

Pastor Geoffrey R. Boyle
Memorial for Arlys “Perry” Sakata
26 July 2011
Grace Lutheran Church, Wichita
Isaiah 25:6-8

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit

Supposedly, Perry didn’t want a funeral—
she wanted a party.

“I’ll be celebrating in heaven,” she’d say,
“why don’t you do the same here on earth.”

That’s the sort of thing only faith can say.

Without faith, you’re left without hope.
And without hope, you’re left without joy.
And without joy, you’re left without a party—
a big party,
**“a feast of rich food,
a feast of well-aged wine,
of rich food full of marrow,
of aged wine well refined”** (Isa 25:6).

Without faith,
there’s no party—
neither in heaven above, or earth below.

But it’s true, Perry has a seat at this great banquet,
this true wedding party,
not by all the good she’s done,
but only by the grace and love and favor of her dear Lord, Jesus.

Now, there are two things to notice about this heavenly party,
at least in the way Isaiah describes it in the Old Testament reading chosen for today:

1. The joy is marked by richness, wealth, extravagance—
the best food with the best of wines!
2. This joy comes from death being swallowed up—
it comes from the Lord wiping away our tears,
removing our fear,
taking away our reproach.

Perry’s reproach is taken away,
her fear is gone,
her tears and anguish and pain and sorrow are all wiped away.

Now, she has great joy!
Now she sings and dances and eats and drinks,
all in joy, all at the wedding feast, the marriage feast of the Lamb! (Rev 19:7)

That’s all great for Perry, but what about us?

How can we celebrate?
Where is our joy?

While we may not have tears for Perry—
she wouldn't want them anyhow, and you all know she's much better off now—
we still have them.

We have tears that mark our own sadness,
our own struggles in this life,
our own brokenness and loneliness.

We fear we won't get through the day—let alone the week!
We struggle to make ends meet, to feed our family, to pay for school—
we fear it'll all be taken from us.

And on top of these tears and this fear, we bear a great reproach,
that is, a blame, a guilt, a weight upon our shoulders that we know we deserve, but don't
want anyone to see!

Where is our joy?
How can we celebrate?

Well, our celebration comes from trusting that what Isaiah spoke has been fulfilled by our Lord,
Jesus Christ.

**“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 will take away from all the earth,
for the Lord has spoken” (Isa 25:7-8).**

Isaiah saw the vision of what the Lord has done in Christ.
In Christ, death is swallowed up in victory.

The death of Jesus on that cross at Golgatha was the defeat of sin,
the payment, the fulfillment, the release of all outstanding debts.

On that cross, your reproach was removed—
the weight was taken from your shoulders.

And when this crucified Jesus three days later rose again from the tomb,
the victory was complete!

Death was swallowed up in victory—
death couldn't hold this Jesus down, as hard as it tried!
This is the vision that Isaiah saw,
many years before Jesus was born of Mary,
suffered, died, and rose again that Easter morn.

Nevertheless, what he saw was the reality of our forgiveness.

And the best way to proclaim the joy of forgiveness is a feast—
a feast of rich foods and well-aged wines!

This is the feast Perry now gathers around—
she's at the *table* of the Lord.

And if you're looking to celebrate with Perry,
the best way to do that isn't just with balloons or streamers or noisemakers or cake—
though those are all fine—
the best way is to pull up a seat at the table.

The Lord has set in place a constant meal,
a wedding feast that even we who are still here on earth are invited to attend.

The Church calls this meal “The Lord’s Supper,” or “Holy Communion,” or “the Eucharist.”

This meal is the very same meal around which Perry now gathers with great and high delight!
She eats this same bread and same wine not for her forgiveness anymore, as we do,
but for pure joy!

She's now got a seat at the table where says to St. Paul,
“Please pass the butter,”
and he says to her,
“Sure thing, Perry.”

She listens to Peter's story, then Andrew and James.

She asks Jesus Himself, the host of the meal, why she's here—
and He says to her,
“Perry, **blessed are you who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb**”
(Rev 19:9).

And Perry says, “Thank you.”

That's the meal Perry now attends with great joy,
without any tears or sorrow, fears or reproach.

And that's the meal our Lord invites you to attend as well—
each and every Lord's day as often as you can.

For at this meal, this party, this celebration—
heaven comes to earth and you get a foretaste of the feast to come!

That's how we celebrate: Faith, Hope, Joy, Feast! All coming together, with Perry, at the Supper!
In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit