

Mountain Of God 8am

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Preacher: Harry Robinson

[0 : 0 0] The text is in your pew Bible on page 619, and you might find it helpful to follow it, and you might find it helpful to take the little yellow sheet home with you so that you could look it up, because it gives you the references and read it to find out what on earth I was talking about when you're trying to resolve that during the rest of the day.

I worry a lot when I prepare a sermon about how you're going to tell people who aren't believers about things which really belong to believers, as this passage does.

I mean, if you're not a believer, this passage isn't going to help you very much, but that may help you to know that you're not a believer. You could start from there.

I was thinking about this business of preaching to people who don't believe, and I was drawn, I mean, for one reason or another, I went to John chapter 9, which was the man who was blind at the pool of Siloam, and Christ came there, and he said to Jesus, Jesus, I want to receive my sight.

And Jesus spat in the dust of the ground and made some mud and spread it on his eyes and then said, go and wash in the pool of Siloam, and you will see.

[1 : 3 5] Well, I think that most preachers are Christ-like in that they make mud and spread it on people's eyes. But the sermon generally ends there.

And they just go around with their eye full of mud that they got from the sermon on Sunday and haven't gone through with the rest of it, which means to wash it away so that you'll begin to see.

So my prayer is that you will take this mud in your eye carefully and then that you'll go and wash in the pool of Siloam so you can see what it is.

Passage is from Isaiah chapter 25, verse 6 following. And there is a mountain. And this is the mountain that Dan read about in the second chapter of Isaiah.

It's the mountain that we talked about two weeks ago in chapter 11, where it's the mountain where the wolf lies down with the lamb and where the child plays on the den of the cobra and where a little child leads wild animals.

[3 : 0 1] It's a mountain where the Lord, who is the Lord's appointed leader, is ruling the Lord's appointed people.

It's the same mountain that Moses went up to get. I mean, in figure, it's the same mountain that Moses went up to get the law. And nobody was to come near the mountain for fear they'd die.

Well, at the end of the time when we're speaking of here in Isaiah, not only is, you're invited to come to the mountain.

And at that mountain, God, who is the absolute pirate, you know, I mean, I think that's a good way of thinking about him because we want to accommodate him to the gentle habits of the 20th century.

But the fact is, if you read the Old Testament, you will see that God is an absolute pirate. But there's a difference because of what is in his heart.

- [4 : 08] But this God, who is the absolute tyrant, has prepared a banquet. And the banquet is made up of rich food, aged wines, carefully strained.
- And this rich food is to meet your deepest hunger, to satisfy your insatiable thirst.
- The best of meats and wines. You know, I don't, I, you may all be different, but when I go into a restaurant, I see what they have, and I think, ah, that's what I'd like.
- And then I see \$25 beside it, and I think, well, no, fish and chips will do things. But in this occasion, the very best. The best of wine and the best of food.
- And the Lord is throwing a party, and that's the picture that we're given. And if you're careful to read it, you'll see the party is for everybody, all people everywhere.
- [5 : 15] This is Baptism Sunday at St. John's, and I've had the privilege of preparing some of the parents for this baptism service. And grandparents for most of these children come from places like Italy, and Ireland, and Norway, and France, and all sorts of wonderful places that these children are coming to be baptized here this morning.
- And then next week, we're going to celebrate the new assistant minister at St. John's, who comes from Nigeria, and his wife, who comes from Malaysia.
- So there's a kind of foretaste of all the peoples of the world are invited to this banquet which God has prepared. And that's a lovely, a lovely picture.
- Everybody is invited. But then there's a problem with most parties. And at most parties, you go all dressed up in order to deceive your friends, to think that you're wealthier than you are, that you're healthier than you are, that you're happier than you are.
- And generally, it takes quite a lot of drugs and alcohol to convince them. But that's how parties work. Because, as you understand from this party, because of the pervasive reality, that death is also what the party needs.
- [6 : 54] And death is the great, I mean, this is not just death in the sense of the termination of our biological life. This is death as a great spiritual principle that pervades the whole of human history.
- And death means separation. And we encounter death as we encounter separation between people. Death moves in.
- And so when you have a lot of guests at a party, they all hold back. They're all for psychological reasons or spiritual reasons or physical reasons or something. They don't want to open up to one another.
- They don't want to, I mean, it's very difficult. But at this party, things are going to be different. At this party, it says that the Lord will destroy the shrouds that enfolds all peoples and the sheet that covers all nations.
- And what it means is that the things that separate people from one another, those are going to be taken away because it's because we are under a covenant with death that we want to keep ourselves separate from one another, not to let anybody know what in fact is the truth about ourselves.
- [8 : 24] We just can't do it. And we can't do it because of this principle of death that pervades. But at this party, it says, if you look at it carefully, he will, that on this mountain, he will destroy the shroud that enfolds people and the sheet that covers the nations.
- And he will swallow up death forever. It will be gone, finished, over. It will no longer be a reality amongst us in terms of our physical life, but also in terms of all the pervasive reality of death as it infiltrates our society.
- Death will be no more. It will no longer have a sting to it. It will no longer have a victory. It will no longer have the last word.

