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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
November 23, 2014
Last Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture Lessons: Hebrews 12:18-24, John 5:19-29

Hymns: 246; 611; 605; 50:2-3

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Revelation 7:9-17

9 After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, 10 and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" 11 All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, 12 saying:

"Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom,
Thanksgiving and honor and power and might,
Be to our God forever and ever. Amen."

13 Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?"

14 And I said to him, "Sir, you know."

So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. 15 Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them. 16 They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; 17 for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

(NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth.
Amen.

In Christ Jesus, The Judge of all, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: A lot will be going on that Day.

The day I'm talking about is the Last Day, Judgment Day, the day some of this world refer to as "Dooms Day." There is going to be many different things happening pretty much all at the same time, or at least happening so quickly that it would be difficult for us to distinguish the sequence of events. The Lord will return with a shout with the sound of the trumpet and all the dead will rise. All the unbelievers will not only be shocked, but horrified by the coming of the Lord. And so "Doom's Day" will be coming upon them. The world and everything in it will be passing away. Peter tells us in his second epistle that all this that we see around us will be gone.

2 Peter 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.

For far too many on that last day their focus will be on the destruction of the earth, and their own fear will drive them to seek a place to hide. However that is not where your focus will be. For while many tragic and even cataclysmic things are going on your focus will be on --

THEME: The Glories of Judgment Day.

One of the things that will involve us personally will be --

I. The Gathering of the Elect.

Remember that John is being shown visions of the victory of God and the glories of heaven in the visions of Revelation. The early Christians were being severely persecuted and by all appearances

to human perception evil was prevailing and the Lord's Kingdom was being defeated. John himself was being held in exile on the island of Patmos so that his influence would not rally the spirits of the believers. Ah - but the Lord is not so easily defeated. In fact the Lord is triumphant, and His people, though oppressed for a time, shall be delivered from this world which is very evil to the glories of heaven. That is what is revealed for our encouragement in the opening verses of our text.

Revelation 7:9 “After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands.”

At the end, on the last day there shall be a great assembly of all the blessed. While in this world we see ourselves as being so few in number, for we cannot see all those who are the Lord's, on the Last Day we shall all be together and it shall be a great multitude of the children of God. You won't even be able to begin to count the number of the assembly. And it shall not be from only one ethnic group or from one country in the world. We shall be gathered from all the lands, from all the peoples and from all the tongues in this world. We are all the children of Abraham, the children of Israel, for we hold to the faith of our fathers, faith in those promises of salvation which were fulfilled in Christ Jesus our Lord. We shall all stand together before the throne. And oh, it shall be glorious! Remember how the Apostle Paul describes it for us in –

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

Together with the Lord! There shall be standing with us all those who have gone before us. Their mortal remains will be raised from the grave and they shall be just ahead of us arriving before the Lord, glorified together with us. The vision has all of us wearing the same apparel, the white robes of Jesus' righteousness. For only

attired in His righteousness through faith in His sacrifice and His resurrection will we be gathered together by the holy angels who will come with the Lord. Yes, we will be spotless and pure before the Lord, for our robes will have been washed white in the blood of the Lamb. There will not be any stain of sin remaining. Already today the Lord assures of His righteousness being ours through faith so that we sing:

TLH 373:1 “Jesus Thy blood and righteousness My beauty are My glorious dress. Midst flaming worlds in these arrayed With joy shall I lift up my head!”

We will stand there ready for the greatest honor and privilege that could ever be bestowed upon us. That is what the palm branches are all about. Think back to Jesus’ Palm Sunday entry into Jerusalem. Remember how they waved the palm branches and cheered and sang as Jesus approached riding upon that donkey. They were having a victory celebration for a conquering hero. And that is exactly what the Last Day will be! All of the elect of God will be gathered before the Lamb and before the throne --

II. Glorifying the God of our Salvation.

Revelation 7:9-12 After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude ...10 crying out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” 11 All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, 12 saying: “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, Thanksgiving and honor and power and might, Be to our God forever and ever. Amen.”

On that Day our hearts will be overflowing with the praises of the Lord. We will be focused on the wonders of grace which the Lord has poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Lord. Salvation doesn’t come from us, and we know that full well. We know this to be true because the Lord has opened our hearts to believe the gospel. We have rejected the thought of our own righteousness which is vanity, and seen that God in His love sent our Savior into the world that we might have life in His name. God loved this world in spite of our rebellious and sinful ways. He

loved this world and had compassion upon us. He sent His Son, His only Son whom He loved, to bear our sin in our place. He sent His beloved Son and while enduring the agony of the cross the Father forsook Him, cursing Him with the curse of the law, the spiritual death that separates the sinner from God.

Jesus bore this curse of death for us that we might have life in His name. Jesus is the Lamb, pure and spotless who was a worthy sacrifice, the all sufficient sacrifice to win for us salvation. His blood washes us clean. And so it shall be because of the mercies of God and the sacrifice of Jesus His Son, our Lord that we shall stand together before the Lord rejoicing in our salvation, praising the God of our salvation. Surely salvation comes to us from the Lord and from the Lamb! On that Day we shall sing with the choirs of angels and all creation shall join in the praises of Him who has called us out of the darkness of sin and death into the light of life.

We shall be standing before the Lord as a grand assembly --

III. Entering the Bliss of Eternal Life

But first let us remember the deliverance of the Lord and how it grants us our true identity.

Revelation 7: 13-14 Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?" 14 And I said to him, "Sir, you know." So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Those wearing the white robes are coming out of the great tribulation on the Last Day. This is the assembly of all the elect. The Lord did not promise us that everything would be easy in this temporal life. Indeed He warned us that the world would hate us for His sake. He warned His disciples that troubles would come, and severe troubles at times. There would be tribulation. Christians are **not** exempt from the everyday troubles of life. We get sick. We have troubles with work and family, and finances, all the other problems of daily life. And these the Lord uses for our discipline, to keep us close to Him, looking to Him for strength and deliverance. However, He also warns that persecutions will come.

He warns that false prophets will come. He warns that there will be any of a number of attacks that the devil will make on our faith coming from the world. But “**he who endures to the end will be saved**” (Matthew 10:22).

This is the great tribulation, and we, along with Christians who have gone before us for hundreds of years have lived it, and so will those who follow after us, until the Day of the Lord comes. Then those who have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb, that is those who have faith in the Jesus as the one who suffered and died for us, together we will come before the Lord. This is the message the apostles presented from the beginning and it remains our hope and expectation. Paul preached to the Christians in Asia Minor:

Acts 14:22 “strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, ‘We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.’”

By the grace and power of the God we shall endure, and what lies before us is the glory of eternal life.

Revelation 7:15-17 “Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them. 16 They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; 17 for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

All of the problems and distress and pains and disappointments and tribulations of this life will be gone forever. And indeed we shall dwell in the glory of the Lord, and that shall be so wondrous that we cannot comprehend its glory, but Paul assures us in Romans 8:

Romans 8:16-18 “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. 18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”

By grace, through faith in Christ, we are the children of God. Because of this wondrous and gracious truth we look forward with eager anticipation to the Lord's return in glory. Indeed we rejoice with the psalmist:

Psalm 16:9-11 Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will rest in hope. 10 For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. 11 You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

The fulfillment of these words prophesy regarding our Savior's death and resurrection, that Jesus did not see corruption in the grave, lays the foundation of our hope of resurrection to the bliss and glory of heaven. This is what the Lord promises for all who love His appearing, fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore! **“Even so, come Lord Jesus”** (Revelation 22:20)!

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.