

SERMON FOR ALL SAINTS' DAY 11-5-17 (Our Redeemer)

Revelation 7:9-17 "Saints of God – Now and Always!"

Dear Fellow Redeemed, Saints of the Living God!

The Scriptures apply a number of beautiful and meaningful titles to us Christians. We are called 'The People of God', 'The Children of God', 'heirs of God', the 'salt of the earth and the light of the world'. Peter describes us as a **'chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God...'** What glorious titles! What priceless privileges they convey to us!

There is an even more glorious and honorable title that the Bible applies to us Christians, namely, the title 'Saints of God'. Can you and I be classified as saints? What is the value of being a saint? For our instruction today let us meditate a bit more on the subject:

"We are the Saints of God!"

What is a 'saint'? A saint is simply any believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. The word "saint" is derived from the Latin word "SANCTUS" = a holy person. A saint is not a person who walks around with a halo on his/her head, with a holier-than-thou expression on his/her face, and with folded hands; but a saint is simply a Christian, someone who has been made holy by faith in Jesus Christ. And those who are made holy before God are also people whom God has set apart to be His witnesses and the evidence of His presence before others. In other words, people ought to see God in us, in how we live and act. *That's how we serve as the Saints of God*

So you and I as believers in Jesus Christ are saints. To be sure, we sometimes apply the word "saint" to eminent men and women of God, as for example to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, the Gospel writers, or to Paul and Peter or to Mary the mother of Jesus. We also often use the term 'saint' to apply to departed believers, to those who have been transferred from the church on earth, the church militant, to the church in heaven, the church triumphant. And, of course, the term is also used to describe certain people who have been 'canonized' by their church and thereby elevate to the rank of sainthood. But scripturally a saint is any believer in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, whether he is living here or has gone on to glory in heaven.

All Saints' Day is a day observed in the church in commemoration of all the faithful departed saints of God. The Word of God before us speaks of the saints of God who have reached their eternal destination; it speaks of the saints in glory. Who are they? They are people from every land and nation under the sun; people of every class and color, of every language and locality, of every race and rank; people who have been redeemed by the sacrificial life and death of Jesus Christ. Speaking of the saints

in glory, St. John makes the interesting and instructive comment, first of all in verse 9: **“I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count...standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.”** And then in verse 14 he goes on: **“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.”**

Where are the departed saints of God? St. John informs us that they are **‘before the throne of God.’** So the departed saints have not passed into annihilation or extinction or nothingness. Death does not end everything. The Lord tells us: **“the hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice and come out”** (John 5:28, 29). So Jesus gives us a clear and definitive answer to the question raised by Job centuries earlier when he asked, **“If a man dies, will he live again?”** The answer of Scripture and of Jesus himself is, **“YES!”**

Can you think of a more beautiful or comforting description of the present situation of those **who have died in the faith than that they are in the presence of God,** before the throne of God, or in the city of God? God assures us that our loved ones are with Him in glory. And John, in these same verses **tells us how they got there:** **“They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”** While on earth, their robes had been soiled and stained by the ravages of sin, but the atoning sacrifice of Christ cleansed and purified them from all their iniquities. There is no other way of gaining admission into the holy city of God than by faith in the merits of Jesus Christ. That is why Luke writes in the book of Acts: **“Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.”** So our loved ones who have passed on before us and we ourselves are saints of God because we have had our robes washed in the blood of the Lamb; that is, Jesus shed His blood as the payment for our sins.

When the Apostle John was permitted to have a glimpse of the saints in glory, he noted that their appearance was marvelous to behold. The Scriptures tell us:

1. that the saints above ^{will} have glorified bodies, bodies from which all defects and deficiencies have been removed; *Fashioned after His glorious, resurrected body!*
2. that the saints above are robed in spotless white robes, signifying the perfection and purity that has been given to them by Jesus;
3. The Bible tells us that the saints above are in a state of supreme blessedness and happiness; that heaven is a place of full joy and pleasures forever!
4. They carry palm branches in their hands in joyous celebration of the victory over sin and Satan that has been won for them by the Lamb. Truly, as the Psalmist declares in Psalm 92:12 **“The righteous shall flourish as the palm tree!”**

So, what do the saints in glory do to pass their time? Those who imagine heaven as a boring place with nothing to do but play harps and sing hymns are wrong. **Believers will find fulfilling service day and night in the presence of the Lord.** Certainly the description of the saints in heaven given us by John here in our text is one of the most beautiful and inspiring that we have. John writes: **“they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon 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.”** What the service that the saints render in heaven is we are not told. But day and night, ceaselessly and eternally, they serve the Lord that brought them to the faith and preserved them in the faith during their days on earth. While here on earth we sometimes grow weary of worshipping and serving God, but the saints in glory never grow weary of worshipping and serving their Creator, Redeemer and Comforter.

As saints in glory we will be exempt from all difficulties and disturbances and troubles. We will enjoy the beauties and the pleasures that await us before the Lord. As residents in the holy city we will be fed with bread from heaven and refreshed with living fountains of water. We will enjoy perfect peace, quiet rest, and total safety. We will experience what the Psalmist describes in Psalm 16:11: **“You will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”**

As Saints of God we can rejoice in the fact that our best days are yet to come. We have a glorious future awaiting us: **residence in the city of God, refreshment from the Lamb of God and reunion with the people of God who have gone before us.** Truly, it is beyond our powers of comprehension to fully appreciate what the saints in glory are experiencing right now. If people living about 1900 had been told about color Television, VCR's, CD's, Cell Phones, and Jet planes that could take you anywhere in the world; about space travel, about picking up a phone and talking to anyone anywhere; about the internet – they would have considered such ideas as mere fantasies and beyond the bounds of reality. But we know it has all happened! Listen to what Scripture has to say about what is in store for us: (1 Corinthians 2:9) **“No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him...!”** The glitter and glamour of life's special prizes will soon fade away, but not so the glory of the saints of God. So, on this All Saints' Sunday, **may we marvel at what an awesome God we have.** May we be ever thankful for His gift of forgiveness and life through His Son, Jesus; and may we heed Paul's encouragement to **“strive for the prizes,”** to be as John directs us in the book of Revelation: **“faithful unto death and we will receive the crown of life!”** Amen.

You don't have to know - Just Believe *You don't have to know - Just Believe!*