

Sermon for All Saints' Day

Date: November 4, 2018

Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

First Reading: Revelation 7:1-4, 9-17

Epistle Reading: 1 John 3:1-7

Gospel Reading: Matthew 5:1-12



Sermon Text: Revelation 7:2-17

Sermon Title: A Great Multitude Standing Before the Throne

Introit: Psalm 31:1, 3, 5; antiphon: Revelations 7:14b

Hymns:

LSB 748 – I'm But a Stranger Here

LSB 801 – How Great Thou Art

LSB 955 – Let the Vineyards Be Fruitful

LSB 922 – Go My Children With My Blessing

Distribution:

LSB 725 – Children of the Heavenly Father

LSB 680 – Thine the Amen, Thine the Praise

Liturgy:

Divine Service: Special



Pastor James Groleau
St. John's Lutheran Church
1200 13th Avenue NW
Austin, MN 55912
Office: (507) 433-2642
Shepherd@JamesPlace.net
StJohnsAustinLCMS.org
FaceBook.co/StJohnsAustin
Twitter.com@StJohnsAustinMN
FaceBook.com/Shepherd.James.Groleau



Text: Revelation 7:1-4, 9-17

I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth. They were holding back the four winds of the earth to keep them from blowing on the land, the sea, or any tree. I saw another angel coming from the east with the seal of the living God. He cried out in a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm the land and sea, “Do not harm the land, the sea, or the trees until we have put the seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God.” I heard how many were sealed: 144,000. Those who were sealed were from every tribe of the people of Israel.

After these things I saw a large crowd from every nation, tribe, people, and language. No one was able to count how many people there were. They were standing in front of the throne and the Lamb. They were wearing white robes, holding palm branches in their hands, and crying out in a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”

All the angels stood around the throne with the leaders and the four living creatures. They bowed in front of the throne with their faces touching the ground, worshiped God, and said, “Amen! Praise, glory, wisdom, thanks, honor, power, and strength be to our God forever and ever! Amen!”

One of the leaders asked me, “Who are these people wearing white robes, and where did they come from?” I answered him, “Sir, you know.”

Then he told me, “These are the people who are coming out of the terrible suffering. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb. That is why they are in front of the throne of God. They serve him day and night in his temple. The one who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. They will never be hungry or thirsty again. Neither the sun nor any burning heat will ever overcome them. The lamb in the center near the throne will be their shepherd. He will lead them to springs filled with the water of life, and God will wipe every tear from their eyes.”

NOTE: Copyright information.

Bible Translation: GOD’S WORD®, © 1995 God’s Word to the Nations. Some readings have been adapted to better reflect the original Greek or Hebrew.

Credit for Images:

Pronunciation for difficult words are contained in { }

© 2018 James Groleau.

Permission is granted to use these sermons for any non-profit purpose. I only ask that credit, as to their origination, be noted appropriately.

Grace, peace, and mercy be your in the name of our risen Savior, Jesus the Holy Christ, the Lamb of God. Amen.



We are coming to the end of another Church Year. As we wind things down our focus changes from daily life in anticipation of our life to come, to one that centers on that day, that Judgment Day, when Jesus will return in power, glory, majesty, authority, and might. He will not return humbly like when He came in a manger. He will come on the Last Day, on Judgment Day, with all the wonder and splendor due the Author of Life.

Angels will accompany Him and like a mighty army they will go out over the whole Earth gathering all of the faithful to Christ. There will be trumpet blasts that will shake the skies and crack the Earth. There will be shouts of praise and song as Cherubim armies and Seraphim choirs sing His praise. It will be, for all who believe on Jesus' name, a wonder to behold; an awesome day full of joy and celebration.



As we enter this time in the Church Year, where we focus on the coming Last Day, we remember all those who have left this Earth, in the faith, ahead of us. They have already seen much of what is for us something yet to come. They have seen the face of God. They have heard him say, "Welcome home good and faithful servant." Their soul now waits for the Last Day¹ when their body will be raised, made perfect, and joined to their soul again.² A day when they will once again be fully and wholly human; perfectly human as God first made us.

