

Pentecost 19 10/15/17  
Psalm 23:5a 23A

## YOU PREPARE A TABLE BEFORE ME IN THE PRESENCE OF MY ENEMIES

The Lord Jesus Christ prepares a table for you. He takes ordinary, earthly elements of bread and wine. Like Namman who wondered what was so great about the waters of the Jordan last week in our Sunday school lesson, we look at it and wonder: What's so great about ordinary, earthly bread and wine?

Nothing. It's just bread and wine, pretty bland, pretty plain, pretty simple. But, Jesus adds His Word to it, "Take, eat; this is My body; Take, drink; this is My blood, given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins." And with the words of Jesus added to the bread and wine, it becomes for you just what Isaiah is talking about, "a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined." It is a feast of the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation; a feast that enables you to love God and love your neighbor. There is no better table. There is no better feast.

I. Jesus prepares that table for you in presence of your enemies. Consider that location for a moment. Couldn't there be a better location than in the presence of your enemies? Wouldn't it be better with family, friends, those you love and those who love you? That tells us something. Something very important because Jesus is the Lord and He knows exactly what He's doing.

Psalm 23 is our Psalm this Sunday. The Good Shepherd Psalm. Jesus is your Good Shepherd and you are the sheep of His pasture. Back in the Bible days, the shepherd would take his sheep to graze up on the mountain side during the summer. And its interesting that the shepherds called that grazing land the "table land". But, before they could graze, the shepherd would have to prepare the table for the sheep by clearing away the brush and rocks and debris. The shepherd literally had to prepare the table for his sheep.

And, the shepherd had to protect them because they were in the presence of the sheep's enemies, enemies like wolves and cougars and all who were enemies of the sheep who wanted to kill and destroy them. Ya, the shepherd prepared a table for his

sheep – literally – in the presence of their enemies. Jesus did the same for you, Little Lamb, because you are in the presence of your enemies.

You have the devil, who prowls around like a roaring lion seeking to devour you. He will bait you; He will badger you; He will tempt you to lure you away; all to turn you away from God and His Word.

Then, there is the world. The world which tells you you are # 1 and you deserve to have it all, and have it your way. And, the best way to get your way is through hatred and anger, and greed and coveting, and envy and malice, so that if someone is standing in your way to be # 1, take'em out. If that unborn child is an inconvenience for your life and lifestyle, abort the child. If your co-worker is impressing the boss, looking like they may get that promotion ahead of you, gossip, lie, stab'em in the back.

Then, there is your own sinful flesh. You have this happen, haven't you? Come to church, go to Communion, and then sit in the quiet of your church pew to pray that you are really going to live a Christian life, you are not going to give in to your pet sin, anymore. This time, you are really going to do it, you are really going to love God and love your neighbor. Then you go home, and the trees in your neighbor's yard have shed all their leaves into your yard, so you get to spend all your time, cleaning'um up. And, you are angry, and bitter, and resentful, and filled with self-pity. You go to the game or the mall, and you see a woman you wish was your wife, and she would make you oh-so-happy.

You know it all-too-well. The evil you don't want to do, you find yourself doing all-too-often. And, the good, you find yourself not doing.

These are your enemies and they come at you; they attack you, all to keep you from living a holy, God-pleasing life today and drag you into the fires of hell for all eternity.

It is in their very presence that the Lord prepares a table for you, "This is My body, this is My blood, given and shed for you. Given and shed for you on Calvary's cross. The Lord Jesus Christ went to that cross carrying in His own body all the sins that you were lured into and all the sins you ever will be lured into by the devil, the world, and your own sinful flesh.

Upon that cross, He gave His body and blood into death. It was given and shed for you as the atoning sacrifice for all your sins. And, as His body and blood were given and shed upon that cross something wonderful happened – He crushed the devil’s head. He overcame the world. His blood, shed for you, washes your flesh clean, white as snow. That’s the body and blood given and shed for you.

After He gave His body and blood into death for you, He rose again the 3<sup>rd</sup> day, so that He can take that victory, that forgiveness, life, and salvation He won for you, and give all it to you.

How does He give it to you? He gives it to you at the Table He prepares for you in the presence of your enemies. The perfect table in the perfect location because this is how life works. As long as you are in this world, you are in the presence of your enemies. Make no mistake about it: By His death and by His resurrection, Jesus has indeed crushed the devil’s head, overcome the world, and His blood washes away all your sin so you are as white as snow. And on the last day, He will come in all His glory to take you out of this great tribulation to live with Him in the new heaven and the new earth. On that great day, the devil, the world, and your sinful nature will be no more.

Your enemies know this. So, they spend as much time and energy as they can coming at you, luring you into false believe, despair, and other great shame and vice. So, the Lord Jesus sets His table before you, “Take, eat, this is My Body; Take, drink, this is My blood, given and shed for you, for the forgiveness of sins.” That’s the same body and blood that will come again on the Last Day to take you out of this vale of tears to be with Him. He will call forth from the grave all those who have died, and you body and blood will be raised, re-united with your eternal soul, to live with Jesus forever and ever, without end.

That’s the perfect food. So you come to the feast at this table and the only thing your enemies can do about it is watch and see their doom.