

## TCC Sunday 25th May 2014 – The feast & the farmyard – Isaiah 25

### Title: “The feast & the farmyard”

#### Purpose:

- To appreciate the utter faithfulness of our God
- To rejoice in the ultimate feast to which we are invited
- To avoid the squalor of the disgusting farmyard which is this world’s alternative

## INTRODUCTION

Just last week **The Daily Telegraph – Travel Magazine** released the results of a **new survey**.

It starts: “**Apparently - a date in London will set you back £72, on average, a new survey has revealed.**”

**London** topped the latest “**Cheap Date Index**”, (compiled by Deutsche Bank), which compares the price of a “**simple date**”, including the cost of burgers from McDonald’s, soft drinks, a pair of cinema tickets, a round of beers and taxi fares, across 32 cities around the world.

**A date in London** was found to cost **£17 more** than it would in **New York**, where it amounted to **£55**.

At the other end of the scale, a date in **Mumbai** was found to cost **£14**, less than a fifth of what it does in London, and a quarter of what it would cost in New York.

**European cities**, including **Paris, Frankfurt** and **Moscow**, were also among the more expensive places **while Asian cities** tended to cheaper, **with the exception of Tokyo**, which was the seventh most expensive with the cost of the date averaging £60.

Others in the top five most expensive cities for a date included the New Zealand capital Wellington and Edinburgh – the only other British city on the list.

So I guess with the Bank Holiday looming – if anyone’s lucky enough to be out on a date night – then perhaps you better avoid going up to the big city.

#### From Disaster movie to Date night

- (LAST WEEK) - Now if last week, (when we looked at [Isaiah 24](#)), was a case of Isaiah taking us out to the movies where we were treated to watching a real classic **DISASTER MOVIE** – (and we imagined it along the lines of a typical train disaster movie with everything coming to a terrible end) – and we were observing that not everybody on the train was headed for disaster – that some would in fact make it off in safety.
- (THIS WEEK) – So if that was last week, this week is a case of Isaiah taking us out on a **DATE NIGHT**, not to the movies as such, but to attend a **GREAT FEAST**.

And unlike our supposedly “Cheap Date” survey, this date does, in fact, come without money and without cost.

Well today I have just 3 headings that will take us through the 3 sections of this chapter and they are very simple ones – but often I think simple things usually prove to be the best ones:

- #1 – Verses 1-5, what I’m going to call: UTTERLY FAITHFUL
- #2 – Verses 6-8, what I’m calling: ULTIMATE FEAST and then finally
- #3 – Verses 9-12: UNSPEAKABLE FILTH

So #1 then:

## 1] UTTERLY FAITHFUL

### Some initial observations

Just so that we can build up a little bit of momentum with our chapter - let me make a few observations which will help us to get a foothold in these verses that are set before us.

Unlike last week, this passage is altogether quite compact – it is just 12 verses in total, but nevertheless, it is always good to try to get a feel for the passage before you dive in:

- **AND THE FIRST THING TO SAY IS THAT** - this whole chapter is a **very joyous chapter** containing a lot of wonderful things and **serves to very nicely balance off the kind of things that we were getting in the previous chapter** with the predominant focus being on **DISASTER**.

So, I guess if you wanted a dominant focus here in **Chapter 25** – we would say it was centring around **DELIGHT** (not DISASTER).

- **THE SECOND THING TO NOTICE IS THAT** – the chapter **begins very spontaneously**.

**Verse 1** reads **“O LORD, you are my God; I will exalt you and praise your name...”**

And that is always a **wonderful**, when someone **breaks forth in spontaneous praise** – it’s heartfelt and not merely some calculated act of giving praise to God.

- **THE THIRD THING WORTH POINTING OUT IS THAT** – our chapter has **3 clear sections**.

It starts out with 1) **a song of praise** – then in the middle there is the idea of 2) **a great and glorious feast** – and then it closes off with 3) **another song of praise**.

So I suppose you could say it’s a case of: **FESTIVITY – FEAST** and then more **FESTIVITY**.

- **A FOURTH THING THAT WE SEE IS THAT** – there at the end of **Verse 8** (the FEAST section) we have an **important phrase**, where we read **“The LORD has spoken”**.