They wait, the same way we wait, though we wait in a place taxed by sin, and they wait in a place free from those ills and trials. Sin no longer has any effect on them. They have past through death to life. They have run their race,³ and remained faithful to the end.⁴ They are free, and for that we give glory to God because we know that God's promises are good, true, and trustworthy. We know that all those faithful whom we love are with Him now resting, waiting, anticipating that day when they will see you and all the faithful raised to eternal life.

Now the logical part of us tells us we should not miss them. We should not mourn their absence because we know they have left this place of sin and corruption. They no longer suffer anything. We also know that we will see them again. They are not cut off from us forever, as Death would have us believe. Logic would tell us these things but we are more than logic. We are human, and as such we have emotions. One of those emotions is love. We were made in the image and likeness of God.⁵ As such we share some of God's qualities and traits. One of those is love.⁶

Many years ago Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden. Life was wonderful and perfect. God would walk with them in the cool of the day. God would talk with them and teach them. They cared for nothing and had no want or need that was not fulfilled. Yet, through Satan's design,⁷ they destroyed that perfection. On that day you can presume God wept. He wept because on that day that

1 Revelation 6:9-10

2 Romans 6:5

3 2 Timothy 4:7

4 Hebrews 3:14

5 Genesis 1:26-27

6 1 John 4:7-13

7 Genesis 3:4-5

which He loved most died.⁸ Death has never been natural. It is not part of life nor is it part of living. It is not what God designed nor is it what was supposed to happen. Death is the result of our separation from God and it is always painful.

Now God knows all things. God knew He could, and would, fix the mess we made of His perfect creation. He knew He could make it all better again. That however would not stop Him from weeping. How do I presume that God wept when death entered the world. I turn to an event when Jesus, the Holy Christ, walked this Earth as a man.

In that event Lazarus, His dear friend, had become sick. Jesus was called to help but He did not go. In fact Jesus waited days before he went to the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. By the time Jesus got there Lazarus had been dead four days. Jesus waited on purpose.⁹ He delayed so that He could show that He was, is, and will ever be, truly, wholly and fully God. Yet when He had to confront Lazarus' death Jesus wept.¹⁰

Jesus knew what He was going to do. Jesus knew He was going to bring Lazarus back to life, on that very day. He knew it, and still He wept. He wept that day because death is something we never want to see anyone whom we love endure. If we could prevent it we would do nearly anything to stop Death from having its way with those whom we love, but there is nothing we can do. Death will come and it will have its way. We are helpless to do anything to stop that. You might be able to delay it, or slow it down, but Death must come. Just as it will come for you someday. On that day, just like Jesus, just like you, people will weep when Death has its way.



Death is the curse for sin. If you sin you die. That has been, and will always be the rule. With that rule in mind Satan took great joy in bringing death to us. He used us to hurt God. Satan attacked us because he knew we were weak. He knew we could not resist his power. He was right, we can't.¹¹ He is more powerful than you can imagine. Even the arch-angel Michael would not dare to take on Lucifer, but rather always calls on God for such encounters.¹²

Lucifer was perhaps the most powerful thing God created. His name 'Lucifer' means "son of the dawn." So majestic, so powerful, so magnificent, was he that to look at him was like looking at a sunrise. He commanded a third of all the angels in Heaven so great was his authority.

When he fell, he took a third of Heaven,¹³ and you, down with him. The beautiful magnificent creature had become the most vile and disgusting. He is the very epitome of filth. He now has names like Satan, Devil, and Beelzebub. He is the lord of refuse, filth, and rot.

That is the beast that attacks you and drags you down to the pit with him. He is too great, too powerful, for us to fight. Satan's only goal is to destroy us and in doing so break the heart of God. Satan knew the rule, sin must bring death. Satan knew the rule, only those who are perfect can stand in the presence of God. Satan knew God would not, could not endure, loving something imperfect. What he did not know is how much God loved us.

Lucifer was perhaps the most beautiful, powerful, majestic thing God created, but not the most important. You, you are the most important thing God has created. He loves the lowest and most

8 Genesis 2:17; Genesis 3:3

9 John 11:6

10 John 11:35

11 Romans 3:23

12 Jude 9

13 Revelation 12:4

corrupt human far more than He has ever concerned Himself with Satan. Because of that love God could not endure being separated from you forever.

