

All Saints 2018
Revelation 7:9-17

SERMON TEXT FOR ALL SAINTS IS THE APPOINTED EPISTLE FOR THIS DAY, FROM THE 7TH CHAPTER OF REVELATION.

The Psalmist says, “Praise the LORD! Sing to the Lord a new song...Let them praise His name with dancing, making melody to Him with tambourine and lyre (Ps 149:1,3)!” And clearly, that is what that great multitude that no one can number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palms branches in their hands, is doing (cf. v. 9). They are praising the Lord, crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb (v. 10).” And they are not alone. All the angels and the elders and the four living creatures join them and praise God, saying, “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen (v. 12).”

They are doing this because God has taken them from the great tribulation of earthly life to Himself in heaven. Listen to the life they live in heaven:

Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

That’s what the saints in the church triumphant are doing. What about you? What are you doing? Today, you struggle in the Church Militant. And, your life shows it.

When it comes to God and your relationship with God, do you fear His wrath such that you avoid sin at all costs? Do you expect nothing but good things from God or when things don't go so well, do you moan, and gripe, and complain because you didn't get your way? Do you call upon God's name in prayer, praise, and thanksgiving, or do you use God's name to lie and deceive? When it comes to the Lord's Day, do you come to the worship services of God's House on a regular basis, or just when it is convenient, because honestly, there are other places you would rather be? Do you honor your father and mother and all those in authority over you, including teachers and police officers? Do you see these people as the masks of God, that God has given you for your own good and your protection? Do strive to live at peace with all people, or do you remain angry, and wish harm and ruin upon some of your neighbors? Do you love and honor the spouse God has given you or do you neglect him/her? Do you live in a fantasy world of if only he or she were your spouse, you would be so happy? Is pornography part of your fantasy world? Do you respect other people's property, or do you just take what doesn't belong to you? Do you gossip, slander, spread innuendos, say things that are not exactly flattering about your neighbor, or do you defend them, speak well of them, explain everything in the kindest way? Are you satisfied with everything God has given you, or do you look at what your neighbor has been given and think, "That stuff is a whole lot better. I want his stuff."

As you think about all these questions, consider what James says about God's Law, "For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it (2:10)." The Prophet Ezekiel tells us what happen when you fail to keep God's Law, "the soul who sins shall die (18:4)."

And yet, here you are this morning, joining your voice with those standing before the throne of God and the Lamb Christ, robed in white, holding palm branches in their hands. Here you are speaking the exact same words as the angels, archangels, and all the company of heaven, “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.” You just did that as we sang “This is the Feast” in our liturgy.

So, how is it that a sinner like you can join your voice with those standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands? The answer is very simple: You have washed your robe and made it white in the blood of the Lamb. The sinner becomes a saint, and that’s the story of each and every one of us.

When you examine your heart and life in the mirror of the 10 Commandments, God shows you your sins to bring you to repentance. You confessed that sin again this morning. And then what does God do? He dresses you in the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Go back to the Garden of Eden, because what God did in the Garden helps us understand what it means to be dressed in the righteousness of Jesus. Eve believes the lie of Satan, she eats, and she gives to her husband and he eats. And their eyes are opened, and they see their nakedness, their guilt, their shame. They try to hid their shame, but it doesn’t work. So, Moses tells us this, “the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them (Gen 3:21). God Himself had to dress Adam and Eve to cover their guilt. And, He did it with the skin of a slain animal. That means blood had to be shed. This is why the book of Hebrews says, “Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of

sins (He 9:22). And, the blood of the animal God killed to cover Adam and Eve looks forward to the blood of Jesus that covers over our sin.

Jesus came down from heaven, “born of the Virgin Mary, was crucified, died, and was buried...The 3rd day, He rose again from the dead,” all for you, so that He could give you forgiveness, life, and salvation. He did that to fulfill all righteousness for you.

And He clothes you with that righteousness. That’s what He does when He pours it on you in the waters of Holy Baptism. The Bible says it this way, “For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ (Ga 3:27).” That’s what He does when He plants it in your ear through the preaching, reading, and learning of God’s Word. That’s what He does when He feeds you the life-giving body and blood of Christ in, with, and under the bread and the wine in Holy Communion.

Through these Means of Grace, our Lord Jesus Christ clothes you with His own righteousness, that white robe of salvation; and He gives you a palm branch of victory to hold, for His Easter victory is your Easter Victory. And that means that today, in the here and now of today, sinners like you -- who have been forgiven -- can stand with all the angels, the archangels, the four living creatures, and all the company of heaven to cry out with your loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb (v. 10).” You cry out with them, “Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen (v. 12).”

You can do that because you are a Saint of God.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.