Death will be swallowed up in victory. So thanks be to God for his inestimable gift in his son, Jesus Christ, by which death has been swallowed up and the power of death has been broken.

So if you look carefully at the whole text, then you will see that these are the circumstances of this party.

[9 : 47] Watch now. First note that it is the almighty God who summons us, who summons us to the party, who invites us.

He issues the invitations to all people everywhere. He has prepared the finest meats and the best wine.

Now he moves among his guests. He removes all the shrouds by which we hide from one another. He takes away the sheets that separate us from people of different cultures and different languages and different religious things and all the things that separate people.

He is the host that destroys death. He robs it of its victory over us, takes away its sting, breaks its power to separate us from one another.

Then our host approaches every guest individually and he wipes the tears from their faces and he removes the disgrace under which they live.

[11 : 00] The disgrace of the shame of those who believe in a God, who are trusting in Christ, in a world which has determined not to come to the party.

In other words, there is a, I think as he describes it here, there is a sense in which there is a disgrace that falls on us because we're not with it, because we've chosen to come to the party while others have chosen not to unhold the party and despise the party that God has prepared and of which God has invited us.

So, Jesus goes on to explain why there are people who don't come to the party. And he explains it this way, because he was sitting in the house of a Pharisee one day having a meal with him and one perhaps of the pious guests wanting to make conversation with him said, said to him, ah, blessed is the man who will eat at the feast of the kingdom of God.

Ah, yeah, that will be a great day, won't it? And Jesus says, yeah, that will, but remember this, and he explained a parable to him. A certain king made a great feast, and when he had his feast prepared, he sent and invited the people to come, and those who should have been first to come sent word to the king saying, I'm sorry, I cannot come.

I've married a wife. I've bought five yoke of oxen. I've bought a piece of property. I'm otherwise engaged, and though I'm delighted to be invited, I'm not able to come.

[13 : 15] I'm so sorry. And Jesus explains that that's the reaction, and says how that king is compelled almost to conscript people into coming to the party that he's prepared.

So full are we of our own business and of our own dealings and of our own life that we have no time for the party that God has prepared for us.

And so you get, you get this amazing story by Jesus explaining it. Now, Isaiah explains the problem in a slightly different way, and I might say this may offend your sensibilities, but it's certainly very graphic.

If you look in verse 10, the middle of verse 10, Isaiah picks Moab, which was one of the adjoining countries to Judah, to Judah, which is the country to whom Isaiah was speaking, and he says of this country, Moab, which represents the response to the invitation, that Moab will be trampled under him as straw is trampled in manure.

You've got to work with rubber boots on a cattle ranch to really understand what that means. But I'm sure most of you have had that experience somewhere.

[14 : 50] But that's how he describes it. The straw will, not the grain, but the straw will be trampled into the manure. manure. And life will be, and this is a very graphic picture, like swimming in the manure.

They will spread out their hands in it as swimmer spreads out his hand to swim. And in this process, it says, God will bring down their pride.

He will despise the cleverness of their hands. He will bring down the high, fortified walls behind which they thought to protect themselves and bring them low and lay them down into the dust.

That's, that's the picture of life if you don't have in mind the fact that you have been summoned to a party and you're accepting the invitation to go to that party and you're, you're not going to be subject to all the disgrace of those who are much too busy and much too sophisticated to want to go.

That's the lifestyle described in very graphic terms as being swimming in the fire. It's a, it's a very powerful picture. So, the party then gets going and the music begins.

