

Sermon - 10/31 and 11/4/18 **Be Part of the Crowd Revelation 7:9-17 All Saints Day**

Dear Saints who are washed by the Lamb's blood:

Jesus says: **"Rejoice that your names are written in heaven."** Luke 10:20

This is All Saints Day. Every year on this Sunday we remember our brothers and sisters from our fellowship who have passed from this life to the glories of heaven in the past year. You may also remember loved ones from your families and friends who also have entered heaven this past year. And we also remember all of our loved ones who have gone on to heaven two years ago, three years ago and beyond. Now is the time to remember that those in Christ who have passed on are now dressed in white robes before the throne of God. This is the picture we have from these verses of Revelation.

And so this day we remember:

- Edward Rowland 9-16-17
- Jerry Adsit 10-12-17
- Eva Ellifson 2-26-18
- Helen Kueht 3-31-18
- Esther Schlender 5-19-18
- Leon Zimdars 8-29-18

The Apostle John wrote the book of Revelation around the year 95 AD. John was the last surviving apostle living in exile on the island of Patmos in the latter years of his life. While on Patmos John received a series of visions from the Lord about the future of this world. He wrote these words to the 7 churches that John had served in Asia Minor (present-day Turkey).

The 7 churches to whom John wrote were about to be persecuted for their faith. One of their pastors had already been executed and soon the full fury of persecution would be unleashed upon these saints. John was reminding these believers and us that God is in control of all events of human history and even though evil seems to prevail, Jesus has defeated our enemies and we have a place reserved for us in heaven through the blood of the Lamb.

John says that as believers in heaven we will be: "...Before the throne of God and serve him day and night...never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst...and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." Revelation 7:15ff

See where your loved ones are. John says he saw: "A great multitude...standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes...and they cried out in a loud voice: Salvation belongs to our God...they have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb...they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night." Revelation 7:9ff

This is what our loved ones are doing in heaven.

Our loved ones are at the throne of God. The celebration that all believers in heaven will experience when Jesus comes back someday is likened to a wedding celebration.

How do you feel when you are invited to a wedding? For the most part I think we feel that the celebration will be...

- a time of joy and excitement
- a time of seeing family and friends
- a time of food and fellowship

As believers in Jesus, we have been invited to a wedding.

- The wedding feast of the Lamb of God
- We the church are the bride, Jesus is the groom
- God invites us to live with him forever in heaven

Jesus once told a parable about a wedding banquet. He said: "The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come..." Matthew 22:1ff

In Jesus' day a wedding celebration would last for several days. Before the wedding there would be two invitations that would be sent out:

- The 1<sup>st</sup> would be sent out several days before the feast so that the guests could properly adjust their schedule.
- The 2<sup>nd</sup> would be sent out a few hours before the feast so that the guests could be ready for the hour of celebration.

- The king would send out his servants with the 2<sup>nd</sup> invitation with this message to the guests: “Come, to the festival for all things are ready.”

Jesus says to us: **“Come! Whoever is thirsty, let him come...let him take the free gift of the water of life.” Revelation 22:17**

We have been invited to the feast. Who would not want to go to the feast!

In Jesus parable some, however, some refused the invitation to the feast. Jesus says: “But (some) paid no attention and went off---one to his field, another to his business.”

Matthew 22:5

- Some made light of this invitation and went on their own way
- Others mistreated the king's servants who came with the invitation

Why? Why would people refuse this invitation? Why would they refuse to enter a place of joy, glory and fellowship with the Lord?

The Bible says in II Corinthians 4:4 **“The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers,** so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

In these last days of the world in which we live there is a battle going on for the souls of men and women. The Bible speaks about the devil who desires to deceive us:

- The great dragon...the devil or Satan...leads the whole world astray. Rev 12:9
- Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes....for our struggle is...against the spiritual forces of evil. Ephesians 6:11ff

### **Spiritual warfare**

The Bible speaks of the great tribulation. We are in the tribulation. It is a time when the devil, the world and our sinful flesh war against our souls. The life we live in this world in the body at times is a difficult one because of sin that surrounds us. The Bible says: “The sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.” Galatians 5:17 We are in a battle....

- with the sinful world and its wickedness
- with the deceitfulness of the devil and his schemes
- with our old sinful nature

**Life in the tribulation is not easy.** It hurts. Tears result. The struggle, the agony of life in the tribulation, must not be minimized. However, John reminds us that every tear will be gently wiped away from every saint's eye by God himself. The Christian life begins and ends personally and individually with God's call into faith and out of the grave. It is to you that God comes to wipe from your eye the last tear --- the final remnant of life in the tribulation.

Remember you are part of a grand crowd that cannot be numbered, singing and celebrating in a spectacular and delightfully deafening chorus. The tribulation for us was not easy. But our robes tattered, torn and horribly defiled by life in the tribulation are plunged into the bloodbath of the Lamb's blood and removed dazzling white.

In the Apostle John's vision of Revelation one of the residents in heaven asks John, **"These in white robes---who are they, and where did they come from?" Revelation 7:13**

Who are these in white robes? The answer is in verse 14: "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

We need to be wearing the proper clothing to enter heaven. And that proper clothing is the white robe of righteousness which we have received from the Lord Jesus. In Jesus parable of the wedding feast we hear him say this: "But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes...Then the king told the attendants, 'Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'" Matthew 22:11-13

If we are going to enter the wedding feast of heaven we must have on the proper clothes: the robe of holiness, perfection, the white robes of Revelation, the righteousness which Jesus gives to us. John's vision here is a description of the believers in heaven: "...a great multitude that no one could count...standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes..." Rev 7:9

The residents of heaven are described as holding palm branches in their hands, worshiping the Lord around the throne, serving Him day and night. While they are doing this the Lord is protecting them by covering them: “He who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat...and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.” Revelation 7:15ff

God has placed the robe of righteousness upon us and has washed the stain of our sins away:

- For God has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness Isaiah 61:10
- For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. Gal 3:27
- Faith is credited as righteousness Romans 4:5
- Not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ --- the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. Philippians 3:9

The Bible says that only 3 persons are able to wear white robes...

- Jesus
- Angels
- Believers in Christ – you and me

Our fellow members who have gone to heaven this past year, Ed, Jerry, Eva, Helen, Esther and Leon are now wearing the white robes. While they were on this earth they were...

- baptized by water and the word
- taught the gospel
- saved by faith in God’s grace

Romans 8:1 says: **“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus...”**

What are our loved ones who lived and died in Christ doing now in heaven? Revelation 7:11 says: “They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying:

Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God forever and ever.”

Someday we will join our loved ones in heaven. We will join in the wedding feast of the Lamb and Jesus says to us: “Rejoice that your names are written in heaven.” Luke 10:20

We rejoice “For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

Revelation 7:17