We are starving. Regardless of what we have in our pantries or full our refrigerators are, we are starving. Young people are starving as they check their social media accounts to see how many people have liked their content, and they go away unfilled, unsatisfied, unsatiated because it wasn’t enough to make them feel truly loved or important, and if it did, they’ll have to go back for more soon enough. Old people who don’t mess with such nonsense are starving as well. They think that if they have a little more money, a little more security, a little more safety, a little more comfort so that they can truly feel secure, and it’s never quite enough, is it? We’re starving! And we convince ourselves that this next success, this next promotion, this next relationship, this next vacation, this next party, this next affirmation will finally fill us, but it doesn’t.

Isaiah’s people were starving as well, but they satiated their hunger in different ways. They were hungry for security, so they sacrificed to and worshiped Baal, the storm god, thinking, “if I worship him, then I can be sure that rain will fall and I’ll have enough food to feed my family, and then, I’ll be satisfied.” If not control over their future, it was pleasure and fertility as they worshiped the goddess Asherah by indulging their flesh with her temple prostitutes. If not that, they filled their deep, unfillable hunger with money, power, and status at the expense of the poor and marginalized.

We’re all starving. Something deeper than physical hunger, a craving that nothing can fill. How fitting then that God, through the lips of Isaiah offers nothing less than a feast. Not just satiation, but it tastes good as well. The finest wine- not that $19 dollar stuff at Walgreens, the wine at the bottom of the barrel that’s been aging for years, growing stronger, more flavorful and richer. The best meats, we’re not talking about beef jerky. This is prime rib, filet mignon, the finest, fattiest meats that fall off the bone. For you.

What’s God saying? What he has in store for you and all who belong to him is not simply an answer to your problems, not simply something to get you through your hardships, but nothing less than the satisfaction of the deepest, most desperate, most fundamental, most violent cravings of the depth of your heart. **Only God’s Feast Can Fill You.** In this feast your shame will be wiped away, your isolation will be destroyed, and death will be swallowed up forever.

1. Your shame will be wiped away.

Last week, a football player was interviewed by the reporter about his excellent game, and he said something that struck me: “I have to come out here and prove my worth.” This isn’t just about getting a job done, it’s about proving and earning a worthiness. Why would anyone need that? We talked about this last week in Bible class. When Adam and Eve sinned, what immediately happened? They realized they were naked and they covered themselves- not simply embarrassment, but deep, permanent shame, as they hid from God’s presence when they heard him walking in the garden- they were afraid! Why? Because they, along with every human being ever made, was created by God to be his friend, to walk with him, to obey him, and to be rejoiced in by their creator. And after they sinned, they had to hide, because they could no longer stand before God unashamed. They were now ugly, dirty, bad, unrighteous. There’s a reason why children hide and lie when they do something wrong. There’s a reason why we do everything in our power to make ourselves look better than we actually are. We make our accomplishments seem more than they really are and downplay our failures. We lie about our past to make us look better than we really are. We use things like money, accomplishment, likes, followers, supposed moral goodness to make ourselves better than we really are because deep down, all of us share the curse of Adam and Eve- we’re no longer good enough. We’re dirty. We’re shameful. We’re ugly. We lost the honor we had as God’s perfect creation in the garden and everything we do is a performance trying to hide our shameful nakedness before a holy God.

And Christ took it back. Christ, the perfect son of God, honored above all, declared by the Father “This is my Son with whom I am well pleased,” and he was willingly shamed. He was hung, naked on a tree, marked with shame, so that our naked shame could be covered. Do you know what those words mean? “Jesus your blood and righteousness my beauty are, my glorious dress?” Christ was the epitome of beauty and perfection and became ugly and shameful, so we, ugly and shameful, could stand before a holy God beautiful and perfect with nothing to hide. Look at what Isaiah says! The veil is destroyed, we don’t need to hide, and the reproach of God’s people is wiped away with Jesus’ blood. This feast can satisfy you because you will have what your heart has been searching for- the ability to stand before someone beautiful, holy, and perfect, and be accepted.