[16 : 23] The people who had been received by their gracious host start to sing and their song is recorded for us again in the passage when it says, surely this is our God, we trusted in him and he saved us.

You should write, we trusted in him in small letters and he saved us in big letters. We tend to do the opposite thing. What we did is really important and his response has been adequate though perhaps not too enthusiastic.

It's quite the opposite. We trusted in him, he saved us. That's, that's the picture and that's the, that's the import of the song they sing.

Surely this is our God, we trusted in him and he saved us. This is the Lord, he is God and he is Lord in that that is his name by which he is known because God is not an abstract concept.

He is a personal God whose name is the Lord. This is the Lord, we trusted in him, let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.

[17 : 40] salvation. Now that's, that's what happens when the song is sung and people acknowledge the wonder of the banquet to which they have been bidden, the graciousness of the hospitality that they have encountered there and they sing this song.

Well, then the passage that we're required to look at goes on to Isaiah chapter 27 and the last two verses which are 12 and 13 and in those two verses it brings a whole section of Isaiah to a close but it summarizes what has been said above.

In Isaiah chapter 27 verse 12 it says this, that there's going to be a harvest, that's what you do at a harvest time is to thrash in that day the Lord will thrash from the flowing Euphrates to the wadis of Egypt the whole known world for them and you O Israelites will be gathered up one by one.

Remember that what he sees here is a great harvest that there is a thrashing which separates the grain from the straw and the chaff and he says that each of the people who are to come to the mountain will be picked up one by one and brought to the place where they're meant to be.

O Israelites will be gathered up one by one and then it says that the trumpet will sound. Now this is the apocalyptic trumpet which says you've got the invitation it's now time to come come to the mountain to the feast the banquet which God has prepared for you and so he says yeah that on that day a great trumpet will sound and those who were perishing in Assyria that is all the lost tribes of Israel those who were perishing in Assyria and those who were exiled in Egypt will worship the Lord on this holy mountain in Jerusalem.

[20 : 15] They will come to partake in the feast and to join in the singing and so that's that's the wonderful picture of that Isaiah gives us of the whole ultimately culmination of the history of all the nations when there is a thrashing that there is a separation between the straw and the chaff and the grain and each one will come one by one to worship the Lord on his mountain.

So I'm thinking of this in terms of your lifetime decision because when you receive an invitation like this this is an Old Testament invitation given by Isaiah but it's not unlike the invitations that ring through the pages of the New Testament when Jesus says come unto me all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will refresh you.

He invites us to come to him as they came in a sense to be a restored Israel in the promised land so we come to be the new Israel not marked by our ethnic origins but marked by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit creating in us a community in which we have in which the Lord is our host in which death has been defeated and in which it is our delight to say the Lord in whom we trusted he has redeemed us he has saved us so that this morning at the 10 o'clock service there's to be a baptism I mean there's going to be several baptisms and what what the what is at the heart of baptism and what is at the heart of what it means to be a believer is that your heart's response when you read this passage is to say

I'm going to that party and nothing's going to stand in my way you make that decision in the midst of the circumstances of your life and you say I'm going to that party think of the dimensions of that party remember the foot washing of Christ of his disciples as they came to that particular solemn party think of the things that separate us being swallowed up and that the great separator death will be vanquished its power will be removed and the celebration will truly begin for you and for those who are being baptized today at your baptism at the point where in a sense you decided you were going to come to the party you were signed with the sign of the cross as a token that you will not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified even though you may suffer some disgrace in a world which is far too sophisticated for that and you are prepared to fight under his banner against sin the world and the devil and to continue

Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto your life's end well having made that determination then it is your business to live your life listening for the trumpet which will announce that the banquet is now ready the invitation is out and you are to make your way to the mountain that's the powerful picture that Isaiah presents to us and it's the picture that is to pervade the whole basic reality of our lives and to give meaning and purpose to our lives that we are waiting for the summons to the banquet that God has prepared and we're not going to get knotted up in the excuses which come so readily to our hearts because we're so important and so busy with other things

[24 : 53] God grant that that on our hearts this invitation may be engraved and that we will know that it is our life's business to await the summons to that party and to be ready to join it at God's command Amen Amen for our love to be everyday to be CH war ■■■ ■ maybe or to be ■uth and that's very amazing and that's how to