

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church  
Des Moines, WA  
November 13, 2011**

**Revelation 19:1-9**

**A Glimpse at the Saints Triumphant**

**They are:**

- 1. Immaculately dressed**
- 2. Immeasurably joyful**

**Hymns: 215 – 730 – 213 – 218**

All Scripture quotations from the NIV

**Revelation 19:1-9 –**

<sup>1</sup> *After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting: “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, <sup>2</sup> for true and just are his judgments. He has condemned the great prostitute who corrupted the earth by her adulteries. He has avenged on her the blood of his servants.”*

<sup>3</sup> *And again they shouted: “Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever.”*

<sup>4</sup> *The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God, who was seated on the throne. And they cried: “Amen, Hallelujah!”*

<sup>5</sup> *Then a voice came from the throne, saying: “Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, both small and great!”*

<sup>6</sup> *Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: “Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. <sup>7</sup> Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! 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 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!’” And he added, “These are the true words of God.”*

One summer when I was in high school, The King and his Court came to my town. Those of you who are softball lovers might be familiar with The King and his Court. Since 1946 they had been a touring team of four softball players that would come to town and play a full team of nine! The King and his Court only had a pitcher, catcher, shortstop, and first baseman. And they always won.

They were led by their talented speedball pitcher, Eddie Feigner, who would not only pitch at about 100 mph, but also had a repertoire of behind the back and between the legs pitches. He even pitched with a blindfold. And when the game was getting dull, he would back up and pitch from second base!

What I remember about The King and his Court coming to Prairie du Chien, WI, a town of about 5,000, was that I didn't want to pay for a ticket! I thought I could watch from outside the chain link fence that circled the ball diamond. But before game day, city workers put up plywood sheets on the fence all the way around the park! There would be no glimpses of softball wizardry unless you bought a ticket, or if you wanted to illegally find a stepladder and peek over that fence!

Have you ever been in a situation where you just wanted to get a glimpse? At a sporting event? At a parade? When a celebrity came to town? How about getting a glimpse into heaven? I think that would interest us all! Would God actually allow us a peek into heaven?

He actually does. On this Sunday we call “Saints Triumphant,” we focus on what a glimpse at saints in heaven would be like. Let's focus on this text from Revelation 19, peer over the “fence,” and get “**A Glimpse of the Saints Triumphant.**” **They are:**

- 1. Immaculately dressed**
- 2. Immeasurably joyful**

**1** — We read in Revelation 19:  
*“After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting: ‘Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for true and just are his judgments. He has condemned the great prostitute who corrupted the earth by her adulteries. He has avenged on her the blood of his servants.’ And again they shouted: ‘Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever... Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory!’”*

It would be helpful to set the scene of this chapter in Revelation. When I preached on a text from Revelation in September, I mentioned that the theme of the book is very simple: GOD WINS! In the end, after all is said and done, God wins. The purpose of the book was to encourage the Christians in Asia Minor who were undergoing persecution for their faith. An angel from Jesus revealed a number of visions to the Apostle John concerning what would happen until the end of time. All of them led to the end of the world when God would deliver his people and bring them safely to heaven.

In chapter 18, we read about the downfall of the enemies of God. These are antichristian forces and the Antichrist himself. And the peoples who belong to this earth mourn because of their downfall. Then, in chapter 19 we have a beautiful picture of the saints who are safe in heaven and who will live there eternally. This is our “glimpse” of the saints triumphant today.

Before looking at the wonderful pictures too closely, we need to recognize a sad fact. The sad thing about this glimpse is that you and I do not deserve to be in it. We should not, by nature, be in this scene in heaven as we peek in. That is shown us in the judgment God reveals at the beginning of this text. As the saints sing their song in

heaven, they praise God for condemning and judging the great prostitute, or whore. They rejoice because this is the prostitute who corrupted the earth with her adultery. This is a picture of the Antichrist’s fall, who has deceived the world with false teachings and leading people away from God’s true teaching of salvation. God’s judgment is final. The prostitute has been judged, and her smoke will “go up forever.”

As we hear these sobering facts about God’s judgment, we must ask the question about whether we have the worthiness to be among the saints in heaven.

### **Do you and I deserve to be there?**

Jesus had an interesting picture of being worthy to enter the heavenly wedding banquet that God has prepared. In Matthew 22 he said, *“(The king’s) wedding hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. ‘Friend,’ he asked, ‘how did you get in here without wedding clothes?’ The man was speechless. Then the king told the attendants, ‘Tie his hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’”*

This man thought he could be at the king’s wedding banquet in his own outfit, perhaps even the best he personally could offer. But this was not good enough. He needed the garments that the king provided. Can you imagine having a nightmare about your own wedding? Ladies, can you imagine dreaming that you’re coming to the church on your wedding day and you slip and fall in a large mud puddle before entering, and you have to go through with it without getting cleaned up? Or can you imagine dreaming that your wedding day sneaks up on you so that you somehow have nothing good to wear and end up at church in your swimming suit or worse? Suddenly you find yourselves in front of a packed church that is filled with 500 people and

they're all staring at you because you are not dressed properly?

That doesn't even compare to how unprepared and unfit you are to be in God's heaven on your own merits. Isaiah 64 tells us clearly, "*All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags.*" If your darkest thoughts were exposed to all on Judgment Day, what would that reveal? If your most shameful moments were on display in front of the world and in front of a holy God, what would that reveal? A sinner who should be banished forever.

This is why we're so happy to read farther in vv. 7-8, "*Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear. (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)*" How has the bride been made ready? By a wedding planner! God the Father planned and ordained how the saints are prepared as the bride of Christ. Back in the OT book of Isaiah, the Lord had said, "*Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.*" God planned that through a Savior, the sins of the world would be washed away.

