Isaiah 25:7-9 7On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that covers all peoples, the burial cloth stretched over all nations. 8He has swallowed up death forever! The Lord God will wipe away the tears from every face. He will take away the shame of his people throughout the earth. For the Lord has spoken. 9On that day it will be said, “Look, here is our God! We waited for him, and he saved us! This is the Lord! We waited for him. Let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation!”

“Pay the rent!” (villain) “But I can’t pay the rent,” says the pretty damsel in distress! “Then you will give me favors,” says the lecherous and evil landlord. “Ooooh!” swoons the damsel. “Get back, you vile villain,” says the hero. “I’ll pay the rent and save this girl from your evil clutches!”

Such is the way the early movie industry portrayed the battle of good versus evil. In those early days, evil was always overcome by the hero riding in and saving the damsel in distress. Heroes and the idea of heroes has been around ever since the beginning of the humankind and even today little has changed in the portrayal of the basic battle of good, evil, and heroes, with a few interesting exceptions.

The exceptions we see today. For instance, in the old days the hero was almost always a man and the one in distress was almost always a woman, a pretty woman. In today’s world those in distress are likely to be anyone and anything from men, women, Ewoks, Wookies, Muggles, and any other creatures that Hollywood might invent. Heroes are just as likely to be anything too, from men, women, supermen, superwomen, androids, turtles, magicians, and the one I find most interesting, the bad guy or girl hero. The interesting thing is to realize that for all our so-called sophistication and intelligence people have still never shaken the theme of good versus evil and the hero who saves.

In my opinion this whole idea started with the fall into sin. When Adam and Eve sinned and brought evil into the world one of the first things God does is to give the promise of a Savior from sin, if you would, a hero who will save us from the evil of the world. Think about that and perhaps you’ll agree that even today our ideas of good versus evil and heroes is a carryover of that basic promise of a Savior from sin. I can even tell you that as I look at all the heroes of today’s movies, in truth, most of them are elaborate Jesus stories.

It’s not that I don’t like heroes, after all, I really don’t know of anyone, myself included, who hasn’t somewhere along the line imagined themselves as the proverbial “knight in shining armor.” If anything, I will have to confess that I still like an exciting adventure where good wins and the villians get what they deserve and everyone lives happily ever after. It’s not that I don’t like heroes, it’s just that as a Pastor in today’s world, I get rather jealous.

That’s right, jealous! Not jealous because I am not a hero, but jealous for my Savior Jesus. People go out and spend thousands of dollars on the imagined heroes of today. I see kids with hero dolls, costumes, electronic games and the like, but I have yet to see a kid with a Jesus doll. (Honestly, I am not even sure there are Jesus dolls!) I am not jealous of the money that is spent, I am jealous for Jesus because of the time kids spend playing with these heroes or even just imagining that they are like these heroes. I am jealous for Jesus because often adults quickly promote these imagined heroes, these madeup heroes, and Jesus and what He is and stands for gets horribly short changed. A family will rush out to see the latest hero movie but Jesus and his church gets neglected. Oh, that we would spend as much time with our Savior in mind and in our hearts, for I tell you that no matter what imagined hero you think is great, Jesus is greater!

Our text reminds us of the greatness of Jesus. Let’s examine this text and hear this wonderful message of our Savior God. Our theme will be: **THIS IS OUR GOD, OUR SAVIOR!**

Our text for today is taken from the book of Isaiah. Isaiah was a prophet of God some 700 years before Jesus actually came. God allowed Isaiah to foresee what the Savior of the world would do and to understand the tremendous and wonderful benefit mankind would have in Jesus. “What benefits,” you might ask?

We could simply start by referencing the verse I didn’t highlight, verse 6. In a nutshell, verse 6 speaks to us of the eternal kingdom of God, that holy and perfect place God’s Savior would provide and invite us to. In verse 6 it is portrayed as a banquet. The greatest of banquets with the finest of food and drink for each and every person of the world. Verse 6 is really, a promise of the eternal life and wonder that God will and has given in Jesus. Not a place where we can be safe until the next disaster, but rather a place where the disaster and sin is never found again! All of this because of what is revealed in verses 7 and 8.

Verses 7 and 8 tell us: **7On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that covers all peoples, the burial cloth stretched over all nations. 8He has swallowed up death forever! The Lord God will wipe away the tears from every face. He will take away the shame of his people throughout the earth.** You do realize that this is the basic message of the day of resurrection? **“On this mountain”** refers to Mt. Zion where Jerusalem sat. It was on Mt. Zion that Jesus was crucified. Where he endured the punishment for all sins and took, head on, the curse of sin, namely, eternal and physical death.

I realize that death is not a pleasant subject for most, yet it is a subject that somewhere and sometime we will confront either because of someone we know or because death is upon us. Again, when we speak of death we are talking about two types of death, related but distinct: physical and spiritual.

