

Sermon Transcript for All Saints Sunday, November 7, 2021

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

We begin today with the reading from the book of Revelation. Now, movies made about the book of Revelation or at least some semblance of the book of Revelation, with their ideas about what Revelation is going to look like, most of the time it creates a sense of fear or anxiety, like, "Man, I don't want that to happen anytime soon." And yet the book itself says for all who read this it will be a blessing. So we need to understand what the blessing is that comes from this book of Revelation. And first off we have these angels, the angels that have power to harm the earth and sea and the voice saying don't harm the earth, or the sea, or the trees until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads, sealed on their foreheads. Now, if you know anything about Revelation, you often hear about the mark of the beast, which is a number that is in theory, seared on our foreheads.

And yet this is not the mark of the beast. This is the mark of God. This is God telling the angels that they are not to destroy this world. That the end of the world is not to come until all who have been called by God have been sealed on their foreheads. Now, I don't know if you know this or not, but you are sealed. You have been sealed on your foreheads. Now I guarantee you, if you look in the mirror, even if you get really, one of those magnifying mirrors, you're still not going to see anything. However, you are marked. And to remember that mark, you need to go all the way back to your baptism. And if your pastor was a faithful pastor, he probably said, these words, "I mark you on the forehead and upon the heart as one sealed by God." And then of course, every pastor baptizes you "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit". That is your mark. It is not done by physical hands. It is done by the Holy Spirit through the power of the Word, connected to the waters of baptism. And therefore all who have been baptized have been marked and have been sealed in the promise of Christ and your sins though they are scarlet have been washed white in the blood of the Lamb. Hence of course, why today's liturgical color is white because today we remember our baptisms. We remember that we have been sealed by Christ and we though our sins are as scarlet have been washed and we carry the robes of Christ. We are robed by Christ in His righteousness and therefore are clean, and white, and pure, and holy. We are saints of the Lord.

We've been set up apart by God, no longer in fear of anything that might come. And Jesus kind of hammers that home in His beatitudes as He reminds us at the very end, that "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you, and that are all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account." Now our natural human inclination is that when we think about being reviled and persecuted and being falsely accused is not to rejoice and be glad. And yet that's what Jesus calls us to do. Rejoice and be glad because we know that we are in the arms of Christ. We are secure because we have been sealed. We have been sealed. We have been given the armor of God. We have been given the helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, the belt of truth, the feet of the Gospel, the shield of faith, and the sword of the Spirit. That was given to us in our baptisms.

It guards us and protect us from all of the accusations of the devil in the world and our own sinful nature might throw at us. Because I'm sure there are times when you, in your darkest moments, looking back on your life, beat yourself up. How can I be a Christian when I've done X, Y, and Z. I cannot believe that I did that. How can God love me? I am a poor miserable sinner, and I have failed miserably, which is true, but it's not where you're supposed to dwell. That's only a way station to, but I have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, but I have been washed in the waters of baptism, but God has claimed me as His child. He has adopted me. He has sealed the deal. I am His, and therefore my failings are brought to the cross where I remember that they have been paid for by Christ.

And so, I then seek to serve Him in joy and Thanksgiving, because I know that God is the one that is doing the work within me and through me and I need not worry even when I face persecution and revilement and false accusation. You see, when we celebrate this day, we do celebrate those who have already received their reward and when we look at these beatitudes and Jesus said "Blessed are the poor and spirit for theirs is the

kingdom of heaven." Now we understand we are poor in spirit. We get frustrated when we look out at the world today. We get frustrated when we see people not coming to church, people not wanting to hear the message of salvation. People actively doing evil in this world. And it does make us poor in spirit when we realize that we are participants in that. Yet, we are also part of the kingdom of heaven.

We live in a tension in this world. We are poor in spirit, but we are members of the kingdom of heaven. We are sinners and saints at the same time. Here in this earth, there is still a tension, but those that have died, the first part of these things are not theirs anymore. All theirs are, is the kingdom of heaven. They are comforted. They inherit the earth. They're satisfied with righteousness. They have received mercy. They see God, and they're called the sons of God. All that, that's all they are experiencing right now. All the benefits, and all the blessings, and all the rewards of having hope in the promise that you are sealed and understanding that that is why we will be with Him. That is why we know we can be called the children of God.

