



15 March 2018

SWALLOWING DEATH

Isaiah 25:1 *“O LORD, you are my God; I will exalt you, I will praise your name; for you have done wonderful things, plans formed of old, faithful and sure. 2 For you have made the city a heap, the fortified city a ruin; the palace of aliens is a city no more, it will never be rebuilt. 3 Therefore strong peoples will glorify you; cities of ruthless nations will fear you. 4 For you have been a refuge to the poor, a refuge to the needy in their distress, a shelter from the rainstorm and a shade from the heat. When the blast of the ruthless was like a winter rainstorm, 5 the noise of aliens like heat in a dry place, you subdued the heat with the shade of clouds; the song of the ruthless was stilled. 6 On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear. 7 And he will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over all nations; 8 he will swallow up death forever. Then the Lord GOD will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken. 9 It will be said on that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us. This is the LORD for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation. ”*¹

The prophet looks forward to the day when the Lord (Yahweh) will right the wrongs that have been perpetrated by “ruthless nations”. This is the day when the Lord will destroy the strong enemy city and be a refuge for the poor and needy. All ruthless nations will eventually be forced to acknowledge Yahweh's greatness.

In addition, death will be destroyed. The Canaanite world at the time of Isaiah described the god of death (*Mot*) as a beast who swallows everyone. Isaiah says that this will all change: Now it is the Lord will conquer the god of death: *“he will swallow up death forever.”*

As we continue our Lenten journey towards Easter, we can use the words of Isaiah as encouragement to embrace the Lord, who dries our tears and who has swallowed up death.

Thought

*Lives again our glorious King, Alleluia!
Where, O death, is now thy sting? Alleluia!
Once he died our souls to save, Alleluia!
Where's thy victory, boasting grave? Alleluia!*

Charles Wesley

¹ This is an excerpt from the apocalyptic section of Isaiah (chaps. 24-27)

The Fifth Sunday in Lent

From Death to Life

The Scripture passage for the day is drawn from Rueben Job and Norman Shawchuck, A Guide to Prayer for Ministers and other Servants, (Nashville, The Upper Room 1983), 129.

This reflection is from my own devotional exercises for the day. (Rev. Pete Grassow)