hearts” and it will not let us rest. All people know right and wrong, and no matter how people may try to excuse things, the conscience won’t let us rest. You see this in the anger exhibited by people when others speak about some sin that they have tried to explain as acceptable. They get angry because they have already tried to quiet their conscience, and now someone else is bringing it up.

It does not matter what we claim, nor does it matter how loud we shout. Nor does it matter if we claim that it is just the pastor’s job is to tell us these things – they are really outdated and do not really mean that today.

Do you feel it? That sheet which enfolds us gets heavier and heavier. It is oppressive and weighs us down.

I suppose I could simply say, “He is risen!” And you all could respond, “He is risen indeed!” Then we could all go home happy, claiming that we’ve heard the good news. We could sing all the Easter hymns which rejoice in the resurrection of Jesus.

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 skirted the issue, denying that there is a shroud – the shroud of death – covering us all.

Dear friends in Christ, I will not rob you of the joy of Easter. I will not play down your sins. More importantly, I will not play down the mighty salvation of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. And most importantly, the incredibly merciful, salvific, work of our Savior.

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

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

We would not need to celebrate the Annunciation, when the angel Gabriel comes to Mary and by speaking to her, she becomes pregnant.

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 Him, they wept.

But it was on the cross that Christ swallowed death. In His own body, having been baptized into your sins and mine, He carried in His flesh, our sinfulness. On the cross, He removed the disgrace that is our sin – indeed the sins of all people.

So today we do rejoice.

Today we are glad.

Today we celebrate in Word, and song, and hymns of thanksgiving for the victorious deeds Christ accomplished upon the cross.

For, it was on that mountain, the hill called Golgotha where the Lord provided, where victory over sin was won. And today we know that death was swallowed up forever on that mountain, for Christ rose from the dead.

The women went to the tomb and found it empty.

As we will hear in the Gospel of Mark at the later service, the angel proclaimed to them, “Don’t be alarmed, you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here! See the place where they laid Him!”

The tomb was empty. Peter and John found nothing but the burial clothes Jesus had worn.

Christ swallowed death. He took your sins into Himself. Today, you swallow life. You eat and drink of your resurrected Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Here on the table before you lies His flesh, given for you. Here is His blood of the new testament – a testament sealed with His blood given unto death 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. He grants you His Spirit that you may live in Him – in love toward His Father and in service to your neighbor. Rejoice today – and every day! Rejoice and be glad in the salvation He gives. He is risen.... He is risen indeed!! Alleluia!!! Amen.