

# SAINTS TRIUMPHANT SUNDAY

First German Evangelical Lutheran Church

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## How My Heart Yearns Within Me

### Revelation 19:1-9

After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting: "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God,<sup>2</sup> for true and just are his judgments. He has condemned the great prostitute who corrupted the earth by her adulteries. He has avenged on her the blood of his servants."<sup>3</sup> And again they shouted: "Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever."<sup>4</sup> The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God, who was seated on the throne. And they cried: "Amen, Hallelujah!"<sup>5</sup> Then a voice came from the throne, saying: "Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, both small and great!"<sup>6</sup> Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns."<sup>7</sup> Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.<sup>8</sup> Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)<sup>9</sup> Then the angel said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!'" And he added, "These are the true words of God."

Have you ever gone on a long car ride with your family? If you have, you know that these can sometimes be trying experiences. When the whole family is pent up inside a vehicle for many hours, sometimes the patience can wear a little thin and frustration begins to set in. Why do we put ourselves through these experiences? It's because of the destination. We need to get somewhere and so we will do what it takes to get there. If that destination is some place we are really looking forward to, then the drive is much more bearable. If we know that at the end of the journey, we will be someplace wonderful—we will put up with pretty much anything. The end makes it all worth it. Today, in our second reading, we get to see a glimpse of what is waiting for us at the end of this journey called life. And when we realize what is waiting for us in the future, we can endure the stress and difficulty of today much more easily.

Our lesson is recorded in the book of Revelation. This is the revelation that the apostle John received while he was in exile on the Isle of Patmos. If you have read through the book of Revelation, you know that it is made up of a series of pictures or visions, which John saw and then recorded for us. In the vision we have before us today, we witness a great celebration—complete with all the sounds, the sights, and the smells of a big party. The first thing we notice is the sound. John says that he heard “*what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting*. If you have ever been to a party that is packed with people and everyone is trying to be heard over everyone else, you know how loud that can sound. In this case, everyone is shouting the same thing: *Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for true and just are his judgments. He has condemned the great prostitute who corrupted the earth by her adulteries. He has avenged on her the blood of his servants*

With their words, the crowd lets us know what this great celebration is all about. They are celebrating the victory of the almighty God. God’s victory comes about by condemning the great prostitute. We know from the other visions of Revelation that the great prostitute is a picture of the apostate church—those who call themselves followers of Christ but are actually out to destroy the work of the gospel. The great party in this chapter is taking place because the false teachers have been exposed for who they really are and have been cast down in judgment. God has destroyed the enemies of the church. That is a cause to celebrate. In this celebration is a celebration that will last for all eternity. We are reminded of this when we hear the people shout: “*Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever.*” On the Great Day of Judgment, it is not as though God’s people will celebrate just a momentary triumph. They will celebrate an eternal victory. They will know that the enemies of Christ will never again rise up against the Lord. They have been cast down forever. God has repaid them for all their wicked acts against his people.

It is a very comforting thought for us to realize that God’s justice will ultimately prevail in this world. It’s comforting because so often it seems like just the opposite is true. It seems like the bad people in this world and the enemies of Christ always get ahead. Sometimes, it seems like no good deed goes unpunished. You do the right thing and you suffer for it. You speak God’s Word to someone and you get made fun of. That is what life is like on this side of heaven. But as we look at the vision in Revelation, we realize that in the end everything will turn out the way it is supposed to. Those who have

opposed the Lord and the gospel will be punished and those who follow the Lord will be rewarded. There will be a celebration that will last into all eternity.

And who are the ones exactly that will be celebrating? We are told this in the second half of our reading today: *"Then a voice came from the throne, saying: 'Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, both small and great!' Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: 'Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.' (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)* There are a number of different terms used for those who are celebrating in this vision. They are described as "God's servants," "those who fear him," "the bride of the Lamb," and, finally, simply as "the saints." These terms all refer to the same group of people—those who are made holy through the blood of Jesus Christ. This is a reference to all believers on earth and in heaven. They are able to celebrate at the wedding feast of the Lamb because they have been given the right clothes to wear. They have been given fine linen, bright and clean. The word, which we see translated as "the righteous acts" of the saints, could also be translated as the "the righteous verdicts" of the saints. The ones who are celebrating in heaven are the ones who have been given the not guilty verdict on Judgment Day.

Certainly, we want to be among those who are celebrating in heaven for all eternity. And how can we know that we will be the ones celebrating and not the ones who are condemned on the Last Day? We wrap ourselves in the beautiful garment that is spoken of in our reading. As Paul wrote in his letter to the Galatians: *"All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ."* In our baptism, our imperfection was covered over by Christ's perfection. As we continue to look to Christ in faith, we know that we find perfect forgiveness and peace through his blood, shed on the cross. It is because of Christ's victory on the cross that we can be assured of our own eternal victory with him in heaven. It is because of Christ's victory that we can be assured that we will be among those who shout: *"Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory!"*

This is a thought that gives us great joy. I think our joy can be summed up pretty well with the words that the angel speaks in our reading *'Blessed are*

*those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!* The root meaning of the word “blessed” is “happy.” The thought of the saints celebrating in glory makes us happy. First of all, it makes us happy when we realize that among those saints are all our loved ones who have already died in the Lord. Even though we might miss them here on earth, we know that they are experiencing eternal joy at the wedding supper of the Lamb. This thought of the saints celebrating in glory also makes us happy because we realize that we, too, will enjoy this celebration. One day, when the Lord calls us home, we will experience for ourselves the endless joy that belongs to those who have been invited to the marriage feast of the Lamb.

I don't think I could close this sermon with any better words than the ones which close our text: *“These are the true words of God.”* You do not have to doubt your eternal future for even one second because God himself has spoken on the matter and he always speaks the truth. You can live every day with the confidence of knowing that you are headed for a glorious triumph. This can bring you comfort on those days which seem anything but triumphant. It can also bring you joy in those times when things seem to be going well, because you can know that even the best this earth has to offer is nothing compared to the glory of the saints triumphant. As Job said so well: **“HOW MY HEART YEARNs WITHIN ME!” Amen.**

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Sermon No. 205  
November 16, 2008  
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