

“All in One” – Pr Jim Sprengle – All Saints’ Day (Observed) November 6, 2022

- I. **Revelation 7:13-14** – “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.”
- II. **As believers in Christ, we are considered saints.**
 - a. Who me?
 - i. I have never done any miracles that I recall... I’ve never been a Mother Theresa and spent my life as a nun or a monk helping the poor... I’m much more of a sinner than a saint.
 - ii. That’s the response most people have when they are told they are a part of the saints of God.
 1. Sometimes it’s because of the Roman Catholic teaching about saints, which are given special status after their deaths because of a life that met certain qualifications...
 2. We do not subscribe to these teachings, but instead see all believers covered in the white robe of righteousness as saints... even while here on earth.
 - b. As saints of God – we, altogether with the saints in glory, form one body.
 - i. In other words, we are all one in Christ, whether we are in the world or in the arms of Jesus.
 - ii. So, how does it feel to be called a saint?
 1. Again, most of the time we consider that title to be way above us – but that’s the trouble – being saved is so much more than just being good!
 2. Just like you heard last week for Reformation Sunday as we celebrated Martin Luther and the other reformers who helped us see that works of our own do not get us into heaven, it is simply by God’s grace through faith.
 3. God places the white robe of righteousness on us through faith, we don’t get our lives straight and do good things in order get the robe!
 - c. I read about a lady named Beatrice Fediuk, decided to write a “resumé for heaven” instead of an obituary.
 - i. When she finally passed away at age 94, the local paper printed her “resumé” in their obituary section.
 - ii. It starts: “Dear Lord, please accept my application for Eternal Life. My resumé is as follows...”

1. She then divided it into sections with objectives, references, training, experience, volunteer work, and hobbies.
- iii. Beatrice gave a summary of her life history, saying when and where she was born, and that she has a large family who are not seeking an opening in heaven just yet.
- iv. She shared her memories, saying: “Lord, You know that (as a teacher) I never had any ‘teacher’s pets.’ Rather, I put my heart into teaching those with learning challenges, or difficult family situations. It was here that I feel I did my best work.... I also continued volunteer work, knitting scarves for underprivileged children.”
- v. Then at the end, she added: “Lord, I hope that You will find that I have met my objectives and deserve a place in Your heavenly home. You know where to find me to further discuss my qualifications.” ¹
- d. Even though this heavenly resumé is kind of funny – the sad truth is that many people think this is how you get to heaven – you do good things for most of your life... and then, if the good outweighs the bad, God will let you in... kind of like a scale with just enough good to tip the scales.
 - i. Yet, what does the Bible say?
 1. Listen to Titus chapter 3 – “⁴ But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, [baptism] ⁶ whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ so that being justified by His grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” (Titus 3:4-7)
 2. Or, Ephesians 2:8-9 “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”
 3. Or, Romans 11:5-6 “⁵ So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. ⁶ But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.”
 - ii. Yes, God is abundantly clear – we do not get to heaven because we do good things... or because we are so holy and saintly... it is only God who gives that to us as a gift.

III. **What a gift it is!**

- a. God so loved the world, that He GAVE His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3:16)
- b. Our reading in Revelation today tells us that the people experiencing eternal life are a huge group of people from every language and background... and they have come through what? The great tribulation.

- i. The world is full of tribulation and suffering – and they have come through it with God’s gift of grace through faith... praising Him with all their might because they are finally home... finally at peace.
- c. You see, God saved them – and us – by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5) – or in baptism, He gave us a white robe of righteousness that covers us... we can even be called “saints”.
 - i. I had the privilege of witnessing my new grandson Ben’s baptism a couple of Sundays ago, and what do you think he was wearing?
 - 1. He had a white robe on that was Andy’s when he was baptized as a little baby.
 - 2. A white robe that symbolizes the gift of God to Ben... to Andy... to all of us who received the covering of righteousness... which was bleached in the blood of Jesus our Savior.
- d. The death of Jesus on the cross and the blood He poured out is the only work that counts – and instead of making us go through the same thing to pay for our sins – God gave His only Son in our place.
 - i. Who could have imagined that the blood coming from Jesus has the cleansing power to free us from our sins... to purify us and make us holy... to bleach our robes of righteousness clean and white.
 - ii. But that is what God has done – so that we can be a part of the saints – whether we are here... or there... we are all in one as God’s chosen people.
- e. It’s interesting, but in the whole Book of Revelation, there are no solos.
 - i. We read about the twenty-four elders singing and casting their crowns at His feet... the host of angels singing together... and all creatures in heaven and on earth joined in one song... and those who win the battle against the beast are given harps and a song to sing together.
 - ii. In all these places, multitudes of people or angels come together to sing in unity...² and though we are not connected to angels in the same way – we are connected to all those in glory who have gone before us.
 - iii. This is the unity that we have with the Communion of Saints... we sing, we praise, we celebrate the feast of the Lamb in victory... all in one.
- f. So wear your white robe in the world of tribulation and trial with confidence – not because of anything you have done – but because the God of the universe has done it all for you as a gift. Amen.

¹ Rebecca Flood, “Woman Submits References to God for a Place in Heaven in CV-style Obituary,” Newsweek (2-21-22).

² Graham Kendrick. *Leadership*, Vol. 15, no. 2