All Saints Day—November 1, 2026

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

"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, and crying out with a loud voice, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!'"

It's a bit puzzling. The sight John sees is a bit puzzling because some things don't seem to make sense when John beholds this image before him in Revelation and it's no different for you today as you listen to this word of God and take in this sight. John sees God's people, he sees the church. But what's puzzling and doesn't seem to make sense is that he gets a glimpse of what it to come. John sees his future and yours. John sees eternal life. The Lamb is on his throne, and the saints are right there with him.

The Lamb is vividly shown here in this reading. He is seated on the throne and all fall before him and worship him. The Lamb, who he is and what he has done, informs really everything in Revelation. The Lamb is a reason why Revelation is one of the most comforting books in the entire Bible. If your idea or opinion of Revelation is one of fear and trepidation, then you have been influenced to have this notion by false teachers and teaching about this book of the Bible. It's not about interpreting signs like some code breaker but it's all about just as the opening words of this book, really an Epistle, say, "The revelation (apocalypsis) of Jesus Christ." This whole book of the Bible is about Jesus. Well, of course it is but there something to it and the place Revelation has in the Scriptures. It's about who he is, what he has done, what he continues to do, and what he will do at the consummation of all things. To say it's all about Jesus is not a mere trivial answer but really the heart of Revelation as Jesus is the one who has won and gives eternal life.

So, with that in mind the image of the Lamb is telling. In the previous two chapters of Revelation, chapters 5 and 6, the Holy Spirit revealed to St. John some important details. Describing the Lamb John wrote, "And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints."

And then again not long after image of a slain Lamb who is living, another detail is given which is a hymn to the Lamb, St. John wrote, "Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" and the elders fell down and worshiped."

This Lamb is the one has been slain yet raised. He is the one who alone is worthy and possess the power and salvation. The Lamb is the one who is to be worshiped, and he is the one who is the victor who has conquered sin, death, and the devil. In Revelation 12 the devil and his angels are thrown out of heaven and can no longer go before the presence of God and accuse his people. Why is this the case? Revelation 12:11 says, "They have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death."

The Lamb saves and conquers by his blood. And so, what does the reading before you today, then, tell you? "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, and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" 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, saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and

power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen." Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?" 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."

Christians, God's saints, are cleansed by the blood of Christ. They don't make themselves saints, God does. They are clothed and covered with Jesus and his righteousness. These are God's people. These are the people who belong to the Lamb for this Lamb is the Lamb of God who has taken away their sin and takes away the sin of the world. Saints are "holy ones" that's what the Greek text means. Holy ones have been set apart. Saints are different because God has called them out of the darkness, called them out of sin, called them out of the devil's kingdom and into his eternal Kingdom. Saints are free, as you heard last week from John 8. They are free to live forever. They are children of God redeemed and ransomed by the Lamb and have a place before his throne.

This is hard to fully grasp on this side of things when the vision is the future seems distant from the present. Now, there's tribulation, there's suffering, there's so many things that occur in this world before the saints stand before the Lamb. You know this and experience it. Life in this fallen world is a "vale of tears." It's a valley where you walk through this life as one who is tainted by sin, suffers the consequences and wages of sin, and are attacked by the fallen world and the devil. The valley of sin and death is deep at times and it appears as though there is no end and the sides of the valley appear to be closing in on you. But you see in all this as you are here now, you are still a saint. Even now as you behold the saints and glory to come, you are a saint in this world because God has called you his own. The Epistle reading beautifully proclaims, "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. Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure."

So, yes, you "feebly struggle" as the hymn puts it. But you do so as God's children. That's the difference. Saints still struggle but they struggle as saints. You walk through this vale of tears as a saint. It doesn't mean that you won't face these terrible things and suffer. In fact, and in some ways, you will actually suffer more and be persecuted more by the devil and the world because you are a saint. Jesus talks about this time and again in the Gospels and so do the whole Scriptures. Jesus doesn't just throw out the notion you might suffer in this life, but he promises you that you will suffer and he calls you to take up your cross when you follow him. This is what it means to follow Jesus even as he suffered, was mocked, and died. You belong to Jesus and you are his body. Yet saints are different than those outside of God's Kingdom and don't fit into the world around them. Saints are part of another eternal Kingdom and home and so are not surprised when they face trial and temptation in this life or when they are persecuted and reviled for their beliefs and life they are not surprised because this is the same world that crucified the Lord himself.

But the thing in all this is that you are a saint and that's eternal. Saints go through this life clothed and washed clean in the blood of the Lamb as they have been baptized into Christ. You are forgiven here and now and have eternal life here and now. When you walk through the vale of tears and even when you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, you fear no evil. You know how this all ends. You know the suffering, the sin, the persecution, and even death have an expiration date. You are saint and an heir of a glory that does not fade away. You know who you belong to and to whom you belong. The Lamb is victorious and you belong to Lamb.

You are his saints for he is the one who has washed you and called you his own. It doesn't matter the age or where you are from for is the same Lamb who has redeemed you. God's saints don't have an age limit on this side of glory. Some of his saints are aged, and some are taken to himself from the womb. A child is a saint of God just as much as a 100-year-old. It doesn't matter the age, the nation, the language, or people, it is the Lord's doing who makes you his own simply out of his grace and mercy to you in Christ and worked through his means.

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All Saints Day is one of those occasions in the church year where you really get a sense of what it means to be the Church. The Body of Christ is one. There's one church. Some are on this side of the grave and others are in glory. What this reading from Revelation also shows you is that the day will come when death will not separate you from those who have gone before you in the sign of faith. To be God's saints also is to have a communion together as the body of Christ, it the "communion of saints."

You are not alone and those saints who have gone before you are not far but near even as your Lord is near. Every year when the names are read of those who have gone before you in the faith they are read not in a way that these people are now out of sight or just exist in your pictures and fond memories. No! This is far from it. Saints live forever in Christ. These saints of God truly are blessed as they now rest from their labors. They rest and they have gone before you but are still with you. Even as you gather in this place you gather together as the church. Jesus is really present here not just in some spiritual way but in an real and substantial way and comes to you in his word and sacraments.

It's not for mere poetic reasons the proper preface ends with "therefore with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven." The church actually means what she says here and knows that as your Lord comes to you in this place and you take into your mouths the very real body and blood of Christ the whole church has union or communion together. The saints who have gone before you have the same Lord as you have and you feast at the Supper now in this place, but they feast before Lamb on his throne. As you feast you proclaim this Lord and look forward to that day where that image before you in Revelation comes to fruition. John saw what would be and he saw and image that includes you. You are there in that multitude. You are there with the saints who have gone before you and with the saints who will follow after you unless the Lord returns first. You are there and you know this because your Lord promises you now and tells you this is the case as you are baptized into Christ and as he preaches to you and gives you his Supper. You feast here and now and your future is a bodily resurrection like your Lord's where you will feast with him and all the saints at the eternal wedding feast that has no end. The future is known and John's vision and image is your future.

It's puzzling to be sure what St. John beheld but in Christ it all comes to a head and is fulfilled. Rejoice this day and fix your eyes on that future that is yours as a saint. Walk confidently through this vale of tears knowing that this valley ends and the green pastures of eternal life are your eternal grazing ground in the new creation and city of your God. The day is coming when it shall be when you are standing before the Lamb risen from the grave and waving palm branches of victory. On that day you will be just as St. John saw you and wrote, "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. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. 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."

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.