

Sermon

Isaiah's Acopalypse

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Scripture: Isaiah 25 6-9

Father God, You know the ponderings and prayer that have gone into these words please allow Your wisdom to shine. Mother God, let the comfort and joy I have felt in these words be shared by all those listening. Amen.

Isaiah 25 6-9 is right in the middle of a section of Isaiah often referred to as Isaiah's Apocalypse, Chapters 24 to 27. These chapters are full of violence and bloodshed, death and misery, anger and sorrow. These words are not happy, and they are not easy to read. There are in some ways like much of our news today, not apocalyptic, but full of violence and sadness. In the past few weeks we have heard of floodings, and war, plane crashes and massacres. We have watched as the death tolls from these events from around the world continue to creep up and sometimes when we see the news we wonder whether these words from Isaiah 24 are true: "The earth shall be utterly laid waste and utterly despoiled."

Even personally today we carry remembrances of the Saints that are no longer with us. Some of us grieve over tragic losses or remember the deep kindness and love of family and friends no longer with us. Some of us may even feel conflicted and challenged over some less happy memories of the 'saints' we knew. All Saints and All Souls day are days of remembering, days where the veil between the living and the dead may be just a little bit thinner. A time not only when we hold our saints, but also a time to understand death as a part of life, a part of a cycle that each one of us is involved in.

BUT...I invite you to take a deep breath...BUT...take another one....BUT

In the midst of all this pain and sorrow there is Celebration! There is a reminder that we are not alone! For Isaiah 24 tells the story of a feast:

On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines,
of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear.

Imagine this! A table, perhaps the biggest one in your house, with a few other side tables pulled in as well. Your favorite foods, ham, turkey, potatoes, gravy, mayonnaise, salad, pizza, chips, strawberries, steak, chocolate cake, fruit tarts, creamed corn, whatever you can think of...just imagine it...your tables overflowing. And drinks...wines and crystal clear water, juice and pop, not even diet! And of course the perfectly roasted coffee and freshest teas.

This is the place of Shalom, God's Shalom banquet. A place where God feeds and nurtures each of us, where merriment and laughter replace tears and pain; where loss and death will be no more. For as part of this joyous occasion God will destroy God will swallow up death forever and wipe all the tears from our faces.

This is a meal, a time we all yearn for, a time when pain and sorrow are gone and we are happy and content. Where we rest totally in God and know with absolute certainty that She's got this! In fact Isaiah chapter 25 continues with the words:

It will be said on that day,

Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us.

This is the Lord for whom we have waited;

let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

This is our God, the server of the meal, the One that loves us unconditionally, the One whom we wait for and sometimes wish would fix everything. The One who gifted us Jesus. The Jesus that teaches us salvation, so that right now, we can learn to partake in this wonderful banquet.

We can each so easily see the negatives of the world around us, Shelagh noted that a few weeks ago when she talked about the grateful experiment and how our minds are wired to see the bad first. We can easily see the pain of our churches and our communities and even each other's hurt, yet with Jesus as our example, we are given the eyes and ears to see the best gift of Isaiah's banquet: not the food, not the wine, HOPE. Hope that all will be welcomed, all healed,. Hope that all are safe, all loved. Hope that as we celebrate the Saints among us whom have gone before, we continue to create a world for more saints to emerge in. For immersed in this time of remembrance is a time of awareness for the present and the future, a time when we choose to wear Orange Shirts in hope of reconciliation, where we carry Nal-oxone kits to save lives, where we fight for the Homeless, where we stand up for our environment, and, where radical disparities of power and economics are eliminated. Hope.

Isaiah's banquet is about justice, opportunity, reconciliation, and support. It is about truth and love standing in the midst of the trials and sorrow that sometimes can seem to be overwhelming our world. But most all it is about each one of us discovering God in that pain and choosing life full of hope, hope for creative transformation and healing for ourselves and our world in the midst of God amazing banquet of life.

Amen.