Death came into this world when Adam and Eve committed that first sin. God had told them: **“You shall not eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, for on the day that you eat from it, you will certainly die.”** With those words, the Lord was not talking about physical death. He was speaking about spiritual death, about the loss of their perfection and holiness, the loss of “the image of God” they had been created with. God was speaking of the eternal separation that would occur between God and man that would cause people to naturally consider God an enemy, and to bring to themselves the “bondage to decay.” That this was God’s meaning is clear from the fact that Adam and Eve did eat, but they did not physically die right then. What they did was run and hide from God. What they did was become filled with fear toward God, pass the buck with him, and it is clear, no longer grasped or understood the love and care of God. It is a devastating moment.

So it was that spiritual death came upon our world. As a part of the curse of that sin, physical death also comes upon us. God pointed this out when he said to them: **“You are dust, and to dust you shall return.”** Thus, we have the two types of death to deal with. But it is Jesus who came to deal with and defeat both of these deaths.

Jesus defeated spiritual death, the threat of eternal hell, through the forgiveness of sins. He paid for our sins. He grants us this forgiveness by grace through faith. And with that gift of forgiveness, grants us the joy of being his children and heirs of eternal life. In other words, Jesus brings the promise of heaven and eternal life. In our Epistle reading for today that was pointed out. Just give thought to the meaning of verse 19: **“If our hope in Christ applies only to this life, we are the most pitiful people of all.”** In Jesus we have been granted eternal life! It is especially this death that is spoken of in Isaiah by the words: **“He will destroy the shroud that covers all people, the burial cloth stretched over all nations. He has swallowed up death forever!”**

Jesus has also defeated physical death. We are promised that because Jesus rose from the dead, therefore we also will rise from the dead. This will happen when Jesus returns again to put an end to this sinful world and create the new heaven and earth of eternal perfection. In other words, for us, physical death is nothing more than a sleep from which we will arise. We have the promise of Jesus: **“Because I live, you also will live!”** It is this physical death that is especially being addressed in the words: **“The Lord God will wipe away the tears from every face. He will take away the shame of his people throughout the earth.”**

The shame of God’s people is their sin. God has removed this shame through his son Jesus. When we realize this, what is there to cry over, worry over, or be afraid of? God has given us the gift of his eternal kingdom. This gift does not depend on us and what we do, it depends on God and his promises.

I could go on for a long time telling you about the comfort I find in this marvelous gift of God. God cares so much for us that he sent his Son to die for me and for you! When God is on our side, and he is, what is there to fear? What can hurt you? What can get you down? As Romans so adequately declares: **“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor rulers, neither things present nor things to come, nor powerful forces, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**

I am always amused at how our society makes such a big deal out of what it calls “self-esteem.” I agree that feeling good about oneself is important. Your attitude in life in many ways will be determined by this thing called “self-esteem.” But where that esteem comes from is important. If it comes from you thinking you are better, more worthy, more important and more everything because you have been taught to be filled with self and only with satisfying your “self,” you are going to have problems. I have yet to find the person who in and of themselves can be filled with happiness and contentedness. In other words, don’t let your sense of self be based on your personal goodness or your personal accomplishments. If you want to have true and positive self-worth, base that self-worth on the fact that Jesus has died for you and has given you the gift of eternal life and salvation. God the Father and Jesus have so loved you that they made every effort to save you and count you as theirs!!

Yes, you were so important to God that he took steps to save you from the horrors of sin. Let God’s love fill you up with love. Let God’s wisdom be your guide and your help in life. You want to be the best you can be? Well, be what God has called you to be, His Child, his heir, the lamb who hears and follows his voice. And it isn’t so much that you are this or that in this world, but rather that God loves you even though he knows you and God still cares and loves you enough to save you eternally! Let God’s accomplishments move you to a wonderful and unique sense of joy. I tell you that since God cares so much for you, you are important and worth a whole lot!

Finally our text says: **“Let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation!”** What other expressions can be used to adequately re-state what these words already say? If you grasp what God has done for you in Jesus, if you understand how the gift of eternal life has become yours, if you comprehend that the sting of death and the victory of the grave are gone, if you recognize these things, how could you not be filled with the utmost of joy and gladness?

Perhaps it would be good to hear how else the Scriptures puts this joy found in the Lord. Psalm 16:6 says, **“The property lines chosen for me fall in pleasant places. Yes, a delightful inheritance is mine.”** 1 Peter 1:8 says, **“Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not see him now, yet by believing in him, you are filled with a joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, because you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”** There are literally hundreds of passages found in Scripture that tell us about the true joy of life, about the wonder that is ours and is found secure and true in Jesus.

What a wonderful day this is. Jesus has won the victory. He has been shown to be God’s Son. Jesus has brought us salvation. He has been proven our Redeemer. And as we learn in this Old Testament prophecy, Jesus has defeated death and our hearts are filled with joy through Jesus, because He lives and so shall we. Jesus has risen. The victory is won! Amen!