

## Isaiah 25:6-9

<sup>6</sup>On this mountain  
the LORD of Armies will prepare for all peoples  
a banquet of rich food,  
a banquet of aged wines,  
with the best cuts of meat,  
and with the finest wines.

<sup>7</sup>On this mountain  
he will destroy the shroud that covers all peoples,  
the burial cloth stretched over all nations.

<sup>8</sup>He has swallowed up death forever!  
The LORD God will wipe away the tears from every face.  
He will take away the shame of his people throughout the earth.  
For the LORD has spoken.

<sup>9</sup>On that day it will be said,  
“Look, here is our God!  
We waited for him, and he saved us!  
This is the LORD!  
We waited for him.  
Let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation!”

### On this Mountain

#### I.

Inescapable: that’s what it was. Even when shrouded by rain or mist or fog, you knew it was there. Its shadow loomed large in everyday life. Though everyone would no doubt have been stunned if the worst ever happened, plans were in place, just in case.

For a brief time, my family lived not all that far from it; we lived east of the Tacoma, Washington area. The inescapable thing was a mountain: Mount Rainier, to be specific. You could see it looming large on a clear day when you looked out an east window or stood staring that way in the back yard. Even from far away it dwarfed the tallest trees. Evacuation routes were established, and even practiced from time to time, just in case any volcanic activity should ever be detected.

Mt. Rainier was a thing you had to be aware of. It was a thing you had to be prepared for. Many people treated the mountain as a challenge, almost like an enemy to be conquered. They wanted to record their names in the book at the summit, so they would train and prepare. Some lost their lives in the attempt to conquer the mountain.

#### II.

“On this mountain,” Isaiah says. He uses the phrase twice in today’s Reading. “On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that covers all peoples” (Isaiah 25:7, EHV). There is an enemy. The enemy is a shroud that covers all peoples. It is a threat—an enemy that needs to be destroyed. The shroud is sin, and Satan who promotes it.

Satan approached our first parents as if he were their friend. He tricked them into believing that by coveting and plucking and eating a piece of fruit they could be like God—knowing good and evil.

Ever since that moment in history we struggle to understand our enemy and what it takes to win the battle. Every time, it seems, Satan twists what is evil until it seems good in our eyes.

God designed relationships—not just the relationship of husband and wife, but every relationship people have with one another—to be a blessing. Instead of putting the other one first and trying to be of service to that person, we tend to look for ways to get something out of every relationship for ourselves.

God told our first parents that pain and suffering in this life were among the consequences of sin. Even health issues were to point people to the reality that God intended something far better for us. In spite of what he told us, when we experience health issues sometimes we begin to see God as the enemy. Even if we haven't been close to God in the past, we begin to call on him to make things better. Only a full recovery seems to be a victory, in our minds.

“On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that covers all peoples, the burial cloth stretched over all nations” (Isaiah 25:7, EHV).

Benjamin Franklin said: “In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes.” The burial cloth is the wages of sin—death. Death is the last enemy of all. To the young, death might appear far away; shrouded by fog. To those who are older, it might seem that the fog is dissipating—death seems much closer. In the end, no one can escape. Death touches all people.

### III.

We are helpless against death. Try as we might to escape the clutches of sin—and of Satan who pretends to be our friend as he tempts us to sin—we can't stop. We can't even manage one day without succumbing to the shroud of sin, let alone the lifetime of perfection God demands.

But on this mountain *he* will destroy the shroud; *he* will destroy the burial cloth. He is the Lord Jesus. Isaiah looked ahead prophetically to the mountain we call Calvary. There Jesus stretched out his arms on the cross. Onlookers taunted him to come down, but he refused. To come down would be to leave the debt of sin unpaid. He stayed up there to pay the full price for the sins of every man, woman, and child who will ever live.

He destroyed the shroud. He destroyed the burial cloth.

Isaiah continues: “He has swallowed up death forever!” (Isaiah 25:8, EHV). Destruction of the shroud of sin and the burial cloth of death was completed by Jesus' resurrection from the dead on the first Easter morning. Though death is even more certain than taxes, death no longer has mastery.

That is why this reading from Isaiah is also a reading for Easter Dawn. On this mountain, the one called Calvary, Jesus defeated sin by paying for it in full. On the third day, he rose from the dead, and the last enemy—death—was defeated forever. Death has been defeated by Jesus.

### IV.

You have probably been to a few funeral luncheons. After the funeral service is over, those in attendance gather for some food and fellowship. Perhaps they spend some time talking about their loved one and the impact his or her life had on each one of them.

The Lord isn't preparing your funeral lunch, exactly. He's preparing your victory celebration. Jesus has given you the victory he won over your enemies, and now God, the Lord, Jaweh of Armies, wants to celebrate that victory forever.

“On this mountain the LORD of Armies will prepare for all peoples a banquet of rich food, a banquet of aged wines, with the best cuts of meat, and with the finest wines” (Isaiah 25:6, EHV). On this mountain, on the mountain of the heavenly Jerusalem, the greatest feast ever will be held.

Even before pointing to Mount Calvary and Jesus' defeat of sin, Satan, and death, Isaiah started talking about the heavenly Mount Jerusalem. God made his plans even before Jesus died on the cross. Victory by our Lord Jesus was so sure and certain that the plans could be made well in advance.

The most lavish Thanksgiving dinner pales in comparison to the banquet of heaven. There will be the best foods—the richest foods. There will be fine, aged wine—the finest wine ever imaginable.

The Bible describes heaven in earthly terms we can understand. Everyone understands a feast. The Bible describes a feast fit for a king—for King Jesus. That feast of eternal life will be shared with you and me and every one of our believing loved ones and friends.

“The LORD God will wipe away the tears from every face. He will take away the shame of his people throughout the earth. For the LORD has spoken” (Isaiah 25:8, EHV). Right now there is sadness; there are tears. Today you might be thinking about those who have gone before you into heaven. While you are happy that they are with their Savior, Jesus, you miss them. Tears might come to your eyes or a lump to your throat when you think about something you wish you could tell them, or when you wish you could ask them to repeat again some important tidbit of information.

In that banquet hall of heaven, you won't need a big box, or even the little purse sized pouch, of tissues. God himself will wipe away all the tears. There will *be* no tears, because the sin that caused those stains has been abolished and will never threaten you again.

#### V.

“On that day it will be said, ‘Look, here is our God! We waited for him, and he saved us! This is the LORD! We waited for him. Let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation!’” (Isaiah 25:9, EHV). You are confident that you will be in heaven. There is no question in your mind.

The name Jesus means: The Lord saves. Jesus has saved you from your sin. That work that he did on Mt. Calvary for the sins of the world he did for *you*. You know it. You count on it. You rely on the salvation he won for you.

For now, you wait. The day will come when you will be in heaven. On that day you can say: “See? I told you so!”

But even now “Let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation!” Salvation has been completed by the Lord Jesus. As a believer, you are one of his saints—his holy ones, holy because you have been washed in the blood of the Lamb—set apart by him as one of his own dear children.

Way back when, when I looked to the east from Bonnie Lake, Washington, it wasn't with a sense of dread or doom. Mount Rainier isn't just a foreboding, brooding mountain that always lurks with the threat of volcanic disaster. It's also a national park. It's a place filled with beauty. It's a place to breathe in some fresh mountain air.

While sin *threatened* to destroy, it could not. God the Son dealt with the shroud and the doom and the gloom and the burial cloth on the mountain. On the eternal mountain of God he has even now prepared the heavenly feast for you. You are one who will be with him on this mountain. Amen.