

Psalm 23:3

May 20th, 2020

“He Prepares a Table *for me!*”

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church

Easter 7

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Grace, Mercy, and Peace are yours from God our Heavenly Father and Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

[Introduction]

Faithful followers of the Savior, Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!

What is the greatest meal you have ever had? And where did you eat? I am sure you can fondly remember many meals that you have enjoyed.

But that feast was nothing compared to what they prepared for King Solomon and his court. According to Scripture, here is what he had: “Solomon’s food supply for one day was 180 bushels of flour, 360 bushels of coarse flour, 10 fattened cows, 20 cows from the pasture, and 100 sheep in addition to deer, gazelles, fallow deer, and fattened birds” Now that is a spread to be sure.

When King Solomon ate, he didn’t have to cook, kill the fattened oxen, or serve others; his servants did it all.

But notice how David tells us of the faithful Shepherd’s care for his sheep:

“You Prepare a Table before Me in the Presence of My Enemies.”

[Feast of Feasts]

In the Book of Isaiah, we read these words: “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” (Is 25:6). Notice who the host is and who the servant is—it is Yahweh the Lord, the faithful Good Shepherd. He himself will prepare it on the mountain for all peoples. This meal is offered to all who believe that the Savior, the Suffering Servant, and the heaven-sent Ambassador, is giving us what we can’t prepare or have—his gracious *gift*. And what a meal it is!

With vivid colors, Isaiah describes this feast, where the rarest wine is uncorked and the finest meat carved. This is God's activity and doing. His table is groaning from the weight of the best of foods. And he bids us come to his table and dine with him, which is much better than with King Solomon. We get to dine with the King of kings and Lord of lords—the faithful and Good Shepherd, Jesus.

David understood that well when he said: “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies” (Ps 23:5). He is not only preparing a table for me, but in the presence of enemies. The enemies of David were Saul and the Philistines, and yet God took care of David, fed him, and nourished him.

[Invited]

There are others who needed that invitation to come to the table. Peter is one who needed to hear that personally. Remember the night Peter denied his Lord three times, saying, “I do not know the man” (Mt 26:72, 74). Then he went out and wept. Not just sobbing but wailing. He had denied his Lord and Savior. His sin weighed heavy upon him. His heart was crushed and his conscience troubled, and so he went to drown his sorrow by doing what he did before—fishing.

But Jesus didn't let this situation destroy the disciple who one day would be his mouthpiece and take the message of the resurrected Lord to Jews and Gentiles alike. No, the caring and loving Good Shepherd invited the one who denied him to come and eat with him at his table, and the table was prepared before the enemy—Satan. There on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, the Shepherd fed Peter, knowing full well that Satan could see everything. Christ didn't cast Peter out. Instead Jesus forgave him his sins and welcomed him back to the fold.

Jesus is like that, you know. He *is* the faithful Shepherd who cares for the sheep and does so much to help us in spite of the fact that the enemy wants to destroy us as it wanted to destroy Peter.

Jesus reminded Peter, saying, “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers” (Lk 22:31-32). The comfort in these words are not only to Peter but to us.

How often have we, like Peter, David, and many others, denied him, cursed him, abandoned him, and forsaken him? How often have we said, “We will not do that, Lord,” yet we end up doing exactly what we said we wouldn’t? How often have we neglected his Word and done what we wanted? How often have we lived like enemies of the Lord?

Children of God, today, if you are burdened, if your conscience is troubled, and if your heart is heavy over what you have and haven’t done, then hear these words: The victor over hell and the ruler of heaven, the destroyer of death and the champion of our salvation invites you to come and dine with him in the presence of your enemies.

Yes, listen closely to these words and know that Jesus means it: He bids you come to his table, the one he is preparing for you so that your enemy may know that Christ holds no grudges against you, but loves you to the end.

[Cost]

He will prepare this meal on the mountain of the Lord and at a high price. Look at the Lord as he hung dead on the cross. “All who see me mock me” (Ps 22:7). It is our custom to dress up the crucifixion of our Lord. His dead body is my life. His blood is my blood. And he gives his holiness for my wretchedness.

What a meal. Just remember this is the most expensive meal you will eat. It is not in a ritzy restaurant or hotel, but on a messy, bloody, and filthy cross—the cross of Christ. Our Lord died the bloodiest, cruelest, and meanest death. Could it be any more vulgar? There he is, dead on the tree, and the image is horrifying. For what? So that he can prepare a table for me, the *sinner*, before my enemies.

Jesus, the earner of our salvation and the champion of our freedom, invites and welcomes not only millions but *all* peoples to come to him. From his pierced hands, we receive the feast of love and dine with him, rejoicing in the freedom he offers from sin's curse and death's hold.

Today, hear David the shepherd as he portrays the love of God—his Shepherd who prepares a magnificent table for him and us. The Good Shepherd, Jesus, invites you today to be fed richly through the Word you hear and through his Holy Supper. The gracious Lord, the great and Good Shepherd, this day is both host and guest. His body, his blood given for *you*.

The table is ready—the table of love—for you, the sinner. Come and eat at the table he has prepared for you in the presence of your enemies.

So be it.

Amen.

As followers of Christ, “Keep loving one another earnestly
And show hospitality to one another without grumbling.” AMEN! (1Pt 4:8-9)
