

“The party’s over!” This can mean: “It’s 2:00 a.m. and I’ve got to go to work in six hours. Besides, everyone is leaving, and you are out of snacks and drinks.” Or the phrase, “the party’s over!” can mean, “It’s all over, there’s nothing left, the curtain has gone down, the Mighty Casey has struck out!”

It’s this second sense of “The party’s over!” that matches the context of our Old Testament Lesson today, Amos 9:11–15. And this text deals with God’s judgment of the temple in Amos’ fifth and final vision (9:1–4). Hear the word of the LORD from Amos 9:1, “I saw the Lord standing beside the altar, and He said, ‘Strike the capitals until the thresholds shake.’” Make no mistake about it; the party is *over*!

And yet, after the judgment, God declares, “In that day I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old” (Amos 9:11). In other words, Judgment will give way to mercy, and death will give way to resurrection. God promises to raise up the fallen tabernacle of David!

On this day we celebrate that He has done just that! There is nothing dead about Jesus. John 1:4, “In Him was *life*, and that *life* was the light of men.” John 6:35, “I am the bread of *life*.” John 6:68, “You have the words of eternal *life*.” John 10:10, “I have come that they may have *life*.” John 11:25, “I am the resurrection and the *life*.” John 14:6, “I am the way, and the truth, and the *life*.” Climactically Paul throws a triumphant fist up in the air and shouts, “Death has been swallowed up in victory” (1 Corinthians 15:54).

Far from being over, this celebration has just *begun*. And Jesus of Nazareth is the *life* of this party. He’s not some fable or fairy tale that we’ve made up inside our head; He’s God and Man, and He’s risen from the dead!

But every celebration brings with it some questions. The first one is, who is invited?

Amos maintains that *all* are invited. He writes, “So that they will possess the remnant of Edom” (Amos 9:12). The prophet uses a pun to make his point. “Edom” sounds a lot like “Adam.” In fact, in Hebrew both words have the same consonants—only the vowels are different. “Edom” reminds us of “Adam” and “Adam” denotes not only the first man but can also, in some texts, mean all humanity. Confirming this understanding is the next part of verse 12 where God defines it for us, “All the nations over whom My name is called.” Edom, therefore, is code for Adam. Everyone descended from Adam is invited. No one is rejected. This feast is for you and me!

Have you ever felt rejected? Told you don't belong? Feeling second rate? Do you know about partner rejection? Peer rejection? Parental rejection? Parishioner rejection? Do you know about deep running personal rejection? All are invited.

The next question is, what about party gifts? God says, "No gifts, please." Let me explain it this way. It's been my experience in every church at which I have ever been blessed to be a part of that we Lutherans have potlucks down to a theological art. The idea is that **you** bring a delicious dessert. I'll bring some chips. **That** nice lady will bring her **amazing** pasta hot dish, and another good lady will bring a **wonderful** salad. Somehow, it all seems to work out, always! That's a Lutheran potluck, for you!

But for **this** celebration we can bring nothing. God does it all! Hear this promise in Luke 14:17, "At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.'" In Amos 9:13 the prophet confirms that everything is ready for us. He writes that in the days to come the grain harvest will be so plentiful that the "one plowing" will be in the field with the "one reaping," as if spring followed autumn and there was no winter. In the same way, the "one treading grapes" will be performing his work while the planting happens, as if there was no autumn. There will be double production in half the time. God provides it **all**, and He does it in great abundance!

But if this costs **us** nothing, it cost Jesus **everything**. The Savior's lips were cracked and swollen. Blood and spit were caked to His cheeks. Tight nerves threatened to snap as death sang its morbid melody. But on the other side of Good Friday, Jesus lives to give His gifts at this communion table. And what awesome gifts! True body and true blood through which we receive washing, cleansing, healing, and life forever!

The next question is this: what about my appearance? And the answer is life changing: "Come as you are." But you say, "My face bears the marks of worry. My shoulders are stooped from burdens. My lips are dirty from slander. My heart is hardened toward my spouse and children. My fingers are stuck accusing my brother. My arteries are clogged with bitterness and resentment."

Amos 1:2–9:10 is intended to burn and bury the world of power politics and phony religion as these were known in Amos's day. The prophet knows all about messed up government, religion, businesses, and lives. Yet he still says, "Come as you are."

A hen-pecked husband was advised by a psychiatrist to assert himself. "You don't have to let your wife bully you," he said. "Go home and show her you're the boss." The husband decided to take the doctor's advice. He went home, slammed the door, shook his fist in his wife's face, and growled, "From now on you're taking orders from me. I want my supper right now, and when you get it on the table, go upstairs and lay out my clothes. Tonight, I am going out with the boys. You are going to stay at home where you belong. Another thing, tomorrow do you know who is going to put on my shoes?" "I certainly do," said his wife calmly, "the undertaker."

Our sin shows up most in marriages and in families when we foolishly attempt to manipulate, bully, and control one another.

Despite it all, God promises to restore exiled and unworthy people. "I will restore the fortunes of My people Israel" (Amos 9:14). The phrase "restore the fortunes" has nothing to do with the TV show "The Wheel of Fortune"! It has everything to do with changing people's destiny. God reverses the curse. Those in the dark now live in the light. Those long lost are now found. The blind see, and the dead are raised!

So, God says, "Come as you are!" The Father tells His servants in Luke 15:22-23: "Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Let's have a feast and celebrate!" Our God provides the proper attire for all prodigal sons and daughters: Easter baptismal robes washed white in the blood of the Lamb.

Our last question is this: when will the celebration end?

Through Amos the Lord maintains that this feast will **never** come to an end. "I will plant them, and they will never again be uprooted" (Amos 9:15). This new life in the Promised Land was initially fulfilled by the remnant who returned from Babylonian. Now, those who are "in Christ" (cf. Romans 6:11; 8:1; 1 Corinthians 1:30; Ephesians 1:13), possess these promises because we have a land inheritance that can "never perish, spoil, or fade" (1 Peter 1:4), which is the new heavens and the new earth (2 Peter 3:13). While we wait for the Savior to be revealed in His second advent, Jesus promises that we will never be plucked from His hand (John 10:28; Romans 8:37-39). At His second coming all believers will inherit this kingdom and will reign with Him forever (Revelation 1:5-6) in the heavenly promised land. And there we will celebrate the marriage feast of the Lamb, which will have no end!

"For the Lamb who was slain has begun His reign. Alleluia.
This is the feast of victory for our God. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia."

Christ is Risen! He is Risen, Indeed! Alleluia! Amen.