

## “Comfort Food”

*Isaiah 25:6-9*

Pastor Charlie Berthoud | Sermon for Sunday, November 7, 2021

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What happens after we die? Where do we go? What do we become?

The truth is that we don't know. We simply don't know.

As Christians, as people of faith we affirm that Jesus is the resurrection and the life, that in life and death, we belong to God, and that nothing—not even death—can separate us from God's love in Jesus Christ.

I believe all of those things and more. I believe with my heart that somehow someday death is not the final word, even if we're not sure of the details.

The Bible offers a variety of images to give us a glimpse of the future. Isaiah 65 paints a picture of a place of long life:

“Never again will there be in it  
an infant who lives but a few days,  
or an old man who does not live out his years;  
the one who dies at a hundred  
will be thought a mere child;”

--Isaiah 65:20

Isaiah 65 also imagines a place of justice:

“They will build houses and dwell in them;  
they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit.  
No longer will they build houses and others live in them,  
or plant and others eat.”

--Isaiah 65.21-22

And the prophet Micah envisioned a place of peace:

“The Lord shall judge between many peoples,  
and shall arbitrate  
between strong nations far away;  
they shall beat their swords into plowshares,  
and their spears into pruning hooks;  
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,  
neither shall they learn war any more...”

--Micah 4:3

The book of Revelation has an image of the city of God, with pearly gates and streets of gold:

“The angel who talked to me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls.... And the twelve gates are twelve pearls, each of the gates is a single pearl, and the street of the city is pure gold, transparent as glass.”

--Rev 21:15,21

And in the gospel of John, Jesus speaks of a big house with space for lots of people:

“My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?”

--John 14:2

But the heavenly image I like the best comes from Isaiah 25, one of the assigned lectionary readings for today, for All Saints Sunday. It’s also an assigned reading on Easter Sunday.

It’s about a feast, a big meal, with great food and drink. And best of all, everyone is invited. Everyone!

Listen for God’s word:

“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.  
10 For the hand of the Lord will rest on this mountain.”

Today we light candles, remembering loved ones who have died. I lit one candle to remember my father, my mother, and my brother John.

Growing up there were five of us, but now it's just me and my brother Bill who lives in Massachusetts. When I think about the five of us, I envision us on various vacations, and I think about the home where we lived in Connecticut.

But most specifically, I think about the dining room where we had big family meals.

We did not have dinner together as a family on a regular basis, which was too bad, but we did enjoy our holiday meals together—the lace tablecloth, the fine china, the good food, the bad jokes.... It was all there.

And I like the fact that our table had extension options, so it always seemed to have room for cousins and other extended family, friends, significant others, and then eventually daughters-in-law, and grandchildren.

My family of origin wasn't perfect—no family is. We had our share of challenges at the table, sometimes because of too much alcohol, sometimes because of unkind words.

But we stuck together, and we kept coming back to the table, to share holiday meals together and continue the journey as a family, together.

Thanksgiving and Christmas are almost here, which means either in person or via zoom and telephones, families will be getting together and maybe even sharing meals around a table.

After all the tragedy and chaos of Covid and our political and social issues, we exhausted and we're, divided, so we're crankier than usual.

So I encourage you to be mindful and prayerful about your family gatherings.

As you gather with family, take a few deep breaths and ask God to give you patience, and kindness, and clarity, and love and whatever else you need, to help make your time together with family peaceful and joyful, happy and healthy.

Today we share communion—

remembering the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, who offers us the bread of life and the cup of salvation,

remembering how he loved those around him and how he shared meals with all kinds of people.

And as we share communion here today, we remember the saints who have gone before us, having shared meals at this table and at our dining room tables.

Our simple meal gives us a glimpse of that heavenly banquet that is to come:

A table where everyone is welcome, where there is good food and drink, where there is lots of love.