

I love food! There's nothing more exciting than sitting down to a thanksgiving meal or going to a five-star restaurant with delicious food on the menu. For me, the best part is the meat. I could skip dessert if it meant a second helping of turkey, steak, or chicken.

Back in college, when my roommate, Julian, invited me to get dinner at a Brazilian steakhouse with his dad and our other roommate, Marty, I of course said, "Yes, please." For those of you uninitiated, a Brazilian steakhouse is a restaurant where waiters come by your table with different kinds of roasted meats on a stick and shave off a piece for you and it's all you can eat. Needless to say, I waited all day for this delicious meal. I ate a light breakfast and skipped lunch so there would be room for this special occasion.

That was years ago, I don't remember what we talked about at dinner. I don't necessarily even remember what my roommate's dad looks like. I don't even remember what time of the year it was we got the meal. In fact, the meal kind of has a dreamlike, mystic quality to it, but I'm sure it happened! I remember the medium-rare steak as it was shaved with a sword off the skewer. I remember the laminated index card that was green on one side and red on the other to signal to the waiter whether you wanted him to come to your table to get you more food. I even remember the taste of the grilled pineapple with cinnamon on top shaved off a stick.

We love good meals, yet the Lord is telling us about another meal in this Old Testament text, a meal of fattened meats and fine wines. At the end of this vision, Isaiah remarks, **"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.'"** GOOD THINGS COME FOR THOSE WHO WAIT IN THE LORD.

But I. The now is filled with death and deprivation. The Lord gives us this mystic, dreamlike vision in Isaiah 25 of a heavenly meal. **"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."** Honestly, I think this translation is a bit weak.

The Lord promises fattened meats, the word in Hebrew is just the word the fats or the oils. It means the richest part of the animal. Picture your favorite cut of meat, it certainly isn't diet friendly. To put it another way, the love of fried food is Biblical!

Yet the world we see all around us is hardly a thanksgiving meal or an all you can eat gourmet buffet. Death is all around us, especially in this pandemic. The fall months have brought an increase of deaths due to COVID, and that's on top of the same casualties we face on a yearly basis. Those COVID tallies are in our headlines and we can't seem to escape from them.

Maybe we faced the death of a loved one in the past year and we're still getting over that. It doesn't take a pandemic for disaster to strike, illness to infect, or accidents to happen. We resonate with this passage because death is an all too familiar foe.

The now is filled with death and deprivation. The other end of this is deprivation. In a pandemic we've had to do without in many ways. Those Packers tickets aren't doing you any good. Your plans for a Labor Day trip to Madison to see the Badgers flew out the window.

We've had to do without or at least elected to do without a lot of our common comforts: big family gatherings, watching the game with a friend at the corner bar, or even going out to eat at all. In fact, the Brazilian steakhouse I went to with Julian and Marty is closed for the duration of the pandemic. I couldn't go there if I wanted to. Thanksgiving is going to look different this year. Who would have thought we would be yearning for something as simple as going to the movies, going to the library, or even kids going to school?

Things aren't normal anymore. It isn't 2019. 2020 has been the year of asterisks, exceptions, and irregularity. It isn't a year of feasting. It has been a year of deprivation and a year often marked with anxiety, sorrow, and maybe sometimes even anger.

What do we as Christians say to these things? The now is filled with death and deprivation, but **II. The Lord promises refreshment & resurrection then.** “**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. And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. 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.**”

Then, the Lord is preparing a feast, but not only is gourmet food on the menu, Death itself is the main course. As Christians, we can mourn as we see the grave swallow up those we love, but on that day, *the Lord* will swallow up Death.

How did the Lord eat death? By tasting of it Himself on another mountain. Not Zion, that end-time heavenly picture of the life to come, but on Calvary. Because His Son Jesus tasted death on the cross, we need not taste eternal death. On the cross, Jesus has borne all our sins, all our sorrows, and even all our illnesses. On the cross, Jesus drank the foaming cup of God's wrath for you. On the cross, Jesus has taken on our death that we might not die eternally.