An excellent verse that talks about how Jesus has washed us clean from the stain of our sin is in Hebrews 7: "*Such a high priest meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.*" As a Catechism memory passage says, "*The blood of Jesus his Son purifies us from every sin.*" (1 John 1) When Jesus lived his perfect, sinless life, he lived it for you. When Jesus went to the cross carrying the sins of the world so that

he might pay for them, he carried your sins there. He washed them all away and has given you "fine linen, bright and clean" to wear! What an expensive wedding this is.

This week I found out what the average wedding in Federal Way costs. The average wedding has approximately 150 guests. And what price is paid? About \$25,000! That seems like a high priced wedding to me, but that doesn't even compare to the cost of your wedding reception in heaven. It cost the life and death of the Son of God. It cost him his blood and breath. How thankful this makes us to him for all he has done!

It's also noteworthy that the bride's dress has been given to her! It is not her own, and she has not made it. The righteous acts are not their own, but Christ's. This makes baptism so meaningful to us. It's so meaningful that Scripture tells us, "*All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.*" Baptism is a means through which God gives the blessings of Jesus' sacrifice for our sins. It washes sin away and gives the precious wedding garment to young and old alike. This is why many parents choose a beautiful white garment for their babies to wear when they're baptized. It is a garment of a saint. It's why many of our churches have confirmands who wear white robes. It is a garment of a saint.

**As we glimpse into heaven this morning, we see how beautifully and immaculately the saints are dressed!**

**2** — We see something else as we get a glimpse of heaven today. Not only do we see the dress of the saints, but we see their activity as well. They are immeasurably joyful.

This is the big question, after all, isn't it? Everyone wants to know, "What will we do and experience in heaven?" I heard a good illustration recently on why this is so difficult to grasp. If you try to describe the taste of an

ice cream sundae to someone who has only eaten various types of oatmeal in their life, how could you do it? You could compare it to the best-tasting oatmeal that they'd ever eaten, and their mouths might even water, but no oatmeal comparison could prepare them for the delicious flavor of an ice cream sundae. In the same way, how difficult it is to convey the concepts of heaven to sinners on earth who have nothing that relates to it except the illustrations that they are familiar with in their sinful world.

Our text says, *"Then a voice came from the throne, saying: 'Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, both small and great!'"* Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: *'Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come!'* " What answers does the book of Revelation give us? We certainly know the "when": God's judgments and his gift of heaven will last forever.

We also know the "who": These are those who fear and love God, his believers. These are his believers who are "small and great." And angels are all around as attendants at this heavenly wedding.

We probably have most of our questions about the "what." We hear that heavenly music sings, "Hallelujah!" "Praise the Lord!" We hear that it is a loud and joyous scene. Two chapters later, Revelation 21 speaks of the bliss of those there: *"I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.'*" Oh the joy at being at this wedding supper! We have a wedding coming up here at Holy Trinity later this month. I'd imagine it

will be a happy scene with friends and especially loved ones who come from a distance to be here. I'd imagine the whole family will be here and will be together. I'd imagine pictures and video will be taken to document the occasion. I'd imagine there will be hugs and dancing and laughing. Can you imagine the scene of the reunion around the throne of God by his saints? Who has gone before you to his eternal reward? Who is waiting for you? What will you feel and say when there?

This is all pretty mind blowing, but we still haven't mentioned the best part. We're saving the best for last. In fact, the best part is so stunning that it leaves everything else behind. The best part of heaven will be the presence of God himself with you. 1 Corinthians 13:12 says, *"Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face."*

I found some great comments about this concept from a pastor who wrote: **"There are many marvels to look forward to about heaven, but no other sight will compare to looking on the face of the Lord and to see that he is looking at me and smiling! There will be many lovely sounds in heaven, but no other sound... can compare to the sound of the voice which brought the world into being, the voice that shakes the mountains and directs the galaxies, the voice that whispers faith into my cold heart, the voice that calls the dead from their tombs – nothing can compare to the sound of that voice saying to me, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into your master's joy. Welcome home, my son'... Since we don't really know God very well yet, our desires sometimes focus on other aspects of heaven. But when we actually get to heaven, all these wonderful things will not impress us nearly as much as God himself. Anything beautiful will pale by comparison to the Source of all beauty... Even our reunion with loved ones will take second place to our encounter with Love himself. No pleasure will compare with taking pleasure in our Father's glory and knowing that he takes pleasure in us... The greatest joy in the crowns he gives us will be the joy of**

**placing those crowns at his feet in worship...  
These other joys are droplets, but God is the  
Ocean; these others are rays, but God is the  
Sun.” (Rev. David Feddes, “The Back to God  
Hour”)**

**As we glimpse into heaven today,  
what immeasurable joy we see in the saints  
triumphant!**

As we close our brief glimpse this morning, it almost seems too good to be true. In fact, I was talking with someone recently who was having a difficult time. We talked about their problems and I comforted them with many of the promises we have in Scripture about our Savior: That he has died for us and is always with us; that he will bring us safely through this life to the joy in heaven that he has prepared for us. Their response was a passionate sentence: “Oh, I hope it’s true!”

Do you “hope” it’s true? Is it true? We hear the angel who revealed these things to John speak to that at the end of our reading: *“These are the true words of God.”* This is similar to the words of Jesus John had recorded in his Gospel: *“In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”* (John 14:2,3)

May God strengthen our faith in the promises that he has given and revealed to us. And may we thank him that he also has given us a glimpse of the glory that is yet to come for us as saints triumphant, because of his grace in Christ! Amen.