



Isaiah 25:6-9 - ⁶ 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.
⁷ On this mountain he will destroy
the shroud that enfolds all peoples,
the sheet that covers all nations;
⁸ he will swallow up death forever.
The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears
from all faces;
he will remove the disgrace of his people
from all the earth.
The LORD has spoken.
⁹ 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.”

Come to the feast!



How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!
(1 John 3:1)

When was the last time you had a feast? I mean a real-deal, genuine, hours long gathering of friends and family around enough fine food to feed three times the people in attendance? In our fast paced world, I wonder if this happens much anymore. Breakfast (if you eat it), is consumed with one hand, while holding a steering wheel in the other. Lunch, more often than not, is about 10 minutes of cramming down a sandwich while sitting at your desk before you get back to the pressing load of work waiting right in front of you. Dinner? Gone are the days of the Norman Rockwell *Saturday Evening Post* family dressed to the nines, gathered around a steaming turkey at the table. Now it's a fly by the kitchen counter or a swing through the drive through on your way to evening commitments that fill your schedule. So why don't we feast like people used to? It takes too much time, and we've got more important stuff to do than to sit for hours on end with a turkey leg in one hand and a goblet of wine in the other. But every once in a while, there are some special occasions that allow us to slow down, sit down, and enjoy. Besides the holidays and the occasional birthday bash, weddings are a time we might expect a decent spread of food and some time to sit and enjoy.

Jesus uses the picture of a wedding banquet to teach us about the kingdom of heaven – it's only by the King's undeserved love that we're invited, and it's only by wearing the righteous robes the King provides that we get to stay. What makes the wedding feast such a fitting point of comparison to the perfection of heaven? It's a place where there is an overabundance of good things. It's a time when reunions happen and a place where loved ones gather to celebrate. A wedding is a time of joy unlike any other. It's a beautiful picture of the perfection of heaven. In our sermon text for today from Isaiah 25, the LORD God sends out the invitations, plans the party, and sets the table himself for our heavenly wedding banquet. Come to the feast!

Isaiah writes, **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.** When it comes to the heavenly wedding banquet, the Lord spares no expense. In a hand-to-mouth culture like many in Israel were living, can you imagine what it meant to them that God promised such a lavish feast? Instead of a few scraps of bread and some dingy water, you'll have the best meat and the finest wine – and more of it than you could possibly imagine! The abundant feast that had only been the fare of kings and the rich was now the promised to **all peoples**. When it comes to the heavenly wedding banquet, the Lord spares no expense – neither in the food he serves or in the price of admission. This banquet wasn't the kind that you could hire a caterer to provide. This banquet required the greatest cost the world has ever seen – to set this table, it cost the life of the eternal Son of God.

Step a little closer and see the abundance of good and perfect things at this feast, all prepared by your loving heavenly Father for your eternal enjoyment – **the best of meats and the finest of wines**. But at the heavenly wedding banquet, the best part isn't necessarily all that there *is* there, the best part is what *isn't* there. **On this mountain [the LORD] will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; he will swallow up death forever.** An earthly wedding celebration is a wonderful picture of heaven, but isn't it true that at our own wedding celebrations there are some empty chairs? Empty chairs because some of our loved ones had succumbed to this **shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations**, death? Even at such a happy celebration as a wedding banquet with our family and friends, there's still the painful reminder that we're not in heaven yet. But at the heavenly wedding banquet, **The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces;**



he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth. What a day that'll be! To stand with joy beside my Savior God for all eternity with all those who have died in faith! I can't wait for the heavenly wedding banquet, and I bet you can't either!

