

"In Glory Shine"
November 1, 2020

Revelation 7:9-17

Pastor Cathy L Hamblin
Hayward United Methodist Church

Call to Worship

Grace to you and peace from God who is, and was, and is to come.

The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints.

Prayer of Invocation

God of heaven and earth, God of creation and fulfillment, be among us as we worship you today. We are mindful of all of your saints today, and your redeeming work through Jesus which can unite people of all nations, races, languages and all times. You are our shepherd guiding us to springs of the water of life. We give you our thanks for calling us into your presence. In Jesus' name. Amen.

The Word Revelation 7:9-17 (NRSV)

After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

And all the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, singing, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen."

Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, robed in white, and where have they come from?" I said to him, "Sir, you are the one that knows." Then he said to me, "These are they who have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. For this reason, they are before the throne of God, and worship him day and night within his temple, and the one who is seated on the throne will shelter them.

They will hunger no more, and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat; for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

Living the Word

PRAY

"Who are these robed in White, and where have they come from?" "These are they, who have come out of the great ordeal."

John's Revelation is filled with colorful and unearthly visions, which are difficult for us to define or understand in our earthly minds. Numerous passages in this book of Revelation describe heaven as John has envisioned it. Because none of us have been there before, we can only imagine, but John's

revelation is more than just his imagining. He has had an insight, which he has recorded for us to see, beyond our world.

We can find hope in John's revelation as we consider and speculate about our lives and the lives of those we love, beyond death. Often the Holy Spirit inspires our lives with revelations. Most often we take credit for them and we think we are the smart ones. But God's Spirit is working in us all of our lives and within that work there are insights that could compare at times to John's revelation.

There are also Holy moments when we may have a vision of something or someplace and we don't dare tell anyone, lest they look at us funny. If we did share some of the insights that seem wilder, or more far out, we might find that others would be willing to share theirs as well, and we could all have new insights.

So, I will be brave and share one of mine with you. I am risking myself, as I know that you can take it for whatever you wish, but I now know it as truth in my heart. My father, died sixteen years ago at 1:00am on Halloween morning. He had an autoimmune disease called Vasculitis. Over a year, it took his life, little bits at a time. He was in Rochester, at Mayo for the last 10 weeks, slowly going downhill physically.

In the final days it was evident that he would not be able to recover. He could no longer get enough oxygen on his own and was on a ventilator, which made it impossible for him to speak. The decision came to taking more drastic measures to keep him alive or letting him go. It was time to let go. When they took the ventilator off, we had some time when he was still lucid and able to speak again.

The family had gathered, he briefly held his newest grandson, and we surrounded him with our love. At times there were as many as 14 people in the ICU room. So, when he looked around and said "where did all of these people come from?" We just said back "Dad, we have been here." A bit later when he asked what that bright light was, we just said "Dad, those are the same lights that have been on."

That would have been the end of it and it probably wouldn't be at all remembered, but he then said, out loud, a word that only his mother had used. A Swedish word, that was as close to an expletive as she ever used: 'Shad-a-born' which means 'gracious child.' Grandma had been gone for many years and none of us had even heard that word for a very long time. One of his sisters exclaimed "He can see mom."

In our grief, we didn't really process all of it until much later, when we realized that dad was having a vision of where he was going...

Since then I have read the book "Final Gifts" which is written by two hospice nurses, who share their similar experiences as they care for those who are dying. We can't know in this life how that all works, yet we can give God the credit for those moments and times. They are small windows into the world beyond.

The scripture today speaks of the great multitude of saints, 'from every nation,' wearing white robes, carrying palm branches in their hands and standing before the throne of God. They are acknowledging that Salvation is granted from God, and the angels are singing of God's glory and power. What great imagery.

There is great hope in this passage. The music of Salvation leads us as saints, to endure whatever trouble we face in the 'great ordeal' of human existence here on earth. The elder, or wise one present, asks who these might be and where they have come from. And John reminds him that he knows who they are. The elder then responds that they have come through the 'great ordeal.' They are now beyond that.

We know as well. The whole book, the Bible gives us understanding of how we can make it through the 'great ordeals' that we face in this life. It also gives us understanding of how to achieve sainthood. The multitude were not brought in by others, they came on their own.

