

Dear friends in Christ,

Sometimes you just need a little pick me up to make you feel a little better or give you a little more energy. Maybe it's your afternoon coffee that perks you up to get you through the rest of the day. It could be a snack from the vending machine that gives you just the boost that you need to finish out the day strong. Maybe it's the lazy Saturday morning that gives you the chance to breathe a little bit in between busy and active work weeks. It could be a funny story told at just the right time or a nice encouraging note from a friend or co-worker. It might even be a surprise hug from one of your children who isn't usually all that affectionate but decided to give you a hug "just because". At some point, we all need a pick me up—something that puts a smile on your face, brightens your day and outlook on things and gives you the boost of energy and encouragement which you need to keep going.

This is what God offers to us spiritually today—a spiritual pick me up. Just as the grind of work and the grind of a work day or week can wear us down, the daily grind of our spiritual life can wear us down over time. It's easy for our outlook on life to become skewed and for us to not feel overly victorious when it comes to life. We may keep trudging on and pushing forward because that's what we do, but the weight of what we have to face and the burdens that come with the struggles of life get heavy and burdensome and leave us exhausted and tired. We need a spiritual pick me up from time to time to lift our spirits, improve our outlook and boost our spiritual energy to keep moving forward in our Christian lives. Let's listen then in our text as God gives us ***Just the Pick Me Up We Needed***.

**Isaiah 25:6-9** *On this mountain the Lord Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine—the best of meats and the finest of wines. <sup>7</sup>On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; <sup>8</sup>he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove his people's disgrace from all the earth. The Lord has spoken. <sup>9</sup>In that day they will say, "Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the Lord, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation."*

If you were to just listen to these few verses of Isaiah out of context, you might conclude that everything was going great for him and Israel. It would seem as if life were grand and they were all riding a high note. Though it may seem that way at a glance, this couldn't be farther from the truth. Isaiah was facing destruction all around him. He just spent 11 chapters prior to this announcing the Lord's judgment on all of the people who had rebelled against him. This judgment wasn't just limited to Israel. It included all the nations of the world. Each picture he used was poetic, vivid and uniquely suited to the nation that God was setting in his sights. They brought God's anger upon themselves by following after the heath practices of idolatry and sexual immorality. Since God was a just God, he put with the sins of these people for only so long and then he demanded punishment for the. Isaiah had the grim task of bring this message of punishment to these people. He summarized in the previous chapter by saying that the whole earth would be laid waste and plundered as the Lord sends his punishment. These weren't happy times. There was death and destruction all around him. It would have been easy to get down and be full of despair and wonder if anyone would be able to escape the judgment of God.

So in the midst of this section of judgment, Isaiah offers a spiritual pick me up to those who had remained faithful to God. In this chapter and the next, Isaiah took a break from this gloomy task and to sing a beautiful song of praise and rejoicing to God. How could Isaiah be so joyous amidst all this destruction? God had promised he would save a faithful remnant. He promised he would deliver those who remained faithful to him. Isaiah drew the attention of God's people off of the judgment around them to the victory celebration they would be part of at the end of time. He gives God's people a spiritual pick me up by reminding them of the victory they would celebrate. No, they didn't feel overly victorious now, but they would when they met Jesus face to face. He uses the picture of a celebratory banquet to picture the wonders of eternal salvation. What a picture to help us understand the glories of his everlasting paradise that we couldn't grasp on our own. God has prepared for his people a marvelous feast when life on this world is over. This isn't some pot luck that God is throwing together at the last minute. (Nothing against potlucks!). No, he describes the richest of feasts. He describes wine aged to perfection and the choicest of meats. God is pulling out all the stops. This banquet that Isaiah pictures is a formal celebration of great joy and victory. This is a landmark occasion. For landmark occasions we go for the best. This is a high-class event: black ties for the gentlemen and evening gowns for the ladies. This is special! This is a celebration.

What are the people of God celebrating? Victory over death. Though death was all around God's people, death for God's people would mean entrance into heaven. The root cause of not only all of this death around them but all death in general is sin. Sin is the failure to follow God's will. It is doing what God doesn't want us to do and not doing what he wants us to do. We've all done it. And the price we deserve to pay for sin is death. Because all sinned all will die. That's a morbid and sad thought to think about but it's true. Death isn't something to celebrate. But our Lord's victory over death is. Isaiah said, "*The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces.*" There will be no sadness at this great banquet feast in heaven because *destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; <sup>8</sup>he will swallow up death forever and he will remove his people's disgrace from all the earth.* The disgrace was our sin, that is, our shame because of our sin. But God removed that disgrace by the blood which Jesus, God's only Son, shed on Calvary's cross. The banquet hall of heaven will not be stained by sin or made glum with guilt because sin and guilt will be a thing of the past for God's people. Because sin is gone, the veil or shroud will be removed. This could be a reference to a veil that someone might wear while mourning a death or it could be the sheet which covers a dead body because no one wants to

look at it. In either case, because sin is gone death will be gone forever. God's people will not have to worry about sin or death or the effects of either for all eternity. The table is set with the perfect happiness and holiness which Jesus won and it is waiting for all who believe in Jesus as their Savior.

