

Revelation 19:1-9  
Saints Triumphant/Veteran's Day

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### Hallelujah!

Dear Saints Triumphant, Veterans of the war against sin and Satan, Victors over death.

You heard the Children's Sermon – Heaven is a victory. It is reason to cheer. We'll be happy there. We'll be celebrating. And you heard the sermon text. This reading from Revelation is a glimpse of that victory celebration. It's all amazing stuff.

And I thought about using some sports analogies to try to get our minds into this. I mean, there are really very few places people celebrate as vocally these days as the sports arena. And there are some great pictures of the reason to celebrate coming after things look bad. Although the most recent would mean you'd have to be a Cardinal's Fan who knocked the Braves and Brewers out of the playoffs, so I can't bring that up. You think there were some people cheering in St. Louis a few weeks ago when they won the World Series after looking like they wouldn't even make the playoffs. I know some of you were cheering here. So if it's painful for you to think about the Cardinals, pick some huge victory your team won and how you were just kind of inwardly compelled to cheer. You know, how you just have to shout, you have to celebrate. It can't be stopped.

But then, as you think about it, those analogies don't really fit, do they? You see, those are games we see, events we go to, or at least watch on TV. Those are celebrations we are at. But our text today is talking about heaven. Stub hub isn't selling any tickets to heaven. Ticketmaster doesn't have them either – and no matter how deluxe your cable package is – you won't get that station.

Heaven is just so far away, isn't it? That celebration seems almost abstract. You read passages like this and it's hard not to see a huge separation between where we are and where that is. Living where we are living, dealing with what you are dealing with, there doesn't seem to be such reason to cheer. Hallelujahs don't seem to just naturally spring from our insides. Not when we have to deal with loss, and pain, and want, and heartbreak, and death. When you look at all the things you have to look at every day, our cheerleader John has his work cut out for him here if he wants *us* to join the celebration, doesn't he?

But thankfully, it's not just John. You see, the Holy Spirit inspired the apostle John to write what Jesus told him to write of what he saw in this spiritual pep rally that is the book of Revelation. Remember, this was a book written to believers going through persecution and pain and loss and death. And its purpose was to give comfort and joy. As we look at this text, we'll see that God has found the key that causes our celebration – that causes us to cry Hallelujah!

Now, "Hallelujah" is a word that comes up all the time in the Old Testament in praises of the God who did those miracles and gave those victories and showed his power. It means "Praise the LORD", and they shouted it for good reason. But the word doesn't appear anywhere in the New Testament until we get to these glimpses of heaven in Revelation – where we see the true victory and miracle and power.

I mean, that's what the saints triumphant (that great multitude in heaven) that's what they are shouting around that throne: Verse 1: "**Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God.**" You see, they have seen the victory. They've seen the final play, the walk-off home run as it were. So often, we're sad when our loved ones leave this life – but they aren't. They just got tickets to the final victory. And notice what they are celebrating about.

In verses 2 and 3 they are shouting about how God judged the "**great prostitute**" – that picture that the Revelation uses to describe the way Satan uses his power in the church, through the false teaching and misplaced priorities that are all too common in religion today – from the sex scandals to the money scandals to the out and out lies. You see, so often churches here appear to have the power as they align with politics for whatever the goal; they appear to have the glory when you see the money and the splendor and the bling in the name of religion; they appear to have the salvation as they manipulate people to achieving their goals instead of Christ's. But do you see the song of the saints who have seen the final play? "**Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God,**" not to those churches.

Even against all those forces that try to draw people away from Jesus, either by using organized religion to misplace their focus or by using the failures of organized religion to turn them off to time with their Savior – even in the face of all of that – Jesus wins. Praise the LORD!

Are you singing it? One day you will be. When you see the final play... When God calls you home, you will be singing with your parents and grandparents - all the loved ones who died in the LORD – you will be shouting that Hallelujah. You will be a saint triumphant.

But what about now? Here is the amazing comfort on this Saints Triumphant Sunday. Here is the amazing joy we have even here while we're waiting, waiting like those bridesmaids in the Gospel Lesson – waiting like those Israelites in exile in our Old Testament Lesson.

