

“Death Swallowed Up . . . Forever?”—Isaiah 25:7-8

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Death Swallowed Up . . . Forever?”, is Isaiah 25:7-8 → *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.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

With faces downcast solemn people gather, staring into the earth of an open grave about ready to swallow up one of its own in the dust of death. Once again, death has stolen life from these people not only in the lack of the presence of their loved one but also in the heavy grief and sorrow of their heart. In the midst of tears flowing in streams down their faces each knows in their heart of hearts that death is just wrong. It feels like an enemy that has stolen life which belonged to them. The sting is so strong that, in the midst of grief, they also feel confusion, anger and an overshadowing feeling in the shroud of hopelessness.

Contrary to the popular belief of many, death is **not** a natural part of life. I realize it appears such because of having to deal with its sense of

finality in the ebb and flow of life. However, when viewed from the perspective of *the Author of life*—Jesus (cf. Acts 3:15)—death is actually a foreigner in life. Yahweh’s will was revealed when He created Adam & Eve to live forever in His presence in His Paradise. It’s all about life for Him! Their disobedience to God’s command brought death, both spiritually and physically.

It was no different for the people of Isaiah’s day. They too felt *the covering . . . cast over all peoples, the veil . . . spread over all nations and the reproach of His people*. It’s called death and it’s a result of dwelling with the presence of sin in our lives. It causes us to ask in the words of 1 Corinthians 15:55 → *O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? . . .* and admit in the words of verse 56: *The sting of death is sin*. No amount of rationalization can take away the grief connected with the death of a loved one. Some may consider it a “friend” in the midst of severe physical suffering only to experience its sting with tears once again. While one may consider it a “friend” in the midst of his perceived bad “quality of life,” its sting is felt with grave intensity by those left in its wake. **Death is never a friend**. This is why the resurrection of Jesus is necessary in your life.

Verse 8 of our text is spoken to give you a hope which extends far beyond the grave. It is a three-fold promise to you:

- The prophecy promises you that the LORD *will swallow up death forever*. While death feels final it is actually temporary. True closure does not come with closing the grave at the end of a funeral. Even though millions of people in this world may view it as such, they will be in for a surprise because *the Author of life*—Jesus (cf. Acts 3:15)—has different plans!

Even after His burial those responsible for crucifying Him wanted to be reassured of “closure.” They asked governor Pilate to *order the tomb to be made secure until the third day, lest His disciples go and steal Him away and tell the people, “He has risen from the dead” So they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard.* (cf. Matthew 26:64-66) However, no stone hiding their sins, no seal securing their innocence and no guard guaranteeing their safety could stand against *the Author of life!*

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If Jesus rose from the dead to *swallow up death forever* why do we still deal with its sting. While Jesus defeated the power of sin, death and the devil we still deal with their presence this side of eternity. As time continues to linger until Jesus’ 2nd Coming 2 Peter 3:9 says: *The Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, **not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance**.* Jesus wants you

to experience the swallowing up of death at His 2nd Coming and is giving you opportunity to repent of your sins, trust in His Person & Work and *walk in newness of life* (cf. Romans 6:4) **now and eternally with Him!**

By trusting in Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins—not simply knowing Jesus died to forgive you of your sins—His resurrection is your resurrection now and eternally. 1 Corinthians 15:22-23 says: *For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall **all** be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at His coming those who belong to Christ.* Since every person will *be made alive*, Christ has made it possible for you to *be made alive* to live eternally in His presence when death, *the last enemy to be destroyed*, (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:26) is destroyed at His Coming on the Last Day. Without faith in Him you will be made alive to suffer eternally in hell separated from His presence. Repent and believe in He Who is *the Author of life*—Jesus—and experience your death swallowed up in victory forever! (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:54-57)

- Isaiah's prophecy also promises you that the LORD will *wipe away tears from all faces*. The tears of grief which you experience at death are not a result of death. Rather, grief upon death flows from death in the midst of love and relationship. People died every hour around the world yet you are not grieving them all. Even Jesus,

standing at the tomb of His good friend Lazarus, knowing He would raise him from the dead, still wept. (cf. John 11:35) They were not just tears of love for Lazarus but tears of love for you because death is caused by sinfulness and is just wrong.

Jesus came to *wipe away tears from all faces* by dying to take the punishment of your sin upon Himself so you are forgiven—released of that punishment. He came to *wipe away tears from all faces* by rising from the dead so you can rise from your grave on the Last Day and experience the vision of heaven given us in Revelation 21:4 → *He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.* This is not some “pipe dream” but a reality you will experience through faith in Christ Jesus!

- In the midst of the fulfillment of these promises from Isaiah, the LORD will *take away . . . the reproach of His people . . . from all the earth.* You feel this *reproach* every time you encounter sin and its affects. Not only is it evident in death but it is also evident in the persecution which you may receive as a result of believing in Jesus Christ. Psalm 69:9 depicts Yahweh’s Anointed One praying: *The reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me.* While this prophecy also found its direct fulfillment in the Person & Work of Jesus, the Christ, He made it clear that it extends to His

followers as well. Jesus said: *If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.* (cf. John 15:20)

The celebration of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is certainly a celebration of death being swallowed up by life forever in Christ's death and resurrection for you! It is a celebration of victory over the **power** of sin, death and the devil for you! Yet, you still stand by graves with tears, viewing the presence of death. You still experience the presence of the devil in a world filled with sinners. You still feel the rejection of those who, shrouded in the spiritual covering of darkness, persecute and attack you because you belong to Jesus. But you do so in faith, looking for Jesus to come and swallow up the last enemy—death—forever when He comes on the Last Day to take you to live with Him eternally!

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

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

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