On the third day, He rose again. Death thought that he had swallowed Jesus whole, but it was the other way around, Jesus reigned victorious. Our Easter joy is not just a springtime affair, but every day we wake up in the morning with this

Christian hope of everlasting life, and every Sunday is a mini-Easter as we look forward to that last day when Jesus will call us from the grave and into His eternal courts where the marriage feast of the Lamb in His Kingdom has no end.

And this has happened to you. Paul writes, **“Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.”** You have been baptized into this death of Christ, and you have risen again to new life. In baptism, your physical death becomes just as a slumber as you await that day when Christ calls you to life again.

Nonetheless, the death and deprivation is still all around us. These promises of God seem so distant and remote when thousands of people are dying every day, when businesses are closing their doors for good, and when normal seems as fantastic as a unicorn.

But **GOOD THINGS COME FOR THOSE WHO WAIT IN THE LORD.**
III. We wait for the Lord to deliver His salvation. “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.”” Above all else, Christianity is a religion of promises. Not primarily promises that we make to God but promises that God makes to us. Baptism is a promise that God makes to you and works within you.

In baptism, God writes His name on your forehead. In baptism, your name is written on the guest list at the marriage feast of the lamb in His kingdom. You are His and He will pick you up on the last day and take you to be with Him at this feast of fattened meats and fine wines.

The Christian response of Baptism is to trust in God and His promises. Wait for these gifts to be fully realized even when the world crumbles around us. Hold on to these promises of the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come as a life preserver in a storming sea.

When Julian told me that his dad was taking us out to dinner at a fancy restaurant, I never met his dad previously. The dad could have never showed up, he could have “left his wallet” in the car and asked us to pay for the meal, he could have driven us to a fast-food restaurant instead. But I didn’t make other plans, I didn’t say “Nah, I have homework” or “No thanks, I have a nice cup of ramen noodles waiting for me on the shelf.” I trusted Julian’s dad’s promise. Why? Because I trust Julian.

Julian and I were and are still friends. He would tell me stories about his dad, the adventures they went on growing up, how hard his dad works at his job, and what a nice guy he was. Of course, this wasn’t to trick me to getting dinner with him, it was just in the course of our everyday conversations. Julian naturally

cared for his dad and spoke highly of him as a habit. So it wasn't a leap of faith for me to say "Yes" to a dinner invitation with me, Marty, Julian, and his dad getting dinner.

So too, we wait for our Heavenly Father to deliver us salvation, and it isn't a leap of faith because we know His Son Jesus. We know Jesus' love of His Father; we know how much Jesus cares for us. We know Jesus died for our sins to fulfill His Father's plan. If we know Jesus and His love, do we have to struggle to believe that Jesus goes to prepare a place for us, or that the Father is inviting us to this heavenly banquet where death and discontent will be destroyed?

In baptism, God makes these promises to you, and don't make other plans. Wait for our Heavenly Father to deliver this salvation. This isn't a sprint; this is a marathon. Unless Christ comes before you die, this is a lifelong wait. These promises of the heavenly banquet and death defeated are here now to be sure, but they are not fully realized until that day that the Father and the Son take us to that heavenly banquet.

Until then, keep coming to church to hear these promises and receive these promises. Read God's Word which is chock-full of God's promises to you. Hang out with other Christian friends who will remind you of God's promises and will help you cling to Christ even when the world wants to pull you underwater. To be baptized means to be clinging to these promises and to identify as a child of God.

Christian author C.S. Lewis writes, "If we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires, not too strong, but too weak." I love food. I love family. I love fellowship. But all of these pale in comparison to the heavenly promises our Heavenly Father gives to His baptized. **GOOD THINGS COME FOR THOSE WHO WAIT IN THE LORD.** May we wait for the Lord with patience even as He daily richly showers us with blessings.