

“The Mountain of our Salvation”

On Mt. Sinai God gave the Ten Commandments to Moses. On the Mountain of Transfiguration Jesus was revealed to us as true God. On the mount of Olives, the God/man Jesus took His place upon the colt of a donkey and rode into Jerusalem as the King of Israel.

There is another mountain – not as well known at the time, not as glorious – but one that sits in the center of all history. Mt. Calvary is where the Son of God was lifted up as the atoning sacrifice for all sin. Everyone who looks – not to this mountain – but to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and believes in Him – HAS eternal life.

There, on that mountain, all of creation is redeemed in the blood of Jesus Christ – death and the grave are conquered. There, in Christ Jesus, the way of everlasting life is opened to all who would believe in Him.

Today, you are invited to another mountain – a mountain where a feast has been prepared for you. On this mountain – Jesus, who was dead, and is now alive – makes a post-resurrection appearance – revealing to you His victory over death, saying, “peace be with you.” On this mountain He invites you to a feast, to eat and drink, and live with Him forever.

Isaiah writes in the OT reading for today: “On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine ...”

He is referring to Mt. Zion, the highest point in the city of Jerusalem. But there’s no need for you to hop a plane for Israel – for Mt. Zion is right here today – right here where the resurrected Lord is present with His Word and Sacraments, where He spreads His feast “for you.”

Isaiah continues: “And He will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of His people He will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken.”

Death is a veil that covers all people. It's a true, inescapable fact of life – that all will die. “All of life is lived at the graveside,” it is said. From the moment you are born you take one step closer each day, until death wraps itself around you, and you are put into the grave.

Why is that? Why must you die? Why haven't you evolved into a creature that will never die, as some would lead you to believe? No matter how high one thinks he can ascend – death brings you low.

For the Christian, death is not a mystery. God's Word clearly tells us that “the wages of sin is death.” The Apostle Paul says: “Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man [Adam], and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned” (Rom. 5:12). Contrary to what man wants to believe – God says that all have sinned, and therefore, all die.

You can deny your sin, pretend you're not a sinner. You can try to justify yourself – claim that sin is religious gimmick, a guilt trip used by those who desire to manipulate and control you. Say what you want about sin – you cannot deny death. Death is the inescapable proof that you are a sinner, for, “the wages of sin is death.”

The prophet Isaiah says that sin and death are a reproach, and they are. They are foreign to God's creation. He created you to live, not die – but the enemy, the devil, has snuck in and planted the seeds of disobedience and pride – leading us away from the Word of life, into death.

And from the world's perspective it looks like the devil has won the day. Sin and death are all around us – but God says that where sin and death abound – there is an abundance of His grace. The Lord God promises that, “He will swallow up death forever” – “He will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of His people He will take away from all the earth.”

In Christ, it is no longer the promise that He WILL swallow up death – but rather, He HAS swallowed up death. Jesus, born of the Virgin Mary, wrapped in swaddling cloths and laid in a manger – was wrapped in the shroud of death, paying the entire debt for the sin of the world – and on the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures.

That’s why His Church proclaims: “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?’ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Cor. 15:55-57)

Today, the resurrected and never to die again Jesus, stands on this mountain and wipes away the tears of your sorrow over sin – so that you may rejoice in His salvation. You know that death will come because of your sin – yet, you live in hope – because Jesus has swallowed up your death forever.

“It will be said on that day, ‘Behold, this is our God; we have waited for Him, that He might save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in His salvation.”

All that the Lord promised through Isaiah now stands fulfilled. Today, these words are in your mouths: “Behold, this is our God; we have waited for Him, that He might save us.” Today, you are saved – not because of your works – but because of the life, suffering, death, and resurrection of God’s beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

“This is the Lord, we have waited for Him; let us be glad and rejoice in His salvation.” Come to Mt. Zion, to the feast that He has prepared “for you.” Gather to His Table, spread with the richest of foods and the best of wines – spread with His victory over death, and His life everlasting.

Rejoice, for the Lord, your Savior, is here. Rejoice and be glad, as you feast in His victory. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.