

All Saints Day (11-5-23)

Revelation 7:9–17 - After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰And they cried out in a loud voice: “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.” ¹¹All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹²saying: “Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!” ¹³Then one of the elders asked me, “These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?” ¹⁴I answered, “Sir, you know.” And he said, “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. ¹⁵Therefore, “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. ¹⁶“Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat down on them, nor any scorching heat. ¹⁷For 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.’”

In the name of Lamb who was slain, our Lord Jesus Christ, dear fellow redeemed:

As a young pastor in the 1980s and the early 1990s, I didn’t particularly like the end of the church year, because many Sundays seemed too similar: for example, talking about Jesus as the Bread of Life for 3 or 4 Sundays in a row. This is why I really liked the change in CW93 that came up with the 4 Sundays of End Times: Reformation, Last Judgment and Christ the King Sunday. The difference each Sunday was clearly laid out.

However, there were always those who hated the 4 Sundays of End Time, because they were purely a WELS invention; no one else used the season of End Time. The new hymnal makes Reformation always the last Sunday of October and the first Sunday of November may be celebrated as All Saints Day. You may remember that on October 31, Luther nailed the 95 theses on the door because the next day (Nov 1st) was All Saints Day. The night before was known as hallowed evening, which today has morphed into “Halloween.”

The truth is that in a way, we have been celebrating All Saints Day for 30 years, only we called it by a different name – Saints Triumphant Sunday. No matter which name you use, the purpose of the day is the same: to remind us of those believers in heaven and that some day we will join them in heaven. So today we consider:

The Heavenly Song of the Saints

1. It’s learned here on earth
2. It’s sung in heaven in glory

1. It’s learned here on earth

There are a lot of songs in Scripture. Someone counted and came up with a bit less than 200 songs. That would include all 150 of the psalms, the Song of Miriam, the Song of Moses, the Song of Zechariah, the Song of Mary, the Song of Simeon plus the 5 laments (sad songs) that form Lamentations, and the four “servant songs” of Isaiah.

The book of Revelation contains some songs as well. They aren’t long but there are seven songs in Revelation 5, 6 and 7. One of those songs is sung by the angels in heaven: **Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!** Today the Apostle John writes to us about another song, but this one isn’t sung by angels.

Have you ever wondered why choirs wear white robes or why the custom is that those being confirmed wear white gowns? One of the reasons may be that it symbolizes the white robes worn by this heavenly choir that sang: **Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.** White symbolizes holiness and purity.

The Apostle John wondered whom these people dressed in white robes were. He didn’t know but he knew that the angel knew. The angels explained: **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.**

To put it simply, the great tribulation that the Bible speaks of here is our time here on earth, in this sinful and evil world. Every day of our earthly pilgrimages we must deal with temptations and whispers of the Prince of Darkness. We struggle against the desires and allure of the world around us. And we struggle daily against our own sinful natures urging us to forget God or to ignore what he says and do whatever we want or our friends want us to do.

We should probably remember that Revelation was written at a time when Christians faces arrest, imprisonment, hatred and even death for being Christians. One of the major purposes of Revelation is to encourage believers to endure and persevere in the great tribulation and finally overcome and receive that crown of life.

Today we are reminded that the privilege of singing in the heavenly choir will someday be ours, but only if we cling to faith, hold onto God's promises of forgiveness and salvation in our Lord Jesus Christ.

When God cancelled our sins for Jesus' sake, he did not erase or "delete" them like a computer. Law enforcement always checks the hard drives of suspected criminals because the information remains in storage until it is overwritten by other information. It takes special software programs to truly remove sensitive information from computers. The US military has standards of multiple overwrites before a hard drive is considered "clean," that the deleted information is really gone.

Our gracious God, however only needs to "blot out" our sins once with the blood of Jesus. For under the new covenant of the Gospel, God promises, **Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.** (Heb 10:17) All our sins are forever off the hard drive of heaven.

2. It's sung in heaven in glory

One of the first things that we notice is the size of the heavenly choir – it was **a great multitude that no one could count.** The number of believers in heaven is not a handful but a very, very large number, even greater than the choir of angels surrounding God's throne. And all these believers join together in singing: **Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.**

In the last few decades, some people in western culture have decided that Christianity is a "white man's religion." Yet the church is made up of people **from every nation, tribe, people and language.** God wants all people to be saved and it won't be just white people or English-speaking or people of German or Scandinavian descent. Believers come in all colors, from all countries, speaking all kinds of languages. The church in heaven will be made up of white and black and brown and yellow and red people – people of all colors and races. As the children's song says: **red and yellow, black and white, they are precious sight, Jesus loves the little children of the world** – and the adults too!

In heaven some day, as we are gathered around the throne of God, **he will spread his tent over them (us).** This means that we will live with God and be with God. He will bless us and give us all that we need.

The end of our text gives us one of the most memorable texts in all of the Bible. John tells us that heaven is a place **where. Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat down on them, nor any scorching heat. 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.**"

Our God – our Good Shepherd – will give us everything that we need. Just as he provides for us now here on earth, we will partake in and share in the blessings of heaven, eating at the heavenly banquet which God has promised us. God also wants us to know that sin won't touch us in heaven. It won't be present and won't be able to harm us. It won't be able to make us miserable or bring us suffering or pain. Hunger and thirst, heat and cold, pain and suffering, all those are caused by sin are gone because there are no sin or any of those things caused by sin in heaven. So all these things that are so much a part of our lives here on earth will be gone forever.

What joy and comfort there are for us in this vision of heaven! Comfort because we know many of our loved ones, our brothers and sisters who have already left this life are already in heaven and are receiving all these blessings that Jesus lived, suffered, died and rose again to give to them. And there is joy, because we also know that by faith this is also our future home too, our eternal residence. This is the place you and I go when our earthly time here is ended. How you and I long to join this heavenly choir in singing, **Salvation belongs to our god, who sits on the throne to the Lamb. Amen.**