This says that we have to process and achieve sainthood, others can't do it for us and we can't just assume that because we called our self a Christian or attended church fairly regular, that we will be considered a saint in the eyes of God. It goes on to say, they – each one – washed their own robes to making them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Only God decides who is in and who is out, but this says that they each have been active partners in their own salvation. Revelation was not written to scare us, but to give us hope for a better place after this life. It should be for us a book of comfort.

In John 14:1-7, Jesus says: *"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me.²In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.*

⁴And you know the way to the place where I am going.⁵Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?"⁶Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.⁷If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know God and have seen God."

Today we celebrate Holy Communion. It is a reenactment of the Last Supper with the disciples of that evening. Jesus is telling them, and us, to remember him. "Do this in remembrance of me." Be an active partner in your own salvation, through me.

John's revelation is very cryptic, like a code that needs to be deciphered. It is mysterious and beyond our understanding, but within it are the seeds of truth about the Kingdom of God, beyond this earth.

The glory has begun, somewhere beyond this place. All of the saints of our lives...who have lived in us and made us who we are, have a place there.

"Well, Saints alive," Yes, there are many saints here still walking around. You know who the saints of your life are that are still with us. I invite you to take time this week to consider who they are and thank God for them. Then take time to let them know that you consider them one of the saints of your life. What a wonderful gift to give another, in this month of thanksgiving...

I want to end with the words from one of our hymns, hear what they have to say to you:

*I sing a song of the saints of God,
patient and brave and true,
who toiled and fought and lived and died,
for the Lord they loved and knew.
And one was a doctor, and one was a queen,
and one was a shepherdess on the green;
they were all of them saints of God, and I mean,
God helping, to be one too.*

*They lived not only in ages past;
there are hundreds of thousands still.
The world is bright with the joyous saints
who love to do Jesus' will.
You can meet them in school,
on the street, in the store,
in church, by the sea, in the house next door;
they are saints of God, whether rich or poor,
and I mean to be one too.*

PRAY

Sing: 708 *Rejoice in God's Saints*

Holy Communion

Holy are you, O Lord, and great is your majesty. All the saints in heaven and on earth sing their praise of your eternal glory.

For in the beginning, you prepared the worlds by your holy Word, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible. You laid out your holy plan of creation and redemption, that all who might know you would have faith, not in things seen, but in things not seen.

By faith, Noah and his family built the ark and were saved from the flood to bring forth a new generation. By faith, Enoch of old was taken straight into heaven.

By faith, Abraham and Sarah obeyed your calling and went forth from their home to a place promised but not seen, to a family promised, but only later fulfilled. By faith, Moses brought forth your chosen people, the Israelites, from slavery into freedom and led them to your holy mountain to worship and to receive your law.

By faith, the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah held fast to your promise of a Messiah who would come to save your people from their sin. By faith, Mary and Joseph awaited the day of your promise, until you brought forth that savior, our Lord Jesus Christ, your only-begotten Son.

In him is the fulfillment of the faith and hope of all the saints. In him is our salvation won and your love revealed.

On the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

In heaven and on earth, O God, the saints and angels unite around your holy altar to proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died! Christ is risen! Christ will come again!

We remember and hold fast to Christ's examples of faith and life as the saints before us have done. We remember his living among outcasts and sinners, his concern for the poor, his life of prayer and worship, and his teachings about your love.

But chiefly we remember his life-giving passion and death, his glorious resurrection and ascension, and his promise to come again to raise us and all the faithful departed to live together eternally in fellowship with him in his heavenly kingdom.

Send now your Holy Spirit upon these gifts of bread and wine, that they may be the body and blood of him who is the hope and salvation of the living and the dead. Send your Holy Spirit upon us also that we might know his presence in these gifts, and through them, be united in prayer and praise with all those who have gone before us.

With this feast, join us in one holy communion of saints, one great cloud of witnesses, with St. Peter and St. Paul, with St. John and St. Mary Magdalene, and with all the blessed dead whose lives of faith in unseen things continue to inspire us, as together we lift our voices to you, O God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in eternal glory, now and forever. Amen

And now with the confidence of the children of God let us pray:

The Lords Prayer

~Lift the Loaf and the cup. ~Open invitation to all

~Crackers ~Juice