

# KING OF KINGS LUTHERAN CHURCH



## Isaiah 25:6-9

### *He Swallowed Up Death*

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This is a true story; although it may sound like I stole it from Reader's Digest: My son Drew was in first grade, working on his phonics assignment when pulled out crayons to write with. My wife Holly asked him why he was using crayons and Drew replied, "Mom, it says right here to use colorful words."

On Grant's 5<sup>th</sup> birthday, we were planning to go out for dinner, but had to suddenly change the plan. Holly said to Grant, "Thanks for being so agreeable." Grant answered, "What does 'agreeable' mean? Does it mean 'smart'?" It is funny when young kids misunderstand something.

We dare not do the same with Easter though. Obviously, we want to avoid the easy to see traps that Easter is about candy or a celebration that Spring has arrived. But we also want to avoid a misunderstanding about what it means Jesus rose from the dead. It isn't a metaphor for newness; nor is it a story that is just about Jesus. This is a story of complete victory over sin and death. This morning, let's think about what that victory means for us so that we don't have any silly, mistaken ideas about Easter.

Perhaps, like me, you occasionally have a bowl of cereal for breakfast, or may a piece of toast. It is hardly a meal to be remembered, but it accomplished the purpose and you are no longer hungry. Other times you've had food that was to be savored — a thanksgiving turkey or honey-baked ham on Easter; or a restaurant that made an amazing steak. It wasn't a hamburger helper meal, but a meal to be remembered and enjoyed.

**On this mountain the Lord Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine—the best of meats and the finest of wines.** This is talking about the results of God's work. We'll talk about the actual work of God in a moment. But our text begins by reminding us that what our God gives us is not

fluffy, feel-good psychology. This is not "hang in there, it will be okay" non-sense. This is a feast of good news!

The good news is this: **On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; he will swallow up death forever.** Through the prophet Isaiah, God foretold the results of Easter. Like an unstoppable plague, death continues its march through humanity. It cares nothing for the culture or the race of a person. Wealth means nothing; neither does success or power that a person achieved. All will eventually succumb to the grave. There is no hiding.

It is exactly what God said would happen to Adam and Eve. When sin entered the world, death was unleashed too. Those who claim they haven't sinned can prove it by not dying. But was we heard in our Second Lesson, **"In Adam all die."** Sin is in all of us, and therefore, so is death.

The manifestations of sin vary. Sin ranges from the grotesque murders we hear about to the public sins that our world and culture delight. But no less wicked before God is the secret, evil thought or the seemingly excusable lack of love aimed at others — because we claim we don't have time to help. Ignoring God or following another god, even when it doesn't hurt anyone else, is a sin that deserves death. The shroud of death covers everyone because sin is everywhere.

But in our text we hear God's promise: **he will swallow up death forever.** The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are victory over sin and death. All the punishment that every sin deserved was placed on Jesus on the cross. Every bit of that anger is appeased. So perfect was the sacrifice that just was Jesus had foretold he would do, he would rise from the dead on the third day. By his resurrection he swallowed

death forever. Death is without power for those who believe in Jesus Christ. With our sins removed and Jesus alive again death is without power to hurt us. With the punishment removed, all that is left is blessings from God. At the end of 1 Corinthians 15 Paul alludes to death like changing clothes. When your clothes get dirty, you take them off and put new, clean clothes on. When a believer dies, it is like taking off old clothes. The sin and all its horrible effects are wadded up and thrown into the garbage. Sin is gone. And the new clothes of unending life are given freely.

The result of death's defeat is: **The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth.** And later in the text: **In that day they 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."**

Easter is more than pretty outfits, lots of candy, and a ham. Jesus' resurrection is the utter defeat of sin and death. It is the cleansing from guilt that our hearts so often need. It is the assurance that death is without any power over us. By faith, we look past death to the joys of heaven that we will enjoy when we too rise. Death is deliverance; death is to be welcomed by believers.

Don't misunderstand Easter. There is nothing small about what Jesus has done for you. He has ended death. The funerals you attend are not an end. The believer is in heaven. They have more reason to feel sorry for you than you do for them. Your own funeral will not be your end either. Through faith in Jesus, you are eternally connected to Jesus and he promises you will live forever.

Until then, our freedom from sin and death means we are children of God who can serve him. Our past failures don't mean the future is doomed.

Artful Eddie was a mob lawyer for Al Capone. He had it all. But he knew the luxury he enjoyed in life was from criminal activity and finally he had to stop. Why give up a life of wealth? Eddie had a son, and he wanted his son to have a better life than he did. He wanted his son to be an honest man. Eddie knew the risk of squealing on the mob. But he was willing to take the risk. Eddie soon got what he expected. The mob found him and he was killed.

But Eddie's son made the most of his opportunity. He was appointed to Annapolis and served as a Navy pilot in World War II. Butch served with such distinction that he earned the Congressional Medal of Honor. In fact, he served with such distinction that they named an airport after Butch, the son of a mob lawyer. Butch's last name was O'Hare — as in the major airport in Chicago. Butch made the most of the sacrifice his father made for him.

The Lord Jesus sacrificed himself for you. His perfect sacrifice ended with disciples looking into an empty tomb; Mary Magdalene meeting Jesus in the garden; and numerous other appearances of a Savior who lived! That resurrection has eternal consequences. It also has consequences on today. **"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above"** (Colossians 3:1). The past doesn't own you; Jesus does.

Today is a new day. But the newness isn't shallow or cheap. It isn't just flowers and bunnies. Death is swallowed up forever. Today is a new day to live. Don't misunderstand what we celebrate. Let the message that Jesus rose from the dead seep into your heart and change you. Amen.

Easter Sunday  
April 5, 2015

