ONLY THE BEST FROM GOD

Jan. 20, 2019 Jn. 2:1-11

Dear Friends in Christ: The best is yet to come! There is a story of a woman who went in to talk with her pastor about her funeral. She had a special request. She wanted to have a fork in her hand at the visitation. The reason—at some church potlucks they were told to hang on to their forks for desert—the best was yet to come. Alluding of course to the best gift God promised to those who love Him—eternal life.

 As you look back over your life, can you name one thing as the best you have ever experienced? The high point of you limited time on earth. I would have to say, for myself, my family; a wonderful wife and 3 kids who all love the Lord. Second, would be our 15 day trip to Egypt, Israel and Germany and the Passion Play at Oberammergau.

 How about you? Anything pop into your mind yet? Well, no matter what we say on this issue, THE BEST IS YET TO COME!

 As we read the Old Testament reading for today from Isaiah 62, we find that the people of Israel, in spite of their past unfaithfulness, will be a special people to God. God wants only the best for all people. This was the angel’s message to the shepherds so long ago: “Behold, I bring you good news of great joy for all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”

 God cared enough to send the very best; in fact, the only One who could do what had to be done to save the people of earth from a horrible fate in the fires of hell—forever.

 Jesus had to face and deal with the terrible trio: sin, death and the devil. Sin is disobedience toward God. Of this we are all guilty. When a baby is born, sin is already in the baby’s innermost being. The Bible says that we sin in thought, word and deed. This evil must be rooted out of each of us. This is what happens at a baptism into the Christian faith. Peter put it this way speaking to the crowd of Jews at Pentecost: “Repent and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

 In baptism, the baby receives thru water and the Word total forgiveness of all sin, won for all at Calvary. Scripture says that the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sins. If you have been baptized, you have received this cleansing. Your sins are forgiven. God truly knows how to give good gifts; gifts that are needed.

 Beating death might sound a little trickier. Mankind still dies. So, did Jesus really beat death? The historical record says so. The Bible speaks of His rising on the third day. His disciples saw the risen Lord and testified to it. Over 500 saw Him at the same time.

 In his report to Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate recounted that Jesus had turned water into wine at Cana, had cured many diseases, walked on water, calmed storms and raised others from death. He also said: “I am almost ready to say, as did Manulas at the cross, ‘Truly this was the Son of God.’

 Jesus Himself said to the Jews in the temple as recorded in John 10: “I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of My own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and to take it up again.”

 After feeding the 5,000, Jesus said to the crowd by the Sea of Galilee: “For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in Him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.” Do you believe it? We will be raised from our rest in the grave to everlasting life. Only the best from our fantastic and powerful God!

 And the devil? He has lost his trump card—death. He doesn’t have much of a future. Rev. 20:10: “And the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.”

 For now, the devil is like a mad dog on a chain. In his first letter, Peter describes the devil as a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. His devious tactics lead people who do not love Jesus to do and say terrible things. This causes pain and suffering. Like the young man who killed Jayme Closse’s parents and kidnapped her. Why did it happen? Why are there terrorists who have no regard for human life? Why do people get cancer?

 It all goes back to the fall of the first 2 people in the Garden of Eden doesn’t it? Our lovely, perfect world has become a place of death and suffering---for now.

 But, God promises, the best is yet to come. Just look at that wedding in Cana. The wedding celebration is interrupted; the wine has run out. Not a big deal. But Jesus, at the suggestion of His mother Mary, lends a hand.

 At Jewish weddings, they mix a thick, syrupy wine base with lots of water---watered down wine you might say. What does Jesus do? There are huge stoneware water jars there, filled with water. Jesus instructs someone to take a dipper of wine to the master of the feast. He tastes it and says to the bridegroom: “Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now.”

 Only the best from God. And just look at Paul’s first letter to the church at Corinth. Chapter 12. We have all received gifts from our loving heavenly Father for the common good. The faith received at Baptism. Can’t get to heaven without it. Being wise in many things. The patience of Job. Being a gentle soul. Able to teach. All these gifts and many more enable each of us to make our contribution to the church. To be a missionary where God has placed us. To say to others as we have opportunity in the midst of all the struggles of life that we all go thru—THE BEST IS YET TO COME! Your Savior and mine is coming back to give eternal life to all believers. Get ready.