When we talk about heaven, we realize there's always a certain amount of both "now" and "not yet." Now, I live in a sinful world surrounded by death, but then, I'll be in a perfect paradise – no more death or mourning or crying of pain. Now I face hardship and loss, then I see just how true it is that Jesus "*can repay from his own fullness all he takes away.*" Now I miss those loved ones who have gone to the heavenly wedding banquet already, then I'm reunited with them in glory. Now I struggle to live as the child of heaven that God has declared me to be in Christ, but then, I'm set free from my sinful nature, no more sin, no more temptation no more guilt. It seems like all the good stuff is yet to come, but I'm here today to tell you that you don't have to wait to enjoy the abundant feast that your heavenly Father has provided. Our God still sets the table and invites his people to feast while we live in this world.

Of course, we will have to wait for the perfection of heaven to *fully* grasp all that awaits us at the heavenly wedding banquet, but in his grace our God has provided us with blessings that pierce through the "now and not yet" that we can feast on right now – his gospel, in Word and Sacraments. Your loving Father spreads the table with an overabundant repast of his Word. Instead of letting you flounder around in a sea of uncertainty about who God is and who you are in relation to God, he puts a laser focus on his Son who tells you **I am the way and the truth and the life.** Your Savior God made sure that your name was on the guest list for his heavenly wedding banquet when he stamped your RSVP for you in the waters of your baptism and wrote your name in his book of life. Your Savior God sets a table for you even today and gives you his Son's body and blood to forgive your sin, to assure you of eternal life, and show you all over again that your salvation rests securely in his nail-scarred hands. Do you see how abundant, how gracious, how life-giving your Father's feast is, even on this side of heaven? His Word and his Sacraments are your constant feast to show you that you have a place waiting for you at his side. What a feast!

Our God spreads that table overflowing with his goodness before us every day, so why don't we enjoy the feast he provides more frequently? We said earlier that people don't "feast" anymore at meals because it just takes too much precious time that we don't have. Is the reason any different why people don't feast on what God provides in his Word and Sacraments? The saying used to be that Christians were "too heavenly minded to be of any earthly good," but has our attitude morphed to fit the priorities of the world around us? Are we "too earthly minded to get heavenly excited"? *I'll be in worship and Bible study and personal devotions more when things settle down a bit. I'll feast on the good things of God when the kids aren't so involved. I'll give to support the work of this feast when it looks like something a little more appealing to give to, or when I can get something out of it.* The feast is there, but maybe we'll put it on the back burner.

What's the only way to find the place card with your name on it in the banquet hall of heaven? The only way to have a spot at the table is to be perfect, spotless, sinless, and holy. Does that sound like you? Does that sound like me? God has given me everything, but almost always my focus is on what he hasn't given me. God richly provides a feast for me in his Word and Sacraments, but too often I relegate what I know to be truly, eternally important down the list in favor of something that seems pressingly urgent. You don't deserve a spot at the heavenly banquet, and neither do I. What we deserve is to be thrown **outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.** Rather than spend eternity at a table for one, God did something about it. He didn't shy away from the ugliness of humanity's sin and its rightful wages. Instead he jumped in. He didn't look down from heaven and lament the waywardness of his once perfect creation. Instead he became one of us. He sent



his one and only Son, Jesus, into the world to take on our humanity; to take on our every sin and pay for them by dying on the cross and rising from the dead. That's what it cost to have you on the guest list for the heavenly wedding banquet – and our God was happy to pay that ultimate price if it meant having you with him for eternity.

So, feast! Look forward to the heavenly feast God has waiting for you through Christ and feast right now on his Word and Sacraments while you wait! Enjoy the feast with your brothers and sisters here at Hope and let this fellowship point you ahead to the perfect reunion in heaven. Jump on board and support the work of this congregation as together we seek to invite more and more people to enjoy the feast that our God freely gives in Christ. Live every day in the peace of knowing your Savior God has prepared a place for you at his heavenly banquet and give thanks that he gives you a foretaste of that banquet every day in the gospel. Go out and live with a spring in your step and a smile on your face because your Savior Jesus is alive, and preparing a place just for you. And then? Then we'll say with all of God's people, **“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.”** Enjoy the feast your God has prepared for you in Christ!

Amen

To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his presence without fault and with great joy – to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power, and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen

(Jude 24-25)