

# St. Paul: On The Same page for 10.12.14 Pentecost 18A

## Day One: Isaiah 25:6-9

*On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined. <sup>7</sup> And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. <sup>8</sup> 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.*

*<sup>9</sup> It will be said on that day, "Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation."*

Halloween is in the stores already. And this year once again many people will wear a shroud for a costume just like the one Isaiah describes, pretending to be a ghost. But death, even though we mock it at times, is not funny, is it?

I saw a slogan from a business leader the other day. Paraphrased, it went like this:

If you keep running, your competition will bite you. But if you stop running, they will swallow you whole.

We know that no matter how fast we run, and no matter whether we eat right or take vitamins, death will eventually swallow us all up. Isaiah says it is the shroud that covers all people on earth. But then he says that it is death itself that will be swallowed.

God will swallow up death. He will swallow up that shroud, the ghostly sheet that wraps a dead body. He will swallow it whole, and he will wipe away all the tears that come with death, and take away our reproach, our sin.

"It will be said on that day, 'Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him...'" That was God's promise, and it was kept by Jesus. We can now say, "This is the Lord; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation." Death has been swallowed up by Jesus!

**Prayer:** *Thank you, Lord Jesus, for keeping that promise made long ago. Now help us to wait patiently and faithfully for the fulfillment of all your promises of new life in heaven. Amen.*

## Day Two: Phil.4:4-13

<sup>4</sup>Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. <sup>5</sup>Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; <sup>6</sup>do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup>And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

<sup>8</sup>Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. <sup>9</sup>What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

Obviously, the Bible says lots of good things. But we have a tendency to look at them individually, as if they were not connected, and try to put each of these things in our life. But each truth in God's word is tied to all the others.

So when Paul urges the believers in Philippi not to be anxious, and to pray with thanksgiving, and to be filled with peace, and to focus on

the things that are honorable and pure and excellent, we might be tempted to try to obey all those instructions – as if we could.

The problem is, by ourselves, we cannot. We can't just decide one day not to worry, and only to focus on the honorable and pure things.

But Paul says that all those things come out of another truth. Namely this: "The Lord is at hand."

Some people are afraid at the prospect of the world's end. Not believers in Jesus. The best news we could hear is this: the Lord is at hand!

What are you anxious about today? Did you read the news about the latest terrible disease? The Lord is at hand?

Did you hear about the atrocities committed in a war? The Lord is at hand!

Are you fretting about your work or your budget or your future? The Lord is at hand! The same Lord who loved and redeemed you – he is near.

**Prayer:** *Come quickly, Lord Jesus. I join all the saints of all the ages in rejoicing that soon and very soon I will see you. Amen.*

### Day Three: Phil. 4 cont.

*<sup>10</sup>I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. <sup>11</sup>Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. <sup>12</sup>I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. <sup>13</sup>I can do all things through him who strengthens me.*

Generally when I've written or preached on this text I've focused on Paul's secret of contentment. Certainly that is a secret that many of us would like to know – and yet which we resist because at the same time we want more and more things.

But there is another wonderful truth in these verses. Not only is Paul blessed by being content in any circumstances, but because he is satisfied with God's will for his life, he receives the gifts of his fellow Christians with great rejoicing.

Paul says that he was not in need. He had enough. He was doing alright. But when

the believers in Philippi revived their concern for him, he rejoiced greatly in the Lord. It was like an over and above blessing. And the believers who shared their gifts with Paul, and who encouraged him, were blessed by God to be participants in his great work.

God is doing amazing things around the world today. And he can provide for his work. Somehow his missionaries will continue. Many of them would serve without pay if they had to. But God gives you the chance to help them, to encourage them, to refresh them. God lets you do these wonderful over-and-above acts of blessing by your gifts.

Where is God calling you to encourage his servants today? At home? At church or school? Somewhere far away? Don't miss your opportunity!

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, I know you will provide for your church. But I ask you to allow me to have a share in that wonderful work which will bring your children into eternal life. Guide me, show me where I might add my small gifts that will bring great rejoicing. Amen.*

#### **Day Four: Matthew 22:1-14**

*And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, <sup>2</sup>“The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, <sup>3</sup>and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come. <sup>4</sup>Again he sent other servants, saying, ‘Tell those who are invited, ‘See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast.’” <sup>5</sup>But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, <sup>6</sup>while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. <sup>7</sup>The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. <sup>8</sup>Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy. <sup>9</sup>Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.’*

This parable was obviously told in a very pointed way to the people who were declining God’s invitation in Jesus. They were the people that you’d expect to be invited. They were the people who had long been in God’s kingdom, the people of Israel. But when the king called them, when he

summoned them to the wedding banquet, then suddenly their daily lives were more important.

It’s easy for us to dismiss that as a problem for those people long ago. But now we are those people who are in God’s kingdom. We are those who know him, who grew up knowing that we were “in” the kingdom of God. Is it possible that we could lose sight of what is important as they did?

Jesus calls us to a wedding, and you are the Bride! That’s a lot more commitment than just being a guest. Like a bride, you are leaving your old life behind to be joined to Jesus. You trust that he will provide all that you need. Are you able to accept his invitation... or are you too married already to your daily life and things?

You need not be worthy. You don’t have to be good enough. The wonderful news is, he will provide you with the white wedding garment, covering all your sin.

**Prayer:** *Dearest Savior, just as I am, I come. I come. Lead me by your Spirit to leave all behind and follow you, because you will replace it all with far greater blessings. Amen.*