Now the Law is clear there can be no forgiveness without the shedding of blood.¹⁴ To account for all sin perfect blood must be shed. Who of us could fill that role? None of us. All of us have sinned. All of us have fallen short of the perfection God commands and demands.¹⁵ Still God would not endure being separated from you forever so He chose to fix the problem Himself. That is, in fact, exactly what He promised He would do.

Go back to Genesis, the very first book in the Bible. In chapter three, in the same breath that God curses Satan He speaks a promise.¹⁶ A promise of One who would come to restore what Satan had destroyed. With that promise came comfort to Adam and Eve. Though the effect of sin was still on them the fear subsided. For Satan however the fear had only just begun. The thrill of victory over destroying God's most loved was dashed on the rocks. Satan's failure would be complete.

Not only was he forever cast out of Heaven, not only would he be cast into the torment of Hell for eternity,¹⁷ but he would have to live with the knowledge that he had failed. He failed because God promised to wash away the sin He hates. God promised to restore us to that perfection He demands and commands. Where we could do nothing to get ourselves right with God, God could and did do everything.¹⁸

So that brings us back here. To this day in this place. Today in this holy house we celebrate a day called All Saints' Day. A day when we give glory to God for all those who have past through death to life, in faith. We give praise, glory, and adoration to God because we know that even though we miss those who have left us, even though we have wept – like God – for them, we know that we will not be separated from them forever. We will see them again.

The day will come when we will once again enjoy the pleasure of their company in a place where sin is forbidden to ever touch us again; in a new Heaven and a new Earth where the relationship Adam and Eve had with God will be restored.

In the book of Revelation we read today:



I saw a large crowd from every nation, tribe, people, and language. No one was able to count how many people there were. They were standing in front of the throne and the Lamb. They were wearing white robes, holding palm branches in their hands, and crying out in a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"¹⁹

Who are these people? All those saved through faith in Christ. They are holding palm branches symbolizing freedom and wearing white robes because God has made them pure.

It goes on to say:

14 Hebrews 9:22

15 Romans 3:23

16 Genesis 3:15

17 Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10

18 Ephesians 2:8-9

19 Revelation 7:9-10

All the angels stood around the throne with the leaders and the four living creatures. They bowed in front of the throne with their faces touching the ground, worshiped God, and said, “Amen! Praise, glory, wisdom, thanks, honor, power, and strength be to our God forever and ever! Amen!

¹³ One of the leaders asked me [John], “Who are these people wearing white robes, and where did they come from?”

I answered him, “Sir, you know.”

Then he told me, “These are the people who are coming out of the terrible suffering. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. That is why they are in front of the throne of God. They serve him day and night in his temple.

The one who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. They will never be hungry or thirsty again. Neither the sun nor any burning heat will ever overcome them. The Lamb in the center near the throne will be their shepherd. He will lead them to springs filled with the water of life, and God will wipe every tear from their eyes.²⁰

Here we see that day, that day when the great multitude will stand before the throne of God. They will be in the presence of the Most High. How can those sinful, sin-filled, people be there? Because God the Father, through Jesus Christ His Son, by the power of the Holy Spirit, has made them clean and sustained them through faith in that cleansing flood. That flood of love that started at your Baptism. That flood of love that poured from Jesus’ Body on that Friday we call Good. That flood of love that God pours out on us every day of our lives. That flood of love that those whom we love who left us in faith have now realized fully, basking in the glory of Almighty God.

Remembering how God saved those faithful that have left this Earth before us, let us use them as an example. Not one of them was perfect. Not one of them claimed to be. The truth is those of you who knew them best could probably best attest to that truth. Yet they believed, and because they believed, they are perfect now. Waiting for you to join them.

This is the wonder of the faith God has given to us. It will restore us. It will restore our relationship between us and God. It will also restore the relationship between us and those we love, those who on this day we remember with love. Missing them? Yes. Yet still knowing our goodbye’s are not forever.

By God’s holy grace and mercy we will see them again.

In Jesus’ name.

Amen.