

Scripture:
Isaiah 25

“We trust in Him.”

As Christians we are called to trust God.

Not always to necessarily understand God ----- but to trust Him.

We are not necessarily called to understand or grasp why or how ---- that despite the fact that God is sovereign almighty and powerful ----- there is still suffering and heartache in the world.

Instead we are simply called to trust in God.

And know and accept that things are happening in accordance with a plan ---
- and will ---- and a way ---- that goes far beyond our ability to understand.

In the book of Isaiah in general --- including our passage today --- the prophet unveils the full and broad spectrum of God’s will.

There is accountability or what some refer to as judgment ---- and there is also salvation --- redemption --- and reconciliation.

Isaiah presents God as the Holy One who has to hold His people to accountability and who also ultimately rescues them and saves them in Jesus Christ.

Isaiah paints the picture of an ultimately gracious God who has a beautiful and happy future in store for all His people.

He looks to a day that is full of joy where any cause for caution or doubt is eliminated.

He paints the picture of a beautiful ultimate tomorrow --- a beautiful and ultimate forever in the presence of God.

He points to a time where all sorrow and death will be decisively overruled on account of the soon to come Messiah that is God’s Son ---- Jesus Christ.

And he points to the extravagant and sumptuous nature of a joyous festival --
-- the feast of the table of God that we see in the middle of our passage today
in verse 6.

And of course today set among us ----- we have a bit of a foretaste of that
very same banquet table and feast.

“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 wines.”

Amidst the trying and challenging circumstances of his day in and around
700BC ---- Isaiah holds up an image and paints a picture of what it looks
like to be rescued and freed from poverty --- political and spiritual
oppression ----- sorrow and sickness ----- death --- and all that ails and
hinders the Israelites.

In the midst of the suffering of His people ---- Isaiah holds up this beautiful
image of a table set where there is room enough --- and food enough for
everyone.

And not only this but this table isn't just set with room and provisions for
everyone --- but the table is set and filled with the finest of fine ---- the very
best of the best for everyone.

“a feast of rich food for all peoples
a banquet of aged wine
the best of meats and the finest wines.” ---- as verse 6 says.

Isaiah talks about all God's people streaming to the Holy mountain for this
joyous and bountiful feast.

The Holy mountain ----- a place where aggression --- wickedness ----
oppression ---- hatred --- sickness --- sin ---- all that ails and hinders us -----
is rendered meaningless and stripped of any lasting power or influence.

The Holy mountain --- a place ---- the place --- the only place where divine
grace ----- divine mercy ----- divine compassion ----- divine salvation as if

there is any other kind ----- divine reconciliation ----- divine redemption ----
 ---- take hold ---- once and forever.

In the midst of his time Isaiah and his message represented that Holy mountain.

He was the bearer of Good News ---- preparing the way for the coming Messiah that the people longed for.

Today ----- the table we have set before us ----- is a micro version of the very same table that Isaiah speaks of.

It too is a symbol ---- a visible sign and then some ----- of the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Room for all --- nourishment for all.

Pointing to and celebrating and anticipating an even bigger and greater and more beautiful and bountiful table ---- in the presence of God eternally --- at the precise time God so chooses.

The establishment and arrival of God's Kingdom here on earth just as it is in heaven ---- is a central theme and truth that Isaiah steadily holds before the people.

The earth restored.

The people gathered at the mountain --- the feet of God.

Where the finest foods are set and ready to be shared.

Freedom from oppression.

Refuge for the poor.

Shelter from the storm.

Respite for the needy.

Salvation through the Messiah.

These are what define Isaiah's prophecy ---- including chapter 25 ----- and of course these things are the very will of God.

And these things are also what this table is all about ----- deliverance ----- blessing --- promise fulfilled --- salvation in Jesus Christ.

Isaiah holds before us and celebrates the very reality that the God who made creation good in the first place ----- has the power and desire to restore it to its goodness once again and finally.

Isaiah holds before us the reality that all creation ---- including humankind will once again be reclaimed by a just and compassionate God.

The one who provides --- beautifully --- bountifully ---- and graciously ---- for all who bow down before Him.

And that's part of the great message of hope and truth that we ----- like Isaiah ----- must hold up --- and share --- and celebrate for all to see.

Like Isaiah we are to hold an alternative vision before our culture ---- one of God's goodness and love.

It's all too easy ---- and non believers in particular are very good at this ---- it's all too easy to want to dismiss God ---- and see Him as false and flawed simply because there is still evil --- and suffering --- and unfortunate circumstances and events in the world today.

Isaiah never once tries to fully explain God's nature --- His judgment --- accountability ----- or the presence of evil ---- the shatan --- Satan --- in the world.

And he doesn't try to explain it precisely because he knows that he can't.

Only God can truly explain the nature of evil.

And so we have to wait on that --- and leave it in His hands ---- and simply let Him hold us in the meantime ---- and trust in Him.

Isaiah sees the world as it is ----- evil and good ---- and doesn't despair.

Instead he trusts ---- and instead he points to a future time --- a future glory - --- a future table ---- when we will see God in all His wonder --- beauty power and awe in Jesus Christ.