Wow! What a pick me up! What a joy it is to take a moment today to stop from the busyness of our lives and be reminded of what God has waiting for us when all of this is over. This is a pick me up that we need! Let's be honest, often times thoughts of a future heavenly feast or banquet are the last thing on our minds. If we are honest, we'll admit that we don't always feel all that victorious with life. Try as hard as we do, it seems like the victories are harder and harder to get and become less and less all the time. Maybe we have a victory here or a victory there, but when add up the wins one column and compare them to the losses in the other, we feel pretty defeated. We often feel more defeated than victorious.

There are many examples of this. I would guess the people in the panhandle of Florida aren't feeling overly victorious about things right now. Cat 4 almost 5 hurricanes don't bring many things to celebrate. Sure, they are thankful to be alive and thankful to have survived, but I would guess that most would say they don't feel very victorious. With all the political mess that's taking place right now—regardless of what side of the aisle you land on—we don't feel very victorious. Neither side can feel very good about the way things went down the last few weeks with the confirmation hearings of the latest Supreme Court justice. It's easy to feel defeated about the whole process and wonder who really has the good of the American people in their minds. Maybe for you all the bills and obligations you have combined with the lagging resources you have are leaving you feeling less than victorious. Or the family matters you have to face are overwhelming and seem to be getting worse instead of better no matter what you do. We let our attention focus on the here and now and all those things which confront us day in and day out and we get so caught up we don't stop to think about the hereafter and what God has waiting for us. We end up feeling defeated and anything but victorious. Like Isaiah, death and destruction are all around us.

Or maybe, what's confronting you is death. There are a lot of different things that make us all unique from one another: our gender, age, race, nationality, area of the country we come from, whether we are married or single, the type of work we do, the economic level we enjoy, etc. But there is one thing which we all share in common regardless of how different we are in all of these areas: we are going to die. I know, that's morbid to think about and sobering thought to consider. But it is a fact of life. Not talking about it won't stop it from coming. Whether we want to talk about it, death is going to come to all of us...unless Jesus comes first. So it's good to talk about. Normally, when we think about death, we don't have many happy thoughts. Maybe if a person is near 100 and had a good life and suffered a lot at the end, we can see the blessing of having that suffering end, but there is still sadness and tears. There is still a hole left as we miss loved ones who have died. There are grim looks and sadness as people gather. Funeral music is often sad music and melancholy. Whether we think about our own upcoming death or that of a loved one, we don't usually have happy thoughts. Everyone of us here has felt the heartache and sorrow in some way that comes from death.

This heartache and sorrow come because deep down we know why death comes. Death is the biggest preaching of the law there is. Thinking about death, any death but especially our own, makes us come face to face with our mortality and the reality that we are sinners before God and deserve death. God tells us in the Bible that we are sinners from conception. So from the moment of conception we start the process of dying. Every time we have a selfish thought, a hurtful word or an unloving action, we earn death more. And even more terrifying is to know the death we are talking about isn't just physical death, but eternal death. Because of our sins, we deserve to die eternally and be separated from God forever. That doesn't feel very victorious.

How we need this pick me up from Isaiah to catch if even just for a few moments a glimpse of the victory to come. As Isaiah prophesied, he looked forward to what was to come. For us, we can look back from the New Testament perspective and see the victory complete. Death is the enemy, but Jesus is the conqueror. He came down to this earth to do battle against death. Jesus felt the same effects of death that you and I do. When one of his close friends, Lazarus died, we are told that Jesus was moved emotionally. He stood before Lazarus' tomb and wept. He wept over what the scourge of death had done to his people. It wasn't the way almighty God intended for us. Jesus' gave us a glimpse of the victory he would win over death when he commanded Lazarus to come out and brought him back to life. Jesus felt the effects of death too. Even more so, he felt them perfectly when he faced death for us. To pay for our sins, he suffered excruciatingly on the cross both physically and spiritually as he suffered the curse of hell. Then he willingly gave up his spirit and died. With his resurrection on Easter Sunday, he swallowed up death forever. This is what wipes away our tears when we think about death. This is what removes our fears. This is what takes away sadness and makes the death of a believer a celebration of victory rather than a dirge of death.

What a pick me up! God has invited you to this glorious feast. Regardless of what it is that you are facing, catching a glimpse of what God has waiting boosts our spirits and raises our strength and energy to keep moving forward confident of God's promise. Jesus went into death's stronghold and emerged victorious. Death could not hold him. As people who have been made righteous through faith in this same Jesus, death will not maintain its grip on us either. God has a rich banquet of blessings waiting for us to enjoy for all eternity: no sin, no death, no pain, just joy, peace, bliss, forgiveness and salvation. No matter what you are facing, take a step back and ponder the feast God has invited you to. Rejoice that God has guaranteed your seat at his table through faith in him. Be strengthened to know that God won't abandon or forsake you, but will walk with you through the challenges of life until you take your seat at his banquet table. The feast has been prepared. Your deliverance is certain. Death and destruction may be all around us, but your salvation awaits. Ahhhh....that's just the pick me up we needed! Amen.