This is a bit of a giveaway phrase indicating that what has just been said is very definite and God is thoroughly determined and decided about the matter and therefore it is as good as done.

- **A FIFTH THING IS THAT – both of the songs**, (the one at the beginning and the one that starts at Verse 9) are bold and **clear confessions of faith**.

**The first one** is personal and individual – it is put in the first person singular and starts (Verse 1) “I will exalt you and praise your name...”.

**The second one** is what you might say “**collective**” – this where the theme of the one is taken up by the many: “Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us.”

#### Application

And isn't that so very typical – this small aspect carries an important lesson – because we need to learn that it only takes one person to start genuinely praising God or stepping out in faith and then you will soon find that others will line up behind.

Q. So what are you waiting for? This was epitomised in what happened recently with Ayanda – he heard God clearly speaking to him in a number of ways so that he could no longer refuse to be obedient with regard to getting baptized. And what happens – Andy hears and knows that he too should follow suit.

You remember that classic experiment you did at school in your very early Chemistry lessons – where you take blue copper sulphate crystals and you drop them in and eventually you have a nice blue solution. But there comes a point of saturation and then all that is needed is some kind of “seed crystal” to be dropped into bring about a process of precipitation. One crystal around which others will then form.

- **A LAST THING WORTH OBSERVING** – is that once again we are given to see that there are 2 different ways, 2 alternatives that are portrayed.

**On the one hand we have the CITY** (it comes up there in Verse 2) and it is ultimately being reduced to a heap of rubble that will never be rebuilt. It's destiny is to be completely wasted.

This is the symbol for man and his headlong pursuit of crafting his own destiny completely independently of any reference to God his maker. This is the “way of Babylon” which in Revelation becomes Babylon the Great which is Fallen.

**Over against the CITY is the MOUNTAIN**. And this is the matching SYMBOL of God and of His KINGDOM.

Remember how the previous chapter ends Isaiah 24 verse 23 “The moon will be abashed, the sun ashamed; for the LORD Almighty will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before its elders, gloriously.”

As time goes on, and as the final days draw near – the distinction between that which belongs to the CITY and that which belongs to God and His MOUNTAIN will become ever clearer – there will be a precipitation, a separation, people’s true alignment will become clear.

Do not be fooled into thinking that there really is the ability to sit upon the fence with regard to the world.

Your position will become clear – either you are a CITY dweller OR you are from Zion, you belong to God’s MOUNTAIN.

#### Let’s crack in – utterly faithful (Verses 1-5)

Well there’s more we could say but let’s crack in.

This first section,(which I have titled “**UTTERLY FAITHFUL**”), is from Verse 1 thru to 5 and Verse 1 is important because it takes the form of a SUMMARY STATEMENT:

Verse 1 reads “O LORD, you are my God; I will exalt you and praise your name, for in **PERFECT FAITHFULNESS** you have done **marvellous things, things planned long ago.**”

The rest of the verses from 2 to 5 simply show the outworking of what Verse 1 is outlining.

So let me drill down a bit into Verse 1 and there are 3 phrases that all quite “loaded” in their own right:

- FIRST that phrase “MARVELLOUS THINGS” – (comes from the Hebrew root word ‘**Paw-law**’ and one lexicon described it’s meaning as:

‘to be marvellous, be extraordinary, be beyond one’s power to do, do wonderful acts.’

It goes on: ‘The verb is found for the first time in Gen. 18:14: “Is any thing too hard for the Lord?”

**Paw-law** is used primarily with God as its subject, expressing actions that are beyond the bounds of human powers or expectations.

This idea is well expressed by the psalmist: “This is the Lord’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes” (Ps. 118:23).

Deliverance from Egypt was the result of God’s wondrous acts:

“And I will stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in [it] ...” (Exod. 3:20).

Praise is constantly due God for all His wonderful deeds:

“I will praise you, O LORD, with all my heart; I will tell of all your wonders” (Ps. 9:1).

Q. Do you find that God is not really very marvellous in your eyes?

Q. Do you feel rather blasé about God, if truth be known – that you kind of have to work up enthusiasm for God?

Well just maybe that is simply because you have never got in the habit of “TELLING OUT” the praises of God when they are revealed to you.

Whenever we speak forth the praises of God, then we find that the WONDERS, the MARVELS of

God become much more cemented in our own hearts.

