

All Saints' Day  
St. Matthew 5:1-12  
November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022  
Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC  
Simpsonville, SC  
Pastor Jerald Dulas

## Great Is Your Reward in Heaven

*In Nomine Iesu!*

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

### **Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:**

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Anyone who has lived a while on this Earth knows that being a Christian also involves persecution. In the Early Church that persecution involved beatings, scourging, imprisonment, and death. We have most likely not experienced such things in our lives as Christians...so far. But we endure persecutions in a different way. We endure mockings, loss of social status, and at times we are just plain ignored by the rest of the world, as if we do not matter at all. Our Lord + Jesus in His Sermon on the Mount to His Apostles tells them that they will endure persecution. This message is the same for us. As a Christian we have the guarantee that we will endure persecutions in this life.

But not all persecutions are the same. Our Lord quantifies His statement about persecutions. We can be persecuted in this life—or at least think we are being persecuted—and actually deserve that persecution. It is the result of our own bad behavior. It is the result of our own sinfulness that causes us to be persecuted; at least the persecutions we believe are happening to us in our own minds. But our Lord + Jesus says that those who are blessed by persecutions are not the ones that actually deserve it on account of their manifold transgressions, but those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness.

What does that mean? He clarifies this statement in the next verse. The ones who are truly blessed for their persecution are the ones who are persecuted for two reasons: they are persecuted for something that is not true; that is, lies are being told about them. And they are being persecuted for the sake of the Christ; that is, they are being persecuted on account of their faith in the Lord + Jesus as the One and Only Savior of the world. We are blessed in our persecutions when we are persecuted as Christians; for having put on the garment of the righteousness of our Lord + Jesus Christ.

This garment we have received when we were baptized in the waters of Holy Baptism. Through faith in the gifts promised in that holy washing we have put on Christ. We have put on His righteousness. We have put on His works and merits. We wear this robe of righteousness through faith.

In the Book of Revelation, the seventh chapter, the Epistle for today, one of the elders sitting on the twenty-four thrones asks St. John who are those of the great multitude which no one could number from every tribe, nation, people and tongue. They were clothed in white robes and sang before the throne of the Lord God holding palm branches in their hands, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits

on the throne, and to the Lamb!" Who are these of this great multitude who fell down before Him on their faces and worshiped Him with all the angels and the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures, singing, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen."?

St. John answers, "Sir, you know." Most likely because the elder addressing him was the eternal version of him in Heaven. This great multitude are those who "came out of the great tribulation." These are those who have suffered persecution in this life. Those who had lies told about them; those who were persecuted for righteousness' sake; for clinging in faith to the Name of the Lord + Jesus Christ. All these are those who are baptized into the Name of the Lord; into the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost. They wear white robes because they have washed them in the blood of the Lamb.

Now, I am not an expert in laundry care, but I am pretty sure that if a robe is washed in blood, it is not going to come out white. The robe will be red from the blood. Therefore, as is the case with all of the Book of Revelation the elder is speaking in figurative language; he is talking in symbolism. Just like the listing of the numbers of the tribes from previously in the Epistle. There are those who want to make those hundred and forty-four thousand out to be a literal number. They forget, however, that they are excluded from this number if they are not a Jew from one of the tribes listed. One cannot take some of the Book of Revelation literal, and other parts figurative. The whole book is Apocalyptic in nature, that is, it is figurative and symbolic.

This is the case with those who have come out of the great tribulation and washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb so that their robes shown as white as the white robes of our Lord + Jesus on the Mountain of Transfiguration. The great tribulation is the life that we are living now. We are in tribulation because we endure persecution. Certainly, there is persecution from the world that mocks all those who cling in faith to the Lord + Jesus. Surely there is persecution from those who preach false doctrines and revile us for holding to the truth of the Word of God. Assuredly, we have the devil about us day and night hounding us without end with temptation after temptation. But we also endure persecution in our very own soul. We endure the misery and guilt of sin and shame for our manifold transgressions.

