

Notes for Next Sunday

All Saints Sunday

The Point of this Week's Readings

First Reading (Revelation 7:9-17). This reading is meant to comfort, encourage, and provide hope for John's readers who are still facing many tribulations. God will protect His people as they carry out the mission of their Lord here on earth. He will not forsake them. He will not permit them to lose their faith and hope. And He promises soon to conduct them to the glorious citizenship of the church triumphant. The images in this reading recall Israel's wilderness wanderings and the hardships of the Church's earthly pilgrimage. It anticipates a peaceful existence without the adversity of this fallen world.

Epistle (1 John 3:1-3). The theme of these verses is righteousness results from being God's child. The argument is stated simply: every child of the righteous Father also practices righteousness, while every person who practices sin is of the devil. The character of a person's life reveals whose child he or she is. The wonderful contrast between the old and the new life is described in terms of the new birth.

Gospel (Matthew 5:1-12). Jesus introduces His Sermon on the Mount with nine beatitudes that detail the future blessedness of His disciples. These promised blessings are God's gracious gifts to those who repent and trust Christ for righteousness. Only after Jesus has assured His disciples of God's goodness to them does He call on them, in the rest of the sermon, to be good and do good. When we recognize our own spiritual poverty, when the Lord leads us to hunger and thirst for God's righteousness, when He makes us pure in heart so that we seek to worship only the true God, then we are blessed now and forever. (TLSB)

For more in-depth commentary on each reading, read the notes found after each text below.

FIRST READING – Revelation 7:9-17

⁹ After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰ And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." ¹¹ All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹² saying: "Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!" ¹³ Then one of the elders asked me, "These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?" ¹⁴ I answered, "Sir, you know." And he said, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have 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 spread his tent over them. ¹⁶ Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. ¹⁷ For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

7:9 white robes. The white robes here in 7:9 symbolize the purity and righteousness of Christ, which purity and righteousness have been given to his people because of his blood (7:14). (CC p. 193)

7:9 palm branches. Symbol of victory. They were displayed when victorious kings were welcomed, most famously when Jesus entered Jerusalem. (TLSB)

7:11 elder. They best represent the whole company of believers in heaven.

7:11 four living creatures. These were an exalted order of angelic beings whose task is to guard the heavenly throne and lead in worship and adoration of God.

7:12 Praise ... strength. The sevenfold list of attributes expresses complete or perfect praise. (CSB)

7:13-14 The “great tribulation” is the worst of the tribulations all Christians experience throughout history for the sake of the Gospel, which will take place immediately before Christ’s second coming; it will be cut short for the sake of God’s people, and it includes all tribulations Christians go through at all times in history for the sake of faithfulness to God’s Word. The Church revealed to John here is the entire Church of God as it will appear on Judgment Day. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

7:15–17† The perfect bliss of the heavenly host is described in a series of 10 statements. The first three lines of the poem describe the blessedness of believers in the presence of God. The next four lines depict the freedom of God’s people from the effects of sin. The last three lines give the source of their bliss: the Lord will shepherd them to the water of life (cf. Jn 4:14). (CSB)

7:17 Fountains of the waters of life. This is an expression for the source of life. God himself is that source of life.

EPISTLE – 1 John 3:1-3

How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. ²Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. ³Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.

3:2 when He appears we will shall be like Him. You were a dying sinner before God called you His child in Baptism. When Christ comes in glory, He will reveal the glory that He has given to you now. Luther: “God is infinite, but we are finite creatures. Moreover, the creature will never be the Creator. Yet we shall be like Him. God is life. Therefore we, too, shall live. God is righteous. Therefore we, too, shall be filled with righteousness. God is immortal and blessed. Therefore we, too, shall enjoy everlasting bliss, not as it is in God but the bliss that is suitable for us” (AE 30:268). (TLSB)

GOSPEL – Matthew 5:1-12

Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, ² and he began to teach them, saying: ³“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. ⁵ Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. ⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. ⁷ Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. ⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. ⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. ¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

5:3 Blessed. The word means more than “happy,” because happiness is an emotion often dependent on outward circumstances. “Blessed” here refers to the ultimate well-being and distinctive spiritual joy of those who share in the salvation of the kingdom of God. (CSB)

5:4 those who mourn. Over sin; similar to the spiritually poor. (TLSB)

5:4 comforted. The comfort the Messiah brings will be fully realized in heaven. (TLSB)

5:6 filled. ESV – satisfied – “We have the clear assurance that God does not cast aside sinners, that is, those who recognize their sin and desire to come to their senses, who thirst after righteousness.” (Luther) (TLSB)

5:8 heart. The center of one’s being, including mind, will and emotions. (CSB)

5:9 will be called sons of God. The Son of God is named the Prince of Peace (Is 9:6). Those who trust in Him are blessed by being God’s sons and daughters (Gal 3:26–28. (TLSB)

5:10 those who are persecutes because of righteousness. Those who suffer ridicule, pain, refusal, punishment, loss of possessions or friends or family for doing what is right in God’s sight, as Jesus did, are (present tense) members of the kingdom of God now and forever. Membership is not gained by persecution, though persecution is the badge of Christ’s followers. The Spirit of glory and of God rests on them. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

5:12 great is your reward. Heaven is the ultimate reward. Knowing that we are going to heaven even gives a joy and peace here on earth. While this is clearly in the future, it is already a reality in the heavens (God’s presence). (Scaer p. 91)