- THE SECOND THING is that phrase: “THINGS PLANNED LONG AGO”:

Quite a lot of the other translations speak about “COUNSELS OF OLD”.

It is not, I think, purely accidental that to accomplish these two phrases we need a WONDERFUL COUNSELLOR! That of course was part of the description for the MESSIAH, this child to be born in Isaiah chapter 9 (Immanuel – God with us).

Q. So what are these “counsels of old” these “things planned long ago” well they reference all the most long-range promises of God which are, if you like, **THE KEY PLANKS OF THE GOSPEL**.

These are the things that God has voiced from the very opening chapters of the Bible – take for example that verse which people call the “proto-evangelium – the proto-evangel – the FIRST GOSPEL”

**Genesis 3 verse 15** “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”

From earliest of days God has been telling us, ever more clearly, that he intends and has always intended that he would save his people from their sins and remove the curse of sin though that first fall of Adam and Eve our historical parents.

- Now THE LAST THING is that phrase: “PERFECT FAITHFULNESS” which the NIV puts at the front – but, for what it’s worth in the Hebrew the phrase is at the end and many translations keep it there.

Take, for example, the ESV which reads “O LORD, you are my God; I will exalt you; I will praise your name, for you have done wonderful things, plans formed of old, faithful and sure.”

This word for SURE there is closely related to the word AMEN and hence my title for this section – we are to know about our God that his words are YES and AMEN.

Recall how Jesus, when he is about to deliver his judgment to Loadicea in **Revelation 3** describes himself: “These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God’s creation.”

In **Revelation 19 and Verse 11** we read of Jesus “I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True...”

Q. I wonder do you possess that knowledge that your God is UTTERLY FAITHFUL – that He is FAITHFUL OVER THE LONGHAUL?

It is quite a useful protection against becoming dejected and controlled by unbelief whenever something doesn’t seem to work out the way you expected – BECAUSE you are able to say that God’s plans from of

old will hold true – things will come through in the end.

And this is what Verses 2-5 flesh out in more detail (and we'll not stop on them) but just to say that the wicked and the strong, those who belong to the WORLD CITY will become the subject of destruction – and those who are weak and who look to God's MOUNTAIN – will know God as a REFUGE, as a SHELTER and as a SHADOW of protection.

So #1 UTTERLY FAITHFUL (no wonder that Isaiah is has become so animated with praise!)

Now #2:

## 2] ULTIMATE FEAST

Now if you have got a good memory and are pretty sharpish in spotting similarities – you just might notice that this chapter (**Chapter 25**) has a lot in common with an earlier chapter we did a few week ago – and that is **Chapter 12**.

**Chapter 12** was a lovely sweet chapter, just 6 verses and it was 2 songs of praise (just like this chapter) and in the middle was a glorious piece (a bit like the meat of a sandwich, I suppose).

**Isaiah 12 Verse 3** "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation".

And the praise and worship at top and bottom funnel you into the MEAT IN THE MIDDLE.

And that is what we have here – THE GLORIOUS – "MEAT IN THE MIDDLE".

Now what we see in our MEATY section (from Verse 6 to Verse 8) is in 2 obvious parts – let me read the verses **\*\*\*READ Verse 6-8 \*\*\***

Verse 6 starts "On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare..."

and then at Verse 7 we get something matching "On this mountain he will destroy..."

One thing +ve and one thing –ve

So we have one thing +ve that God is going to do and then one thing expressed in the –ve form.

So let's look at them and the first is (as we have in our title) an ULTIMATE FEAST.

And this future feast is a topic that comes up a lot in Jesus teaching, in various of his parables and it comes to the fore in books like Revelation where we have that wonderful invitation to come to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

And this is a sumptuous feast where nothing has been left out, there is the best of everything, and what is tremendous is that no one is necessarily excluded – see how it says that it is "a feast of rich food for **ALL PEOPLES**."

**Isaiah 55** takes up this theme of the accessibility and the desirability of this ULTIMATE FEAST.

**\*\*\*READ Isaiah 55v1-7\*\*\***

Now usually, as we say "All good things must come to an end" and here on earth, in our fallen world, that

is unfortunately only too true. Life in this world is limited and every party does come to an end – we can be sure that sooner or later the “fat lady will sing” and rejoice will be stilled and often will turn to a day of weeping.