When we are persecuted, endure tribulation, and suffer guilt from our trespasses and iniquities we do not feel blessed, like our Lord + Jesus say we should be. This is because we deserve to be persecuted for our sins and transgressions. We are blessed, however, when we rejoice in our Holy Baptisms. For in those waters our sins were washed away. We lay hold to our Holy Baptisms whenever we cling in faith to those precious waters. Through those waters we are gifted the robe of the righteousness of the Christ. It is His works and merits which we now possess on account of Holy Baptism. All of our sins, iniquities, transgressions, and trespasses are covered over with the righteousness of the Christ. Truly we are blessed beyond measure.

For we have put on the Christ and His works. To put on the Christ and His works is to wash our robes in His blood—in the blood of the Lamb. This is the blood which He shed for us on the tree of the holy cross. On the cross He won for us forgiveness of our sins. We drink this blood with the wine in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. There we remember and proclaim that His shed blood which we drink is for the remission of all our sins. Through Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper—through all the means of grace—we wash our robes in the blood of the Lamb, and they become white with His righteousness.

Every time we endure persecution falsely for the sake of the Name of the Christ, we are blessed. We are blessed because we endure tribulation just like our Lord + Jesus endured persecution and tribulation. He suffered, was crucified, and was buried. So did the prophets, Apostles, and martyrs who suffered death at the hands of evil men. These men did not love their lives in this world, and gladly suffered and endured all sorts of persecution. For they looked forward to an eternal crown. They look

forward to an eternity living in Heaven. All the saints who have gone before, who we remember and rejoice in on this festival of All Saints' Day, have endured persecution, trial, and tribulation. They have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb to make them white. They have persevered with patience and received the crown of eternal life.

This promise is for us as well. We endure persecution, trial and tribulation every day of our lives. Some days that may be more, or less, intense; some days we may not even feel it at all. And even though we may not have to give up our lives for professing the Christian faith, we suffer in this life because we are filled with sin. Sin corrupts us to the core, and we endure its consequences daily in our lives. But we have the promise of an eternal life in Heaven.

When St. John beholds the great multitude in the seventh chapter of the Book of Revelation, we can believe that are standing in that crowd. We are there dressed in white robes, holding our palm branches, and singing the eternal liturgy of the Lamb in His Kingdom, as we bow our faces to the ground before the throne, and rejoice that we have come out of the great tribulation. All those who cling in faith to the Lord + Jesus, the Christ, have washed their robes in His Blood shed on the tree of the holy cross. All of us who hold on to Him in faith will be in that great multitude. We will be with all those saints who have gone before us; all our loved ones who have already received the crown of eternal life. We will be with the angels and archangels and all the company of Heaven for all eternity.

And the best news is that we are given a glimpse of Heaven by St. John in the Book of Revelation, the seventh chapter. We are given a reason by which we can confess, as our Lord + Jesus teaches, that we are truly blessed when we endure persecution. For we will no longer hunger or thirst. The sun will not strike us, nor any heat. For the Lamb, the Lord + Jesus Christ, will be our eternal shepherd, and lead us to streams of living water. And the Lord God will wipe away every tear from our eyes. Rejoice, therefore, my dear children, for we are truly blessed to be covered in the Lord's blood, and to be clothed with His righteousness, for these robes which we wear through faith will carry us into our eternal homes in Heaven. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:**

Almighty God, be pleased to accompany Thy Word with Thy Holy Spirit and grant that Thy Word would increase faith in us; bring into the Way of Truth all such as have erred; turn the hearts of the unrepentant; and for sake of Thy Name grant succor to all heavy hearts and those who are heavy-laden, that they may through the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ be relieved and preserved so that they succumb not to the temptation of despair but rather that they gain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with the Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

**The Votum:**

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

*Soli Deo Gloria!*