

## **I. Intro. *(walking)* As a kid, one of the best things I loved about Easter Sunday was the special food (& lots of it)!**

### **A. Today I hope most of you will enjoy **enjoyed** our special Easter brunch between the 2 worship services.**

1. Isn't it great to go through the line and have different breads, fruits, and egg casseroles to choose from?
2. It makes it much more than most of us usually eat for breakfast ... sort of an Easter breakfast feast!

### **B. And then there's Easter dinner, as I remember it**

1. A big ham was traditional, but I remember growing up with turkey or roast beef for Easter dinner or sometimes a roast chicken
2. And there were always plenty of other breads & vegetables and salads, along with the hard-boiled decorated eggs ...& don't forget the pies & cakes!
3. All of these things together made Easter dinner a very special meal, usually to be shared with friends or family ... it was, in other words, a feast! *(back to pulpit)*

## **II. Our reading today from Isaiah 25 also talks about a feast**

### **A. It starts in v. 6 by describing for Isaiah's Jewish listeners a future vision that would happen at Mt. Zion in Jerusalem**

1. It's a vision of a rich feast ... a lavish banquet for all peoples
  - a) Meat was a rarity for all except the kings and nobility in ancient times, but this banquet not only has meat but several kinds of meat, even fatty meat, which proved the animals were well fed
  - b) In a time without refrigeration, wine was one of the few things to drink other than water ... but aged & strained wine was expensive and not for the common people, nor for everyday occasions
2. After we're told about this wonderful inclusive banquet, the passage continues in vv. 7 & 8 in a strange fashion:
  - a) Most of our Bible versions say that God will **destroy** the shroud or covering that's over all peoples
  - b) Then it explains further that the shroud is death itself
  - c) Similarly it says God will wipe away all tears and remove the people's disgrace
  - d) This is joyful stuff ... this is the heart of the passage, which we Christians have traditionally connected to Easter ... we have declared that it was indeed fulfilled in the resurrection of Jesus destroying death, wiping away tears & removing disgrace.

## B. But reading these verses has always left me with a disconnect as a reader:

1. I love this great good news of what God does to death, tears & disgrace ... but what happened to the banquet imagery? Where did that go?
2. Why does this section open up with a feast & then quickly talk about other things?
3. In other words, What does destroying a shroud have to do with a feast? Those seem like very different images to me ...

## C. It turns out that if we read this passage in its original Hebrew language, we wouldn't have those questions

1. (That's why Bible commentaries are sometimes helpful ...)
2. Take a look in your own Bible (Isaiah 25) if you have it ... The Hebrew word that we see translated "destroy" in v. 7 actually more commonly means to "swallow up" or "engulf" (Ivan D. Friesen, Isaiah, Believers Church Bible Commentary, ©2009 Herald Press, p. 158; The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew-English Lexicon, ©1979 Hendrickson Publishers, p. 118)
  - a) That is the exact same Hebrew word that we find in v. 8 when it says God "... will swallow up death forever."
  - b) Well, swallowing is certainly something we do at banquets!
  - c) So in this banquet vision that happens @ God's holy mountain, while we the peoples get to swallow fabulous foods & great wines, it's all possible because of the bitter pill that the Lord Almighty swallows for us: God swallows up death itself!
3. The banquet here in Isaiah 25 is not literal, but a metaphor for God's eternal salvation for us

- a) However, I can think of one very edible symbol of this passage:



- b) Since marrying Janette, there is one food item we often have for Easter dinner that more tangibly shows how death is swallowed up –
- c) From her grandmother, Janette learned to make *Empty Tomb Rolls*, which are dinner rolls with a little sweetness surrounding a big empty space where the marshmallow inside melted
- d) After today, every time I swallow one of these, I might have to rename it an *Isaiah 25 roll*, because death is swallowed up!

## III. Besides the image of the death shroud swallowed up, on this Easter Sunday, let's pay attention to tears



### **A. Isa. 25:8 tells us God's vision to wipe the tears away from all faces**

1. If that language sounds familiar to us as Christians, it's because Isaiah 25:8 is quoted twice in the book of Revelation ... in 7:17 and then again near the end in 21:4
2. In many a funeral I've been part of, these words have been repeated ... of God wiping away all tears
  - a) The words become a powerful comfort for grieving people who deeply miss someone who died ...
    - (1) people who feel like death has cut their very heart out from them ... people who feel like the tears will never stop coming ...
    - (2) people like some of you when your best friend, your spouse, your parent, or even your own child has died ...
  - b) People like Mary Magdalene herself, because ...

### **B. Early on a Sunday morning, she stood outside the tomb where she knew they had placed the bloody and lifeless body of her friend and teacher, Jesus of Nazareth**

1. She had seen his agonizing and unjust death, hung up there like a rebellious slave or a common criminal
2. Her world ripped to shreds, her hope shattered, at least she could come be near where Joseph of Arimathea had laid his body
  - a) While there was barely enough light to see, she could see it was even darker inside the tomb, through that space where the stone used to be! Someone had removed the big heavy stone!
  - b) Confused ... heartbroken ... perhaps angry ... she didn't know what to feel, but this just couldn't be! What did this mean?
    - (1) It was awful enough that this marvelous holy man who had taught them and loved them so well got railroaded and executed ...
    - (2) Did somebody then rob them of his body, too?
3. So she ran back to tell her discovery to Simon Peter and another disciple who dearly loved Jesus, and these two men ran to the tomb to check it out for themselves
4. Upon finding the tomb empty indeed but the linen grave cloths still there, they returned to their homes, also like Mary probably not

sure what to feel or how to make sense of it.

