

Sermon for November 5, 2023 – All Saints’ Day

Revelation 7:9–17 (EHV)

Theme: Our Saviour’s home is a place . . .

- 1) Where countless souls praise him for his salvation.
- 2) Where He will comfort us with his eternal presence.

⁹After these things I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing in front of the throne and of the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and with palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰They called out with a loud voice and said: Salvation comes from our God, who sits on the throne, and from the Lamb. ¹¹All the angels stood around the throne, the elders, and the four living creatures. They fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, ¹²saying: Amen. Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and might belong to our God forever and ever. Amen. ¹³One of the elders spoke to me and said, “These people dressed in white robes, who are they and where did they come from?” And I answered him, “Sir, you know.” ¹⁴And he said to me: These are the ones who are coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. ¹⁵Because of this they are in front of the throne of God, and they serve him day and night in his temple. He who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. ¹⁶They will never be hungry or thirsty ever again. The sun will never beat upon them, nor will 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.

As illustrated in the 23rd Psalm, our Christian life on earth can be compared to sheep following a shepherd home through a dark valley. Because many difficulties and dangers lie hidden in the way, Jesus encourages us to stay close to him. But that invites the question: where, exactly, is the LORD leading us? What will our home be like? Will it be worth the arduous journey?

With the Apostle John as our guide, let us let the Holy Spirit answer these questions for us under the theme: **Our Saviour’s home is a place** 1) where countless souls praise him for his salvation, 2) where He will comfort us with his eternal presence.

Part One: Our Saviour’s home is a place where countless souls praise him for his salvation.

Our sermon text is part of a vision Jesus commanded the apostle John to record while he was in exile on the Island of Patmos. Persecution had broken out against the Church, and it was about to get worse. Was all the trouble Christians faced in life worth it? Where was the victory Jesus promised believers?

Yes, the Christians to whom Jesus initially commanded John to send his book of Revelation were indeed like sheep walking through the valley of the shadow of death. To encourage them to remain faithful to him, Jesus gave John a glimpse of heaven. We read:

⁹*After these things I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing in front of the throne and of the Lamb.*

I want to pause here to reflect upon what John saw. So often, we wonder if our confession of Christ has any impact. We are a tiny group of committed Christians in a large city. Very few people accept our invitation to meet Christ in His Word. Is our witnessing having any effect?

Yes, it is! Regardless of how small or persecuted Christianity is from our perspective, our sharing of God's Gospel is never in vain. As illustrated by our sermon text, the LORD uses it to gather his elect, keeping his promise to Abraham to make his spiritual descendants *as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore.*ⁱ

Notice that our Saviour's home isn't just filled with one particular people group but *a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language.*

Even people from the remotest corners of our earth are in heaven. How did the Gospel reach them? Only God knows that, but the fact remains that it did – proof of which is their presence in heaven!

Oh, how wonderful is our Saviour's home: it's a place where countless people from all over the globe live in perfect peace and harmony. The hate, wars, crime, and selfish ambitions that plague our wicked world are gone – replaced by perfect peace, truth, harmony, and joy.

And what is the multinational multitude doing in heaven?

[They are] *standing in front of the throne and of the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and with palm branches in their hands.* ¹⁰*They called out with a loud voice and said: Salvation comes from our God, who sits on the throne, and from the Lamb.*

Their white robes symbolize purity from all sin, and their palm branches represent victory and peace. Notice that they don't congratulate themselves for earning such blessings. No, they praise Jesus – the Lamb of God who offered himself as the once-and-for-all sacrifice for the world's sins.ⁱⁱ Salvation comes from God alone. He keeps every promise he makes. Because of Jesus, He forgives every evil that has been thought, spoken or done. He is the reason heaven is filled with people, for he not only paid for everyone's sins but (through the preaching of His Word) awakened repentance in the hearts of all those people to receive his salvation in faith. He is the reason they are in heaven, and they can't praise him enough for it! Therefore, all of heaven joins them in singing God's praise. We read:

¹¹*All the angels stood around the throne, the elders, and the four living creatures. They fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, ¹²saying: Amen. Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and might belong to our God forever and ever. Amen.*

What an incredible sight! But did John understand why the LORD allowed him to see it? Would he be able to convey what it all meant so suffering Christians could have hope amid sorrow? Just to make sure, the Holy Spirit had one of the elders ask John: *"These people dressed in white robes, who are they and where did they come from?"* And I answered him, *"Sir, you know."* John

understood that he was an earthly man in a heavenly place. He would rather be taught than presume to know – an attitude we would all do well to emulate on this earth.

These are the ones who are coming out of the great tribulation.

