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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
May 8, 2022
3rd Sunday after Easter

Scripture Lessons: Psalm 23; John 10:22-30

Hymns: 23; 783; 409; 51

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Revelation 7:9-17

“After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, ¹⁰ and crying out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation *belongs* to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” ¹¹ All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹² saying:

“Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom,
Thanksgiving and honor and power and might,
Be to our God forever and ever. Amen.”

¹³ Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, “Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?”

¹⁴ And I said to him, “Sir, you know.”

So he said to me, “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and 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 dwell among them. ¹⁶ They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; ¹⁷ for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.” (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth.
Amen.

In Christ Jesus, the Good Shepherd, who gave His life for the sheep, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: "I Know that My Redeemer Lives!" --

Certainly, this Scripture verse from the book of Job is one of our favorite scripture verses. It is also the title of one of our favorite hymns for the many encouraging and comforting assurances it brings to our hearts and minds.

We need this encouragement and comfort from the Lord because it can be disheartening to live in this evil world where there is an outcry against righteousness and a rallying cry supporting sin. Just about every news channel this past week was raising the alarm that radical evil was on the verge of taking over our country because of the Christian position against abortion was going to be the ruination of all women in our country.

It doesn't take much to set off the forces of evil against Christ and His Church on earth. Call sin the sin that it is and just suggest, for that is all this is for the moment, that it might be time to remove one small layer of protection for a heinous and cruel sin, and the devil and his allies in the world go apoplectic. And a great many Christians cringed, and some even fell in line with the world.

We need the comfort and assurance and boldness that comes to the heart of a Christian knowing that our Redeemer lives. This is what the book of Revelation is all about. Our Redeemer lives and reigns and assures all Christ believers of the victory which Jesus already won and has reserved for us in heaven. Eternal life is secure! We are safe; we are secure. We are saved because it is --

THEME: The Lamb Who Shepherds Us.

Our text presents --

I. The Lamb as the Bringer of Salvation.

Our text begins with a precious glimpse into heaven as it is today, before the Judgment Day. It is a precious sight for us to behold!

“After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands,¹⁰ and crying out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” (Revelation 7:9-10)

Our text starts with the words, “*after these things,*” which begs the question, “What things?” What went immediately before this was a vision of the fullness of the Church on earth, and the Lord gathering His Church on earth. So, after seeing those things, John was given this glimpse into the Church Triumphant, where the spirits of believers await the final judgment.

What’s it like to be in heaven? Well, it’s absolutely glorious! And it’s a pretty busy, and full place. There abides in heaven a great multitude of believers who have entered their rest. This multitude is made up of people from all over the world, who came from all sorts of different ethnic groups, speaking every language under heaven. The gospel truly has gone out into all the world! The Holy Spirit has called and gathered His saints from the far-flung corners of the globe. And over the centuries many, many thousands have entered the heavenly places where they are giving glory to God.

This is not drudgery, or a boring experience. This is a celebration, a celebration of salvation. That is truly the significance of the waving of the palm branches in this vision. It is in response to this scene in Revelation that a custom arose to place a small palm branch in the hand of Christians lying in their coffins. It was placed there to remind mourners that their loved one had entered into the celebration of praise that is going on in heaven. Isn’t that a great idea? We need that reminder that while we mourn our loved one is rejoicing before the Lord.

And what is the cause or the focus of that celebration? It is salvation and salvation’s source. Everybody in that multitude is praising God the Father as He sits upon His throne AND praising

the Lamb who is present before the Father. That multitude sings, “*Salvation belongs to our God and to the Lamb.*” (v.10)

God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him. Salvation has not come by the works of man, not in the least. It has come to us fully and alone by the grace of God in Christ Jesus. Jesus did all that was necessary to provide for our salvation, and to assure that we enter into eternal life.

Today is referred to as “Good Shepherd Sunday.” As part of our service we read the 23rd Psalm. Think of that line, “*He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name’s sake.*” (Psalm 23:3) That is what this celebration in heaven is all about. As my Shepherd, Jesus leads me in the paths of righteousness, His righteousness, which credited to us through faith by grace alone. So it is that we possess this righteousness “*for His name’s sake,*” meaning we are saved because of Him. It is all to the praise and glory of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.

