**Revelation 7:9-17 (ESV)**

After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, **10** and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” **11** And all the angels were standing 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**  saying, “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, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?” **14** I said to him, “Sir, you know.” And he said to me, “These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. **15** “Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence. **16**  They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. **17** For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

**“The Justified Are Glorified”**

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. Distress over life is easy, especially with how we can see and hear so much today. Of course, if you pick up the Book of Revelation it takes everything to the next level. The first few chapters reveal the struggle of abuses and corruption within the earthly church. Disaster also seems to be everywhere from wickedness of humanity, to satanic beasts waging war, and even cosmic judgment being rendered out by angels. No one wants to be a loser, but it appears to be that way for Christians. However, Revelation at times removes the clouds to let the sun shine through for us.

When Martin Luther nailed up his 95-Thesis. It was the day before All Saints Day. There were great issues and darkness at that time. Yet, Luther was acting in-view of a great cloud of witnesses. Celebrating All Saints Day stands on those words we confess from the Creed, “I believe in One Holy Christian and Apostolic Church.” The saints who have gone before us belong to the Church Triumphant. They can be important names from the Bible, those significant people in church history, others who were personal to our lives, and even unknown saints only known to God. St. John in Revelation gives glimpses of the saints above as comfort so the Church Militant, the saints below, do not lose heart. As in this life, so in the life to come Christ is the glory of His saints on earth and in heaven.

1. **Service scrapes by for now, but will soon be magnificent. (Changed)**
2. The Church militant is in service to God all our days.

* Change has come by baptism, “See what kind of love the Father has given to us that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him.”
* Before Christianity was common to our western world a 2nd century writer noted, “For the Christians are distinguished from other men neither by country, nor language, nor the customs which they observe… Every foreign land is to them as their native country, and every land of their birth as a land of strangers. They marry, as do all [others]; they beget children; but they do not destroy their offspring. They have a common table, but not a common bed. They are in the flesh, but they do not live after the flesh. They pass their days on earth, but they are citizens of heaven.”[[1]](#footnote-1)
* Before being saints above, all saints were from below good trees that bore good fruit both in witness and mercy to the Gospel.
* Yet, repentant faith never trusts works only a saving Word from Christ who makes sinners saints as He delivers forgiveness.

1. The Church triumphant then serves God in perfect celebration.

* They have not quieted their witness but only sing louder, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”
* Their service of mercy toward their neighbor was finally to their Lord who has spread His service of salvation over their life.
* Now they serve and worship before the throne of God with angels in glory no longer needing repentant faith, but robed in Christ alone.
* This is the kind of celebration where God dwells with them as they look forward to the new creation that is to come on the Last Day.

1. **Afflictions rise up for now, but will finally pass away. (Blessed)**
2. The Church militant must face great enemies.

* Jesus tells it straight giving this promise, “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”
* There are common woes everyone shares in a fallen world like sickness, war, and natural disaster that ravages life with death.
* However, the Christian also knows the spiritual warfare of that sinful Adam within who attacks the saint inside created in the image of Christ.
* Just as a darkened world seeks to entice, disgrace, twist, and even snuff out a faithful confession of Christ and His Word in our life.

1. The Church triumphant then has come out of great tribulations.

* How much more grand is that life, “They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat.”
* All the trauma of work, the laws demands on life, a fallen creation, grief from death that haunts us no longer has a hold on the saints in glory.
* The present life was only a pit stop for Jesus by His death and resurrection built us a promising home saying, “I go and prepare a place for you” (John 14:3)
* Rather than avoiding suffering, Christ takes His saints on earth through the cross to silence all enemies making His Church glorious in heaven.

1. **Victory has tears for now, but will turn into joy. (Justified)**
2. The Church militant lives by faith as Jesus cares for us.

* To find and have confidence in the Church on earth is to look to the marks where Jesus makes Himself known as Savior and Lord.
* It happens by His Word and Sacrament, God comes to us so holiness is not a quality in us, but counting on what Jesus gives of Himself for us.
* The Church has had difficulties like any Christian life and there are many today. Yet St. Paul declares, “No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us” (Romans 8:37).
* Last week at Concordia University, Chicago had an interdenominational conversation and President Harrison in his opening remarks said, “There is more true unity of the spirit where Christians of differing views are honest about those differences then when they sweep them under the rug.”[[2]](#footnote-2)

1. The Church triumphant enjoys the fact then all is cared for in full.

* “For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”
* Since Jesus promised, “No one shall snatch them out of my hand” the saints before us have better pastures and the same Good Shepherd watches over us.
* Tears are more a part of life than we want to admit, but the blessed gift is God’s grace does turn present sorrows into eternal joys.
* Despair does not have the last say but Christ for our citizenship belongs to the Church Triumphant.

St. John will not let the Church on earth go through the Book of Revelation without realizing a better hope in Christ. There is a great tribulation, but the greater comfort has washed the saints in the blood of The Lamb and made them glorious. At the end of the Lord of the Rings Trilogy, Bilbo Baggins is past his days. He is brought to the elves to sail off to the Grey Havens, which is heaven. Upon seeing the ship Bilbo brightens up to say, “I think I am quite ready for another adventure.” May Christ let us walk in such confidence as the saints before us. As in this life, so in the life to come Christ is the glory of His saints on earth and in heaven. Amen. Now the peace of God that passes all understanding be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.

1. https://ecclesia.org/truth/diognetus.html#P670\_121918 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://livestream.com/accounts/1463756/events/4448793/videos/165285943 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)