Look at what John hears next. Verse 5: **“Then a voice came from the throne, saying: ‘Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, both small and great!’** There’s an invitation for all servants of God to join in. And they do: **“<sup>6</sup> Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, (This is much more than just the saints around the throne now – it’s louder than thunder) shouting: ‘Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. <sup>7</sup> Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! (Why?)**

**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 (or the declaration of righteousness) 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!’”**

The celebration on Saints Triumphant Sunday belongs to more than just those who have died. It is ours. Yes, because we know we’ll be with them one day, but notice, it’s even more than that. All of us join in that Hallelujah because we see that victory now.

I know - we don’t always act like it. It’s easy to believe the symptoms we see around us and feel anything but triumphant – whether it’s the scarcity mentality with money that there can’t ever possibly be enough of it to make you comfortable, or the personality problems that make gatherings awkward instead of awesome, or the failure focus that sees all the shortcomings and expects defeat – all too often we walk around as anything but Saints Triumphant. And really, that’s blatant disobedience to God’s command here. God said **“Praise our God”**, not **“Act like he can’t handle things.”** And when we fail to live praise – well – we don’t belong in this scene.

Think about that. Think about how powerful this passage is. Did you notice the picture God uses? It’s a wedding. We’re celebrating because we are at the wedding. And I know. Sometimes the picture of a wedding could backfire if you think about the stress of planning one: all the details, what to wear, how you’ll look, and all that.

But notice all the more the reason to celebrate here: The clothes are provided. Instead of being clothed in all our failures and the flaws we have to struggle to hide or pay the photographer to touch up – the bride in this picture is GIVEN the clothes. This bride is us – the Church, the bride of Christ GIVEN “fine clothes, bright and clean!” And then he explains. That’s the righteousness, that “not guilty” verdict, that we’ve been given. This translation says “righteous acts” which is fine if you remember that those are only done by faith and these clothes are GIVEN, not earned. But the beauty of the dress is that it’s not what we crafted with our sin. It is the blood of Jesus, the robe of His righteousness and perfection – so we truly do look perfect. We are.

We are ready for this wedding. So Jesus tells us, **“Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!”** That lamb of sacrifice defeated our sin and shame – so we are invited to a feast.

Ponder that picture for a moment. Last weekend, I was at a wedding. And the reception was awesome. The food was plentiful. There was pulled pork and all sorts of sides; anything you could want to drink. There were 4 different flavors of cake, even a dance floor, with a band – that played any kind of music you wanted – even did some square dance calling. And then – right next to that band – there was a candy bar set up – 16 feet of glorious table covered with nothing but jars of candy – from M&M’s to

Reese's, from Snickers to Sour Patch kids – and zip lock bags at the front for you to fill.... Talk about a feast with everything – I was blessed to get invited to that.

That's the picture. We are holding an invitation to a wedding feast that puts the one I was at last weekend to shame. And the beauty of this text is that God tells us that we can celebrate that now. Blessed, "Happy" are those who are invited. And to celebrate your invitation, God has given you this foretaste of the feast, where he spreads out before you something far tastier than any barbeque, far sweeter than any candy bar. He invites you right now, every time we gather, to be in His presence.

Heaven may seem so far away, but in reality it begins right here. He sets before you the washing water of Baptism, where he claims you as his own, seats you at his table, and reminds you of the forgiveness he won for you. He puts in front of you God's Word in reading and song and sermon, announcing your status and your future. And at the altar he lets you taste your forgiveness in his own body and blood in the Sacrament. Yes, blessed are we who are invited to the wedding supper of the lamb. We are in his presence right now. That's reason to praise the Lord. Hallelujah!

Hallelujah! You know, on this Veteran's Day – I thought about comparing these shouts of praise we get to be a part of to the shouts of victory in battle, when the enemy is defeated. But the problem is, so often, there's another battle coming – and we thank all of our veterans for being willing to fight those – for loving us and our country enough to earn those earthly victories...

And the sports celebrations are the same – there's always next year – it's never a lasting victory – but this victory (word) – this one (window) is totally and completely complete.

So Praise the LORD! We get to start singing now and never end. **"These are the true words of God."** In Christ, Amen.