### Few things in life certain

There are few things in life that are certain, but one of them is the reality of death. We all grow old and one day leave this earth in a box.

Genesis makes this point very clearly as early on as Chapter 5 where we read 8 times over “and then he died.” it is the sombre drum beat of that chapter where we read of the family tree of the godly line of Seth.

But here, framed negatively, we read that God is going to DESTROY the SHROUD of death. Death – the mighty swallower of life – that ultimate enemy of fallen man – will itself be swallowed.

And in this act God will forever wipe away the tears of man – he will forever remove his DISGRACE (as Verse 8 puts it).

Death is the ultimate violation of LIFE, the ultimate humiliation and shame that can be done to MAN and God has declared that it will be ROLLED BACK – just as the stone was rolled away from the empty tomb, so too will the stone of death, that was surely coming to CRUSH us be itself CRUSHED to powder.

Q. How can we be sure? Well – we have a God of UTTER FAITHFULNESS and also Verse 8 ends: (FOR) THE LORD HAS SPOKEN. God wants us to know that He is absolutely clear on this matter.

This feast is one you are not going to want to miss because it is going to last for ever and ever and ever and ever...

One last point and we’re done:

#1 UTTERLY FAITHFUL; #2 ULTIMATE FEAST now #3:

### **3] UNSPEAKABLE FILTH**

Now you might think that this THIRD HEADING is rather out of keeping with the earlier two – especially as we have said that we have 2 songs of praise, one at the start and now in this final section from Verse 9-12 another one.

Well, all will become clear as we go through – let me read the final song of praise. **\*\*\*READ v9-12 \*\*\***

Again it starts with a bold confession of faith:

“Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us.  
This is the LORD, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.”

We get a brief insight into what people will be saying at the ULTIMATE FEAST – we trusted him and he came good.

Notice the emphasis on TRUST – this is of course the other side of FAITHFULNESS.

**The response that we make to the reality that God is UTTERLY FAITHFUL  
is that we are TOTALLY TRUSTING.**

And this trust will be our boast ON THAT DAY of the great feast – it will be our expression of complete and total satisfaction in what God has laid on.

We will rejoice and we will be glad.

The UNSPEAKABLE FILTH

Q. So what about the filth part?

Well this song is a victory song and just in case we get too wrapped up in the future and start to think that these things are not very connected to the present, we are brought back to reality with a reference to Moab.

Moab was one of the local enemies of the Israelites on the Eastern side of the Jordan River and they are one of the 11 nations that receive judgment at God’s hand in chapters 13-23, they are there in chapters 15 and 16 and one of the things that is highlighted against them is their great PRIDE.

Isaiah 16 verse 6 reads “We have heard of Moab’s **pride**— her **overweening pride** and **conceit**, her **pride** and her **insolence**— **but her boasts are empty.**”

And in these last 3 verses of our praise-filled chapter we see God working out His victory.

His HAND and His FOOT

Notice in Verse 10, how we read of God’s hand and God’s foot.

The verse actually flows on from Verse 9, the NIV omits the conjunction “FOR” and reads:

“For the hand of the LORD will rest on this mountain; but Moab will be trampled under him as straw is trampled down in manure.”

God’s HAND is a lovely thing as it rests protectively on His MOUNTAIN.

On the other hand! (Sorry about the pun) His FOOT is another matter because it will trample down His enemies, the city of man into the dung and the last but one verse (Verse 11) makes it even more graphic.

Here we have effectively a farmyard scene where all the cows have been doing their stuff and the whole place is swimming in COW FILTH and they are literally going to “SPREAD OUT THEIR HADNS IN IT!!”

It is going to be as UNSPEAKABLY FILTH as someone diving head first into a CESS PIT.

**\*\*\* NOT REALLY A VERY NICE IMAGE TO TAKE AWAY WITH YOU TO SUNDAY LUNCH!!! \*\*\***

And this is the IMAGE that God selects as one DIAMETRICALLY OPPOSED to that of the ULTIMATE FEAST.

**\*\*\* YES – THIS IS WHAT WE HAVE BEEN SAVED FROM \*\*\***



We experience and we sing about the TENDER HAND OF GOD  
over against the terrible TRAMPLING FOOT OF GOD.

## **CONCLUSION**