We also see how --

II. The Lamb Delivers His Church Safely into Eternal Life.

“*Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, “Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?”*”

¹⁴ *And I said to him, “Sir, you know.”*

So he said to me, “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and 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 dwell among them. (Revelation 7:13-15)

The identifying of exactly who makes up this multitude, and the words with which this identification is made is important for us. This is getting right to the heart of why we are comforted and assured by the knowledge that our Redeemer lives! Yes, these are the people that have arrived in heaven because of the salvation that was provided by God and the Lamb, but the Lord knows from where He delivered them. Every single last one of these saved souls came out of the **great tribulation**. Now, contrary to what many sloppy theologians teach, this is not referencing some singular event in the history of the world whether past or present or

yet to come. It is referencing all the trouble and affliction and persecution that believers in Christ Jesus have endured from the days of the Apostles, even preceding that in the Old Testament age, right up to our day, and on to the end of the world.

We read in the books of Acts: *“We must through many tribulations enter into the kingdom of God!”* (Acts 14:22) Making it through the trials and tribulations of life and entering into heaven is the goal of our faith. Faith! How often haven’t we talked about different loved ones and the strength of faith they exhibited. It was once reported that a certain Christian woman was told by a friend, *“You have such a strong faith; I wish I had as strong a faith as you have.”* The answer she gave was, *“I don’t have a strong faith. I have a weak faith in a powerful Savior.”*

We recall the words of Jesus concerning faith. If I had faith as large as a mustard seed Jesus says I would be able to move mountains. I haven’t moved any mountains recently. How blessed we are to have the gift of faith in a powerful Savior who loves us and cares for us.

It is Jesus our Good Shepherd who guides us through the trials and tribulations of life and sustains us when we stumble and fall. It is Jesus who makes sure we are safe all along the way until we reach our heavenly goal. It is as we read in the 23rd Psalm: *“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.”*
(Psalm 23:4)

We have the Savior’s Word on that. We read in our gospel lesson how certain our Good Shepherd declares our salvation to be: *“And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.”* (John 10:28) It is the power of Jesus’ love and His gospel of grace and forgiveness that protects us from the evil of this world and keeps us safe unto our end.

Our text emphasizes the need to wash our robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb. In our weakness of faith, in the weakness of our flesh, we daily fall into sin. But Jesus washes us clean. The Lord invites us to find cleansing in Him. We read in Isaiah: *“Come now, and let us reason together,”* Says the LORD,

*“Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow;
Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool.”*

(Isaiah 1:18)

We move from cleansing to continuous care.

III. The Lamb Provides the Ultimate in Shepherd’s Care

Again, it starts with God the Father. We read in verse 15 *And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them.*” While that’s a wonderful thought for us, that we will have the Lord dwelling with us, this translation falls a bit short of the vision John was presented where it speaks of **God covering His people under His tent**, thus sheltering them from all harm and danger. He provides us with His Shelter for all the storms of life. In heaven there will be no more storms.

Everything negative in this world, sickness, pain, sorrow, death, all evil has sin as its source. People forget that **man** sinned and brought sin’s corruption into the world. God in His steadfast love provided deliverance from sin and death, and shelter from all harm and danger. We rest under the shadow of the Almighty. Psalm 91 comforts us with those words: *“He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.”*² *I will say of the Lord, “He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust.”*³ *Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler And from the perilous pestilence.”* (Psalm 91:1-30)

Of course, as in the rest of the vision, the Father upon the throne and the Lamb who is before the throne work hand in hand for the good and blessing of the flock. Our text concludes:

“They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat;¹⁷ for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.” (Revelation 7:16-17)

Psalm 23 begins: *“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
²He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters.”* (Psalm 23:1-2) And that is what the Good Shepherd brings us. He provides for all that we need for soul and body. The

greatest and most difficult necessities of life are the **spiritual** blessings. For those the Lamb sacrificed Himself. So then, we can be assured that our every earthly and bodily need shall be supplied. Life in heaven is the final and perfect fulfillment of all God's promises. All our wants shall be supplied. All our pains and disappointments will be removed. God will wipe away every tear from our eyes.

That's what lies before us. Jesus, our Good Shepherd brings us to the living fountains of waters. He who hungers and thirsts for righteousness shall be satisfied.

On this Good Shepherd Sunday let us remember that we have this image of the Lamb who was slain, and yet lives forevermore. It is Jesus, the Son of God, who loved us and gave Himself for us that watches over us and cares for us in all our ways. The Good Shepherd gave His life for the sheep so that He could lead us in the paths of righteousness even through the valley of the shadow of death, and He gives us the gift of eternal life. *"My Redeemer Lives,"* and we know that *"in my flesh I shall see God,²⁷ Whom I shall see for myself, And my eyes shall behold, and not another."*
(Job 19:25, 26, 27)

AMEN.

"Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." Amen. (Romans 15:13)