1. Your Isolation will be destroyed.

But that’s not all. Your isolation will be destroyed. Notice what Isaiah says about the location of Heaven- the Mountain of the Lord. Understand, to Isaiah’s audience, that meant something. The Mountain of the Lord was where the presence of God was, and a place where you cannot go except to return alive. Think Mt Sinai, the children of Israel in the desert on the way to the promised land, and all who touched Mt. Sinai would die, only Moses could approach God in his glory. They would have also thought of Mt. Zion in Jerusalem where the Temple was- that’s where the glory of the Lord dwelled, in the inner part of the Temple, and no one could go into that place or they would die. Do you see what’s going on? That which is unholy cannot be in the presence of the holy without being destroyed. Yet, on this Mountain of the Lord, God will destroy those who are unholy, but feast with them, abide with them, be with them. The veil that has separated God and his creation since Adam’s fall will be destroyed. How?

When Christ came to earth, what happened? Why is Christmas such a big deal? Because God broke the barrier that humans have tried to break but could never break. Humans, though they’ve tried, could never be in the presence of their creator, so their creator came to them in human form. And when Christ went to the cross, what happened? He was isolated from his Father. The Son who in his essence is one with the Father and the Spirit was torn away as he was punished in our place and cried “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me,” with no answer. And because he was isolated from the father and died, we can be united with the Father and live. Don’t you understand what the best part of heaven will be? You will see the face of the one whom you’ve been searching for your entire life. Consider this: what makes beautiful music beautiful, astonishing natural landscapes astonishing, good art good? It’s that it reflects the astonishing, beautiful goodness of the one who created it, the Lord himself. You will finally see the face of the one who made you, not someone beautiful, but he who is beauty, goodness, and glory himself, and he will use his own hand to wipe your tears away.

1. Death will be swallowed up.

Death is not natural. I don’t care who tells you it is. It’s not natural. Human beings weren’t meant to die, and deep down, we all know it. You’d think that all of us modern, advanced people we’d figure out how to deal with the concept of death, but if anything, we’ve gotten worse at dealing with it. We can’t handle the fact that death exists and it’s coming for us all. You want proof? No one holds funerals anymore, we call them “celebrations of life.” We don’t say, “he died” or “she is dead.” We say, “they’ve passed on, they’ve passed away, they’re on to their next adventure, they’re in a better place, they’re looking down on us.” Why do we do that? We don’t do it for them, we do it for ourselves! Because we can’t handle the fact that they are dead, that body in the casket is dead, and that casket is our future. It doesn’t matter how much money we make, how rich our lives are, how much we accomplish, it won’t matter. Death is going to swallow us, and deep down, we all know it and we can’t face the truth.

Why? Because humans weren’t meant to die. Humans weren’t created to die, but to live with God forever. That’s what we crave, that’s what we most deeply want and desire. And Christ gives this to us for free. Do you see the beautiful, surprising irony of the Gospel? In surrendering to death, Christ swallowed up death in victory. By being punished with the ultimate price of sin, he destroyed it forever and proved to all that death is simply not the end. When Christ rose from the grave, he proved to all of us that he is who he says he is, and that his sacrifice worked, and that because he lives, you and I will also live forever. God has swallowed the veil of death lurking for all of us, and now death has no power over those who belong to him. And when we die, it’s not the end, but the beginning of our new life forever with Christ. We can proclaim “Blessed are they which are called to the marriage feast of the lamb.” We can weep and be sad at funerals, not for them, but for us, but we can weep with joy and hope because they are not enjoying the feast. Because of Jesus, your deep, ingrained, desire for eternal life is fulfilled. The feast is yours.

I’ve noticed that many of you really love stories, books and movies. Some of you love Harry Potter, Star Wars, Disney films, Chronicles of Narnia, Lord of the Rings. I do too. Have you ever considered why you love these stories so deeply? Because they speak to the deepest desires of your heart. We love stories like Snow White, Cinderella, even Shrek, why? Because they show the transformative power of true love. We love Harry Potter, Lord of the Rings, the Chronicles of Narnia, why? Because in them humanity has fellowship with the divine and the supernatural, and death is escaped again and again, and through one’s sacrificial death, victory is achieved. We love movies like Star Wars, SuperHero movies, because we crave a world where good finally and completely triumphs over evil. And at the end of all these movies, all our hearts whisper, could this be true? Could we escape death? Could good finally triumph over evil? Could we be changed forever? Could it be true? In Christ, all of it is true, absolutely, fundamentally, unequivocally true.

Therefore, friends, join Paul and be unashamed of the Gospel of Christ. What we offer is not an alternative life plan, not another set of rules, not something that feels good now, but doesn’t really fill you. What we offer to those who know us is nothing less than a feast, a lavish banquet, and nothing less than what their hearts most deeply desire. We can truly say, “I know what you want, and the stories, the whispers, the rumors are all true. Come to the feast.” Amen