

Sermon Isaiah 25 6 9 Easter Sunday Series B

Sermon: Easter Sunday

Text: Isaiah 25:6-9 (vv.8,9)

Theme: No death – No tears!

Goal: To comfort God's people with the assurance that the resurrected Christ wipes away our tears.

Dear Friends in the Resurrected Christ,

Introduction: This is one of the best prophecies in the Old Testament about resurrection, not only Christ's resurrection but ours as well.

The image that "God will swallow up death forever" and that He "will wipe away the tears from all faces" lifts our eyes up to a future full of hope, in contrast with those who don't have any hope and in spite of what happens around us; because the earthly things and sufferings will pass away, but the spiritual ones will endure forever!

I – God will swallow up death forever

In the Old Testament imagery, Death is seen as an insatiable monster, feeding on its victims, swallowing up everyone (CSSB Psalm 49:14).

Proverbs 2:20 says: "Death and Destruction are never satisfied." Isaiah 5:14 says: "The grave enlarges its appetite and opens its mouth without limit." – This image has not changed that much nowadays when the News show mass graves in Syria, Iraqi and Nigeria; and Ebola is swallowing up hundreds and thousands of lives, besides other terrible news, like several plane crashes recently.

To people scared by death and its power, the prophet announces hope: "The Lord Almighty... will swallow up death forever." The monster itself will be swallowed up and will be no more.

When Jesus died on the cross, it seemed to all that He was swallowed up by Death. The Lord of Life, who had risen from death Jairo's' young daughter, the son of the widow of Nain, and His friend

Lazarus, who had been laid for rest four days before, - now He himself was laid for rest in the cold tomb too, like all mortals. His enemies rejoiced... but their joy was short. On Easter morning the prophecy was accomplished, Jesus was raised from the death by the power of God the Father, and death was swallowed up by the Lord Almighty! Jesus is the firstfruits of the resurrection, meaning that His followers will rise again as well (1 Corinthians 15:23).

1 Corinthians 15 is the big chapter on the resurrection, first of Christ, and then of all. Paul argues with several points and proves, assuring us that Jesus is alive and that we have eternal life as well with Him. And Paul ends the chapter quoting this prophesy of Isaiah 25 and encouraging us to live in full the new life God gives us: “...then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.” “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.””

II – God will wipe away our tears

The second big promise we have in our text says: “The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces.” How many tears were poured out at the side of caskets in your lives? And after this in remembrance of the beloved departed ones? How many tears were on the faces of Jesus’s friends when He was crucified, died and was buried? God promises to wipe away the tears from all faces; this means, from mine and from your faces as well...

Let’s see some vivid examples related to Easter how God wiped away the tears from some faces:

A) When Jesus was carrying His cross along the small roads of

Jerusalem on His way to the Calvary, Luke reports: “A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him.” Many of those women “had followed Him from Galilee” and when Jesus was crucified and died, they “stood at a distance, watching these things”. When Joseph of Arimathea buried Jesus in his new tomb cut in the rock, “the women who had come with Jesus from Galilee...saw the tomb and how the body was laid in it. Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes” to put on Jesus’ corpse. These women were the very first ones to have their tears wiped away early on Easter Sunday morning when they went to the tomb and found it empty, receiving the good news from the angels that Jesus was alive! (Matthew 28:8-10).

B) The second one that had her tears wiped away by the grace of God was Mary Magdalene. John reports that on Easter morning, after she and the women saw the open tomb and ran away to tell it to the disciples, she came back to the garden and “stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept... she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. Woman, he said, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?” After her explanation with the eyes full of tears, Jesus called her by name: “Mary; and she turned over and cried out, Rabboni!” - recognizing Him, the living One. (John 20:10-16). Mary’s tears were wiped away by Jesus Himself!

C) The third one who experienced God’s comfort as Jesus wiped his tears away was Peter. - When Peter disowned Jesus for three times, Luke reports that “he went outside and wept bitterly” (Luke 22:62). His conscience was accusing him of not being faithful to His Master. When the resurrected Lord appeared to seven disciples on the shore of the Galilee Sea, Jesus had a special talk with Peter. He asked him three times: “Simon, do you truly love me?” As Peter reaffirmed his

love and faithfulness to the Master, he was reinstated as a shepherd of Jesus' flock. His tears of repentance were wiped away and he was forgiven by Jesus. (John 21:15-19).

Conclusion: Tears very often come to our eyes due to suffering, illness, death, sins... We can say that we are still crossing Lent in our lives, looking forward to the eternal Easter. But we can be sure that the living Christ is at our side and comforts us like he did with the women and with Mary Magdalene on Easter morning, and He forgives our sins and restores us in His fellowship daily like He did with Peter some days later. He is not just a promise in the future. He is a real presence now, as we experience Him at the Lord's Supper! Paul wrote, based on Jesus' resurrection: "Brothers and sisters, I don't want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him" (1 Thessalonians 4:13,14).

And once death will be swallowed up forever and the tears will be wiped away from all faces, as Revelation 21:4 says about the New Earth and the New Heaven: God "will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

The empty tomb of Easter morning is still open and none can close it anymore. Life flows from the living Christ to all who believe. *The point of the resurrection is that Jesus is alive today too. He is interceding for us, he is shepherding us, he is with us, he is blessing us, he is right now doing all sorts of stuff. Our Friend, our Master, has risen from the grave. Not only has he risen from the dead, but he is at the right hand of God; all the power of the universe flows through his perforated hands* (Phil Brandt). Happy Easter! Let God wipe away from your eyes all tears. Amen.

Pastor Carlos Walter Winterle, Cape Town, 05 April 2015.