Immanuel (Augsburg) Lutheran Church
Shobonier, Illinois
All Saints' Day
November 1, 2026
Revelation 7:9-17

Heavenly Comfort

After this I looked, and behold, 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 white robes, with palm branches in their hands, 10 and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" (Revelation 7:9-10 ESV)

In the name of Jesus, the only Savior of the world,

We live in a day of doom and gloom. Economic worries. Endless conflict at home and abroad. Election Day. Environmental destruction. Enemies within and without. Existential crises. Emotional distress. There seems to be no end to the turmoil. Is that all there is? Heavens no!

Repent! For to people who are suffering and mourning and under attack, our Lord gives encouragement through the vision given to St. John. In today's first reading, St. John describes the scene before the heavenly throne of God: "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 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!'"

How marvelous! St. John was given a sneak peak beyond the veil of time into the resurrection of the saints, that is, believers in Christ, to eternal life. And God had him record that vision for us. And the first thing we notice is the extent of God's salvation and the true and certain hope that it gives. For the extent of Christ's saving work is the whole world - people from "every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages."

You see, this vast multitude, a crowd beyond counting, dressed in white robes, holding palm branches in their hands, and singing a song that ascribes their salvation solely to their God and to the Lamb are the saints of God. Though they come from different cultures, with different customs and different languages, they are united in the heavenly liturgy and their song of salvation before the Lamb. They are rejoicing, not in themselves or anything of their own doing, but only in the Lamb, for He has done everything for them. He is their salvation. Their robes are white only because they have been washed in the blood of the Lamb - the blood shed on Calvary's cross when the Lamb of God died in their place to redeem them and set them free so that they stand before God holy and pure. Because God has done everything for their salvation, they are always in His presence, day and night, delighting to give Him endless liturgy, praise, and doxology. They are sheltered by God's presence and He protects them from all harm and in

that act of awesome gentleness, He reaches out His nail-scarred hand to wipe away every tear from their eyes. Their sorrows are gone. They have eternal joy.

And this is comforting for us because these saints are “the ones coming out of the great tribulation, the great sorrow.” These are the blessed ones of whom our Lord speaks in today's Gospel; those who recognized their own spiritual poverty, even as they mourned over their sin. These are those who were reviled, persecuted, and slandered for the sake of the Lord Jesus and His Gospel. They have come out of the great tribulation which is life under the cross where the devil, the world, and our flesh press in on us. These saints are not super-Christians who lived lives exempt from the same struggles that you face. They are not those so-called “victorious Christians” who aren't bothered by temptation and failure, by doubt and frustration. They have no self-made or self-declared holiness, for their holiness is the blood of Jesus Christ that cleanses us from all sin. They wear the white robe of His righteousness that covers their shame and wraps them up in the forgiveness of sins. It is only through that righteousness that they have access to the presence of the living God.

Yes, my friends, the saints in heaven are people like you and me. People who have had their share of heart-ache and pain. People who sometimes had to struggle day by day just to hang on and keep going. People for whom faith didn’t come easy. People who struggled to trust in God and to believe that in the midst of their troubles God was still there and still in control and most importantly still loving them, forgiving them, holding them. Yet they hung on, they clung to God’s promises, repented of their sins, and found that He was truthful and trustworthy and didn’t let them down.

And while “they in glory shine,” “we feebly struggle.” Still, we, like them, are saints. We are saints because the blood of the Lamb that atoned for their sin has atoned for our sin too. The white robe of Christ's righteousness with which they are clothed is our beauty and glorious dress given to us in our Baptism. They wave the palm branches of victory because the Lamb has triumphed. Death could not hold Him in its icy grip, and because He is risen from the dead, we have the pledge of eternal life.

We are one with the saints in John’s vision because we are one with our Lord Jesus Christ. Indeed as the Book of Hebrews says "...we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses." (Heb. 12:1). There are prophets and apostles, martyrs and confessors, and a unnumbered host of ordinary Christians unknown to us but known to God who lived and died trusting in Jesus Christ. They are all saints. So, you see, we are not alone. Shepherded by the Good Shepherd, we are in His flock surrounded by saints who have gone before us and saints who still live on this earth. We are members of His Church, the communion of saints.

So let the doom-and-gloom sayers have their say. They can harm us none. For while the Church on earth is beset by conflict and division, we have comfort and hope. For the saints in St. John’s vision are the Church that Christ has already gathered home. And we’re the Church that still struggles. But we are not two churches: we are one Church, one communion – in Christ. As the words of that great hymn we just sang puts it: “Oh, blest communion, fellowship

divine! We feebly struggle, they in glory shine; yet all are one in Thee, for all are Thine. Alleluia. Alleluia." God grant that we join that heavenly chorus to sing the endless hymn, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!". Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Rev. Timothy J. Landskroener