And we know that we will be transformed and renewed and restored. With Revelation, it ends with 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 in the book of Revelation. That's a part of the reason why Revelation is such a comforting book because of passages like this. But when we think about our loved ones who have died, we remember that God has wiped every tear from their eyes, that they are no longer suffering from the pains, and the aches, and the diseases, and the injuries, and the broken promises of this world. They're free from all of that. But more than that, more than that, they are before the throne of God and they serve Him day and night in His temple.

See, even in paradise, even with God, we have been called for a purpose to serve God, but it will not be an onerous job like some of our things that we do today in this world, it will be the joy of serving God, because that's all we have to do. We will praise Him. We will serve Him. We will give Him thanks and glory. We will sing with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. We will rejoice. We will fellowship together. We talk in our communion liturgy about a foretaste of the feast to come. We today will receive the body and blood of Jesus Christ, but in paradise we will be with Christ and we will fellowship together with Him in the marriage banquet, the wedding banquet that will have no end.

We will eat not because we're hungry and we need it. We will eat because it's a joy to be together and fellowship together. We don't know exactly what paradise is going to be like. We know that we're not going to get little halos and wings and our little harp and float around on clouds. We know that that's not going to happen because that's a promise of a disembodied spirit. We are not disembodied spirits. We are body and soul. And so our hope is a restoration of who we are today. And we will recognize each other, just like the apostles or the disciples when they were on the mountain transfiguration and Moses and Elijah showed up and they knew it was Moses and Elijah. Now I guarantee you they'd never met either one of them before, but they knew who they were.

And we too will know, not just our mother and father and our grandparents, but our great, great, great, great, great grandparents and all the others. We will know Moses, and Elijah, and Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all of that. We will know each other and we will be known. And the love that we will have for each other will be so marvelous and great and beyond measure. The peace that we will have and above all of that, above the joy of the family reunion that we are going to have when we get to heaven or when we get to paradise, above all of that, we will be in the presence of our God.

And how do I know this? Think about this. In the book of Revelations again, John has his vision of the 12,000 from the tribes of Israel, from each of the tribes. And then he looks around and says he sees a great multitude that no one could number from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages standing before the throne and before the Lamb clothed in the white robes with palm branches in their hands and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb."

Now who is that great multitude? Here's the thing. It's not just those who had already died in the faith. Remember John is seeing a vision of the culmination of God's creation. So that great multitude, John saw you

and me. He saw the end. He saw all of us gathered on the last day. See we were there or we will be there. It gets a little crazy when we start talking about visions, but John saw the culmination, which means we are a part, we were there. So when he sees this great multitude of tribes and peoples and languages, that includes you and me. That includes our list of loved ones that we remembered today, who died this year. It includes all of us. We are part of that great multitude that no one could number. Pretty amazing that John's already seen us and knows us. But then again, God already sees us and knows us and has sealed us. If we are sealed by God, nothing can separate us from His love.

So no matter what happens in this world, and it's going to get crazy at times. Is this the end, the very, very end, or will it be a while? Who knows? The angels will come to destroy the earth and sea and the trees when all who have been called by God are sealed in His presence, in His name. So what do we do as we wait for the consummation of the age, for the coming of our Lord? Well, we serve Him with thanksgiving and praise. We serve Him with joy and we seek to share the love of God with those around us, that they might know the comfort and peace that only God can give.

But we do all of this through rejoicing. Don't be downhearted. Don't be depressed about the chaos of this age. Don't be discouraged that the world doesn't seem to want to hear the message. There are still people out there. There are plenty of people out there whom God is calling. Let us pray that we might be the hands and the feet of the Gospel bearing that sword of the Spirit, which not only cleaves through the enemy, but also cleaves the sin out of all of us.

Let us bear that weapon with joy and thanksgiving, that others might see the joy of their salvation and let us greet each other with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs and give thanksgiving in all times and for everything. For we have been washed in the blood of the Lamb and our robes are white as snow, and we are sealed and part of the multitude of the heavenly host. Today, we are part of the kingdom of God. It's not something we look forward to and wait for. It is ours. And it has been ours since we were sealed.

May that grace, mercy, and peace, and that assurance of your salvation be and abide with you always, now and forever more, unto life everlasting. Amen.