

## ***“Salvation Belongs to the Lamb”***

“These in white robes” – who are they? “These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation” – the tribulation of this world – the chaos, pandemics, rioting and looting, the killing of Christians. These in “white robes” are those believers who Christ has “delivered from evil” one final, blessed, time – like your loved ones who have died in the faith – those whom the Lord has gathered to Himself in heaven.

We hear this Word of the Lord and think of those who are blessed because their reward is great in heaven – we think of THEM, not US. But do not close your ears – do not sequester these words as words for others – for God Himself speaks them to you today, because He is speaking of you.

You are a part of that great multitude clothed in white robes. “These are they who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” Indeed, you have been washed in the blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ – washed in the waters of Holy Baptism – in which Jesus’ blood cleanses you from all unrighteousness.

We hear these words from Revelation and we think they are speaking of other people, or a later time – and therefore, miss their blessing for us here and now. ALREADY you are before the throne of God – even now, today – you stand in the presence of the Lord.

ALREADY the Lord spreads His tent over you – and you find refuge under His outstretched arms of Calvary – even as you live in the midst of the tribulations of this world.

ALREADY you hear the voice of the Good Shepherd, Jesus – and He leads you to springs of living water – removing the burden of your guilt, and satisfying your thirst by His gracious forgiveness.

ALREADY you are clothed in garments of salvation – clothed in the righteousness of God’s very own Son, Jesus Christ --- but NOT YET have you been delivered from the great tribulation of this death-filled world.

ALREADY the Kingdom of God is yours, in Christ Jesus --- but NOT YET have the devil, the world, and even your own sinful flesh stopped pressing the attack – seeking to rip the Kingdom away from you, by ripping you away from Christ.

ALREADY salvation is yours, in Christ Jesus – but it can be lost through unbelief. [P] These in white robes – who are they – they are all the saints, all believers in Christ – those who have ALREADY come out of the great tribulation – as well as us, who have NOT YET been delivered once and for all, but who ARE coming out of the tribulation.

All Saints' Day is a celebration of the “one, holy, Christian and apostolic Church” – the “holy Christian Church” which is “the communion of saints.” It's hard to fathom this gathering of all who are united to Christ by faith. It is a “great multitude that no one could number.” It includes Christians in Eagle and Argentina and France and Novosibirsk.

All Saints' Day is a reminder that the Church does not begin, and end with us – that we are part of something greater than ourselves – something which we cannot see, or comprehend. The Church that we do see is this little flock gathered here at Immanuel – but one day we will see the whole heavenly host of believers – all who are clothed in white robes.

As I teach the catechumens, I often speak of this great heavenly reunion – and I tell them that I hope it will be a class reunion as well – that we will all see one another, once gain.

The reality is that young people grow up – go to school, get a job – get married, have children – and move away. I look at those Confirmation pictures in the hallway, and I see faces that I have not seen in quite a while. But it's not just the catechumens.

Many of us gathered here today may not see one another even 5 years from now, for a variety of reasons. Some move, some die, and some no longer gather with the Church. Some lay aside the robes of Christ's righteousness, and dress in costumes they have chosen for themselves.

While we do not know what the future may hold for us – we do know that this world will be full of tribulations – and we will live in the midst of it.

The devil will continue to prowl around like a roaring lion, seeking to devour the Christian. The deceiver will continue to lead the children of God away from His Word of Life – tempting them to partake of forbidden fruits that bring death.

And the Church, those clothed in white robes, holding palm branches in their hands – will continue to cry out in a loud voice – “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”

Salvation belongs to God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And yet, since the time of Adam and Eve – mankind has been tempted to listen to a different voice, to give a different confession, to hold to a different belief. The temptation is to believe that salvation, somehow, belongs to YOU!

“Sure,” the devil says, “God has saved you by His grace in Holy Baptism, but now its in your hands, and you have to finish the job.” Or, the sinful flesh tells you that you’ve got your white robe, your palm branch – that you’re going to heaven, “no matter what” – so, go ahead and .....

“Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” – and salvation is given to you – for the Lord dishes out His salvation to you, and to all His saints, to all who are united to Christ by faith. He not only promises to forgive your sins – but actually takes them away this very day, leaving salvation in their place.

The Body and Blood of Jesus given into death for the salvation of the world – is given to you, today. Salvation, given to YOU.

The tribulations in which you live are indeed “great” – but greater still is God’s love, mercy, and salvation – given to you, in Christ Jesus. Dear saints of God – cleansed in the blood of Jesus Christ – salvation is yours, today, and forevermore! Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.