### C. But Mary couldn't bring herself to leave ...

1. Something made her stay nearby at this strange & awful yet intriguing place where nothing made sense

a) She hadn't actually looked inside the tomb for herself, & when she did, the next shocking sight was two angels in white where Jesus' body had been lying

b) I don't know if she knew they were angels or not, but she told them she was looking for her Lord, whose body had been taken away

2. Maybe Mary hung around the tomb because she was weeping so hard that she couldn't have walked safely if she tried

a) Tears will do that sometimes ... they fill up our eyes, refract our vision, make it seem like we're looking through prisms

b) Through the lenses of death, we humans do not see clearly

3. Through her tears, she turned around and saw a man standing there ...



a) Maybe this is what she saw

b) Or maybe the man she saw looked distorted to her, not clearly in



focus, a little bit like this ...

4. Then she heard her name gently spoken in the one voice Mary had thought she would never hear again

## IV. When she heard that voice, a whole new gift of sight was given to her ...

### A. This morning I'd like all of you to get a glimpse of that new gift of sight as well

1. Our ushers & pastors have something to help you see Jesus better ... *(3D glasses distributed in seats from baskets)*

2. I invite you to put these on & hopefully this image will look a little less blurry to you... in fact it's supposed to provide a whole new

3<sup>rd</sup> dimension of depth that we don't get in flat 2-dimensional images  
*(You might have to remove your regular glasses for the 3D ones to stay on your face ... if it doesn't look right, try flipping them the other direction for red & blue)*

## B. When Jesus spoke to Mary Magdalene outside that tomb, it's as if he handed her 3D glasses to put on

1. Suddenly she saw him for who he was ... Suddenly there was a new depth of perception! All his prior words and actions had a new clarity, a new richness to them
2. It was as if she had been living her life on a flat two-dimensional landscape ...
  - a) a canvas where death always had the last word
  - b) a place where there were only so many choices you could make because everyone knew that death would just swallow you up in the end.
3. But with Jesus conquering death, it was like Mary stepped through that flat canvas and into a new three-dimensional world ...
  - a) A place where the shroud of death was lifted off humanity ...
  - b) A new way of living where love could be demonstrated without limits ... where previously unthinkable risks were now fathomable because Jesus swallowed up death itself!

## V. Friends, because of Jesus' resurrection, we too have a whole new dimension of sight available to us!

### A. Think of Easter as God's gift of 3D glasses to you, that opens up a whole new world to you

1. Easter changes what life looks like

a) *(invite you to a little with your 3D glasses on & off ... difference Easter makes is like 15<sup>th</sup> C painting of the crucifixion your glasses ... then with them (glasses on)*



*comparison 1<sup>st</sup> off) The seeing this 1<sup>st</sup> without back on*

b) Or let's say you go visit cathedral *without your glasses* risen Christ in your life can mean between seeing this scene, where appreciate the beauty but there are shadows & double images ... and when you *put them back on*



*an ornate old on... the the difference you annoying seeing this*

2. Easter changes how we live life ...

a) it means you too can step off the 2-dimensional death-bound, fear-based canvas of life as the world knows it ...

- b) it means you're free to jump into a three-dimensional realm which has a depth of perspective that others just don't see ...



## B. What is this added dimension of life that Easter provides?

The Easter 3<sup>rd</sup> dimension, the thing that makes all the difference, is our emancipation from the fear of death because of God's love

1. We live in a gun-crazy, security-obsessed culture where fear is often the main motivator ...
2. And the top fear of them all, the one thing to be avoided at nearly all costs, is death.
3. But the good news of the resurrected Jesus Christ is that death is not the worst thing that can happen to us

- a) Goshen College history professor John D Roth has written an excellent defense of Christian pacifism called Choosing Against War ...
- b) An additional subtitle of the book is "A love stronger than our fears", which connects it back to the basic Easter message
- c) Roth writes,

*"The common sense of our culture teaches that the only way to respond to fear is a cowardly retreat or a fight to the finish. The beauty and power of the Gospel, by contrast, is that Jesus Christ offers a third alternative: trust in God – and in the transforming, surprising power of love."*

(John D Roth, Choosing Against War: A Christian View, Good Books, ©2002, p. 10)

4. When we live out of God's 3D love that surpasses fear, it means guns & expensive security systems & big armies have less appeal for us

- a) People who live out of this Easter 3<sup>rd</sup> dimension are willing to give their life, which already belongs to God in Christ, but they don't need to pack a weapon, which could take the life of someone for whom Jesus also died.
- b) This Easter freedom from fear comes out in some of the words of a well-known Gaithers song that goes "*Because he lives, I can face tomorrow. Because he lives, all fear is gone; because I know he holds the future, and life is worth the living just because he lives*"

(Hymnal: A Worship Book, #345)

## VI. Conclusion

**A. Today is your call to step beyond a 2-dimensional life, just as 2000 years ago Jesus called some ordinary fishermen to enter a whole new dimension of life by following him**



**B. Easter is God’s call to you to put those “figurative 3D glasses” on and live a 3D life**

1. Live for something much greater than just yourself, because Jesus is alive!
2. Live beyond the personal benefits and the materialism of the so-called “American Dream” ... because He is alive!
3. Live beyond the hopelessness that says there’s nothing to live for, because He is alive!
4. Live beyond the fear for your own security ... because, by His victory over death, Jesus is alive!
5. Live beyond the fear of death as the ultimate bad news ... Why? Because He is alive!

**C. Brothers & sisters, go out this week with the new vision & the power of this 3D life ... Jesus made it possible, because He is alive!**