In other words, John did not have a vision of heaven in the future. No, he saw heaven right now: believers whose bodies presently were considered dead on earth but whose souls were very much alive before God in heaven. The great tribulation they came from was their earthly life with all its sorrows. Remember: the Christians in John's day faced some severe persecution with more to follow. What happened to all those believers eaten by lions or burned to death? Here they are, standing before Jesus and praising him for the everlasting salvation they were now experiencing.

And why did God grant them such a blessed victory at their deaths? Because *they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*

All the souls John saw in heaven were sinners on this earth who had broken God's Law in thought, word, and deed. They all deserved to be in hell, not heaven. So why were they in heaven? Because they had washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb. With God's law as their guide, they had recognized and repented of their sins while living on this earth – realizing that they in no way deserved heaven or could save themselves. Instead of trying to save themselves, the Holy Spirit moved them to trust in God's mercy promised in the Gospel: that Jesus lived the perfect life they failed to live and died in payment for all their sins. And he didn't remain dead. No, he rose again to show that all had been forgiven. Through the sacrament of Baptism, the Holy Spirit cleansed all believers from all sin - uniting them to Jesus and creating faith in their hearts. Through faith in the Gospel, the Holy Spirit continued to clothe them in Jesus' righteousness.ⁱⁱⁱ

Yes, because Jesus offered himself up as a once-and-for-all sacrificial Lamb to make atonement for everyone's sins, a countless multitude of believers stand before God's throne perfectly holy and righteous. And, as we continue to hold on to Jesus in faith, we can be certain we will join them. How so? Because Jesus' blood washed all our sins away.

Part Two: Our Saviour's home is a place where He will comfort us with his eternal presence.

Now that John has seen what the saints are doing in heaven, the elder directs John's attention to what the LORD is doing for them.

¹⁵*Because of this* (that is to say, because they looked to Jesus in repentance and faith and had their sins washed away), *they are in front of the throne of God, and they serve him day and night in his temple. He who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them.*

Do you know what is the best part about being in heaven? It's not the fantastic food and fun activities. It's not being able to chat with mighty angels or spend eternity with our loved ones (although that will also be great). No, the best part about heaven is being with God, our Father, and Jesus, our brother! We will have a similar intimate relationship with God that Adam and Eve

did before they fell into sin – only better! God says it will be so awesome that we can't even begin to comprehend it now.^{iv}

*¹⁶They will never be hungry or thirsty ever again. The sun will never beat upon them, nor will any scorching heat. The saints in heaven are fully content with Christ. They don't suffer any earthly wants, cares, or discomforts any longer. More importantly, they no longer feel the oppressive heat of shame and guilt before God. They no longer hunger and thirst for righteousness as they did while they walked this earth. Why? Because their Saviour's righteousness now permeates their entire being in fulfillment of Jesus' words from our Gospel lesson: *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, because they will be filled.*^v*

And why will believers in heaven enjoy all these beautiful blessings continuously?

¹⁷for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd. He will lead them to springs of living water.

When hearing that statement, I can't help but think of the 23rd Psalm and all the beautiful things God promises us in it. The saints in heaven are the sheep that God has led through the dark valley of life on this earth onto the eternal green pastures and quiet waters of eternal rest with him in heaven. They are enjoying the everlasting feast full of overflowing blessings described in that Psalm – dwelling in the LORD's house forever.

And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

Any thought that once made these blessed believers cry on earth is gone forever. No more worry, shame, sorrow, or feelings of guilt. Why? Because they are with Jesus, who has dealt with the cause of all their sin and sorrow. He will comfort them himself, and oh, how incredible that comfort will be!

Brothers and sisters in Christ, whenever you are tempted to give up your faith in Jesus – wondering if all you suffer for his sake is worth it and what the result of it will be, remember these verses from Revelation and the glimpse they offer you of your everlasting home with Jesus. May this vision keep you repentant of all sin and clinging to Jesus in faith, hope, and love, trusting that he will keep his promise to work in all things for your good^{vi} – delivering your soul safely through this life home to himself in heaven.^{vii} As you can see in our sermon text, when it comes to our future home with our Saviour, *our sufferings at the present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is going to be revealed to us.*^{viii} Amen.

ⁱ Genesis 22:17 NIV84 (cf. Romans 4:16-17)

ⁱⁱ Cf. John 1:29

ⁱⁱⁱ Cf. Galatians 3:26-27

^{iv} Cf. 1 Corinthians 2:9

^v Matthew 5:6 EHV

^{vi} Cf. Romans 8:28

^{vii} Cf. 2 Timothy 4:18

^{viii} Rom. 8:18 NIV84