



All Saint's Sunday
"Oh, When the Saints (and not New Orleans)"
November 6, 2011
Text: Revelation 7:9-17

In the name of Jesus! Amen.

In the Lutheran Book of Worship, there is a hymn entitled "Look, the Sight is Glorious" (LBW #156). The first words of the hymn are "Look, oh, look, the sight is glorious". While the hymn is a lesser known hymn about the Ascension of our Lord, it does speak to the sight that John writes about in Revelation for today.

What a sight this indeed must have been! To be standing in the throne room before the throne of the Lamb of God!! Yet there he is, standing— watching, and hearing everything that is happening:

First, a multitude – too many to count, from every nation, from every tribe, from every country, gathering together. They are dressed in white, carrying palm branches in their hands, **STANDING** before the throne of God, singing and crying: "Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne and to the Lamb!"

Second, as the multitude is gathered around the throne, they continue singing, "*blessing, honor, glory, and might, be to God and the Lamb forever, A—men.*"

The sight as John records it in Revelation leaves chills going down my spine! The reality, the beauty, and the glimpse of standing in the throne room in the kingdom of heaven – and to be able to describe it in detail!!

As John watches and listens, he is approached by an elder, who asks, "who are these robed in white?"

Who indeed "are these robed in white"? The elder's question is the equivalent of someone asking the pastor, "who were the visitors that recently came to visit on a Sunday morning?"

Who indeed "are these robed in white"? They are the ones who suffered and were persecuted for their faith. They are the ones who stood up to injustice and oppression. They are the ones who washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb, turning their robes not red, but white. They are the ones throughout the centuries who stood for justice and mercy when justice and mercy were not to be found. They are the saints who have entered their eternal rest. They are our loved ones – the ones who taught us in faith, the ones who supported us, and encouraged us, the ones who walked with us as we learned new ideas, the ones who laughed at our jokes, shared in our joys or our sorrows; the ones who shared our hopes and our dreams.

Yet these who are robed in white—the saints – the ones we have known, loved, and held near and dear to our hearts are and were by no means as perfect as we would like them to be.

We remember the unkind word, a self centered decision which we might not have understood. We remember the disagreements, and the regrets. In the midst of these imperfections, a fiercely independent streak may have revealed itself in ways we never knew or thought possible!!

There is one more group standing at the throne, robed in white. Those standing before the throne of the Lamb of God are each and every one of us!

We too, wear the white robe. We wear this robe for the first time in the waters of our baptism. In these waters, we are sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever. We are called, and claimed as children – as God's beloved children.

The beauty about being called and claimed as God's beloved children is that this is something we did not choose for ourselves. God chose it – for us. God chose us as His beloved children because He wants to be in relationship with each and every one of us. God loves us – no matter what.

There are days where the white robe we freely put on through the waters of our baptism becomes soiled and tarnished. It becomes dirty through our sin, our imperfections, our faults, our errors. There may be times we think we do not need to wear this white robe. We may not want to wear this white robe because we are ashamed, embarrassed, forgetful, frustrated, impatient, intolerant. We may think we have outgrown this white robe, and that we need perhaps to try on another size.

Regardless of when we were sealed by the Holy Spirit, and marked with the cross of Christ forever, whether as infants, as children, as teens, or as adults, the white robe stays with us. God's claim on us as His beloved, holy, and precious children remains upon us for the rest of our lives.

In those claims, we hold on to the promise and the assurance of receiving our final white robe which cannot and will not be tarnished at the last.

Thanks be to God! Amen!