

“Can I Get A Witness?”

Rev. 7:9-17

Rev. Mark M. Vickers

Sunday, November 5, 2017

All Saints Sunday

St. Timothy's UMC-Jamestown, NC

Revelation 7:9-17 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

The Multitude from Every Nation

9 *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. 10 They cried out in a loud voice, saying,*

“Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!”

11 *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, 12 singing, “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.”*

13 *Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, “Who are these, robed in white, and where have they come from?” 14 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.*

15

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.

16

They will hunger no more, and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat;

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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.”

Geddes MacGregor in *The Rhythm of God*, tells of a priest who, when asked, ‘*How many people were at the early celebration of the Eucharist last Wednesday morning?*’ replied, ‘*There were three old ladies, the janitor, several thousand archangels, a large number of seraphim, and several million of the triumphant saints of God.*’

My friends, we live in the moment. If we are not satisfied with the number of people that are present for our worship, eucharist, Maundy Thursday service, we ponder the affect. Today, we gather as a community of faith to welcome new members, care for those who are here and remember those who have gone before us. Our problem usually is, we are people of vision. Now I didn’t say we were a people of vision (this time) but rather we tend to focus on what we can see with our God given eyes. But, today the church is reminded that we would not be here if it weren’t for those who went before us.

Listen, we are still in the cradle here at St. Timothy’s! In “church years” we are just getting started. We do not have a large group to choose from. Now that’s not bad, it’s just a fact. However, what I see as even more important than not having a host of “those who have gone before us” to choose from, we have people who have led us to the faith that are not here. They may still be alive but in another part of the world, maybe another church in the area, in our families, in our neighborhood. But they are the people who brought us here to do what we are called to do, be the church.

So you see, the saints of God do not have to be dead. They just have to make an impact on our lives. However, the Bible does make a lot out of those who have gone on to be with Jesus, to be “in waiting” for the resurrection, those who have done great things within the church, with their lives. The saints of God are those people who have made our lives what they are today.

Dr. Stuart Henry, my church history professor at Duke told a story one day and I’ll never forget it. He was leaving the Divinity school building and walking in front of Duke Chapel when he was confronted by a father and his young son. The father asked Dr. Henry if they could enter Duke Chapel, well Dr. Henry obliged and walked in with them, I’m sure, spouting off some history of the chapel and the church. When he called their attention to the beautiful stained glass windows in the chapel, the boys father asked his son, “Do you know who the saints are?” “Sure,” said the son, “the saints are the people where the sun shines through.” I would be hard pressed to find a better definition than that for a saint.

The people in our lives that let the sun shine through are the people who have molded us into the Christians, the people, that we are!

In the Revelation to St. John the Divine this morning we get the cultured vision of those who have gone before us. The multitude from every nation, dressed in white (the color of righteousness and victory); those who have completed the journey and stand before the “throne of God.” In our world, in our Christian journey, those are the people “WE” want to be! Those are the people we have envisioned that have molded us and made us to be the people of God in the Kingdom of God.

For you see, we are an inquisitive people, we want to know who those saints are. In verse 13 we hear the writer say, *“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, “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.”* Those my friends are the people we label as saints.

Those in our lives that have gone before us, suffered for the cause, overcome adversity, fought the good fight, endured the struggles of the time. They are the people in our lives that have left that indelible mark on our hearts and in our minds, and on the church, that changed us forever.

One theologian sums it up best, “The more we do God’s will the less unfinished business we leave behind when we die. If our lives exemplify personal charity and the pursuit of justice, then death will not be the enemy, but rather the friendly angel leading us on to the One whose highest hope is to be able to say to each and every one of us, ‘Well done, thou good and faithful servant; enter into the joy of the Master.’”

That my church is the seal of the saints. Those who have gone before us, those who are among us. Yet in the final triumph, we will be in the presence of God and as the writer of Revelation states, *“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.”*

For this we give honor and praise for those we name before us:

Susan Norman Vickers

Seth Morgan

Sergio Cordova

Isabel Barraza

Doris Kirby

Bernice Webb

Sarah Wright Parrish

Margaret Golden

Charlie Harward

And all of those saints we do not know by name but now sit at the throne of the Lamb.
Thanks be to God!

AMEN & AMEN