It's not always easy to celebrate God's goodness.

Amidst the sometimes ugliness of the world ---- ISIS ----- cancer ----- oppression ----- brutal warfare and killing ----- severe mental and physical illness --- evil ----- and so on --- can be difficult to reconcile and hold together.

But it all comes down to trust and not necessarily understanding.

Trust in God.

Not in doctors --- or lawyers ---- or politicians ---- or armies ---- or prophets or pastors.

Trust not in ourselves --- our intellect --- ingenuity ---- understanding or wisdom.

But trust in God.

Trust in the mysterious ----- beautiful ----- gracious saving way of God in Jesus Christ.

The people at the time of Isaiah wanted God in their terms --- God for them -- and only them.

People today ----- especially non believers if they were ever to accept God in any way ----- want God in their terms ---- God in ways that fit into their minds and ways of seeing --- knowing --- and understanding.

Isaiah doesn't bother trying to explain God's ways --- instead he paints a picture of God's way ---- and holds before the people an image of the great saving compassionate love of God.

Isaiah paints the picture of a gathering where veils that conceal ----- the walls and bridges and anything else that serves to corrupt ---- anything that obstructs or distort God's will ----- will once and for all be removed and obliterated.

And so we will finally see the world clear and unobstructed ----- pure and true as God so intended ----- and originally created.

And we will finally see each other face to face --- with all prejudice --- judgmentalness --- anger ---- pain --- resentment ----- gone --- removed in an act of divine washing and refashioning ----- resurrection.

And we will finally see God face to face in all His radiant beauty ----- and wonder ----- and majesty ---- and awe.

And then we will finally recognize our common humanity ---- the fact that we are all beautiful and created in God's image ---- and take joy in and celebrate one another.

Where now we see differences in skin colour --- race ----- speech --- accents ----- socio economic --- political backgrounds and so on --- often causing discrimination and at the very least demarcation ---- then we will only see and celebrate the beauty and wonder of each other as creatures of God --- all beautiful in different ways.

And at the centre of it all Isaiah presents what we have at the centre of our day today ---- a table set ----- a table set by the Lord.

Every great party and celebration includes --- just as Isaiah presents it ----- a table with food and drink.

The world certainly retains this lesson from scripture ----- a good party --- a good celebration requires a table set with refreshments and fine nourishment ---- good tasting food --- even the heathens --- secular humanists ---- fools of this world know this --- and still do this --- just as we do.

And just as God's goodness ----- salvation in Christ ----- is way beyond any kind of goodness the world has to offer.

So the food and fellowship at God's table is way ---- way --- way beyond anything we will ever experience here in this world.

And so this is cause for great celebration ---- and joy --- and anticipation ---- and hope.

It's true --- we may not be able to fully explain --- in any kind of intelligible way why there is suffering --- why evil still has temporary influence in the world.

But we can paint a picture of what it will one day be like ---- when all pain evil and suffering falls away --- and there is a great feast set before us.

Part of our calling in Christ is to prepare for and celebrate this coming celebration and feast.

Part of our calling in Christ is to share this vision --- this soon to be reality with others and invite them into a life centered around this table --- this God in Christ reality.

And part of our calling in Christ is to work at establishing this table --- with room and sustenance for everyone --- on earth just as it is in heaven --- here and now ----- with and for everyone we meet.

This table isn't just about tiny piece of bread --- small drink.

It represents and points to and prepares for and celebrates ---- so much more.

It points to a different day ----- a different reality.

A beautiful day ---- a beautiful reality.

And so we trust in Him.

Trust in He who tells us about this table --- and sets this table ----- and the truth and reality and salvation in Christ that this table represents and is.

In the words of scripture itself ----- someone once said you don't ever explain Isaiah you just read it --- over and over --- and it explains itself to you as you do.

And so the first 9 verses of our reading today -----

“Lord, you are my God;
I will exalt you and praise your name,
for in perfect faithfulness
you have done wonderful things,
things planned long ago.

You have made the city a heap of rubble,
the fortified town a ruin,
the foreigners' stronghold a city no more;
it will never be rebuilt.

Therefore strong peoples will honor you;
cities of ruthless nations will revere you.

You have been a refuge for the poor,
a refuge for the needy in their distress,
a shelter from the storm
and a shade from the heat.
For the breath of the ruthless
is like a storm driving against a wall
and like the heat of the desert.
You silence the uproar of foreigners;
as heat is reduced by the shadow of a cloud,
so the song of the ruthless is stilled.

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.

On this mountain he will destroy
the shroud that enfolds all peoples,
the sheet that covers all nations;
he will swallow up death forever.

The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears
from all faces;
he will remove his people's disgrace
from all the earth.

The Lord has spoken.

On 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.”

There is a great and beautiful future in store for all who believe --- a table set
--- with the very best of the best.

All we have to do is trust in Him.

God is good.

God is faithful.

And God is just.

And He who began a great work in us ---- will see it through to completion.

As for us ----- in the meantime.

Until that day finally comes.

We trust in Him.

We trust in Him.

Amen.