

**"Saints Come Through"**  
**Sermon for All Saints Sunday**  
**Lectionary Year A**  
**November 2, 2008**  
**Texts: Revelation 7:9-17; Matthew 5:1-12**  
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Saints come through. The picture of sainthood we are given in our passage of scripture for this morning from Revelation is that of a whole multitude of saints, a number so large that it is impossible to count. This huge crowd is made up of people from every part of the world. They don't look alike or talk alike, but they do have a great deal in common. They are all standing before the throne of God and Christ the Lamb of God; they are wearing matching outfits, white robes; they are waving palm branches; and they are shouting out their conviction that it is God alone who has made their salvation possible.

We find out later in the passage that great is the reward in heaven for these saints. They are to be sheltered by the Lamb himself. These saints will never again be hungry, never be thirsty, never be left to the elements, and they will never have any reason to cry. The Lamb becomes their Good Shepherd, the one who will lead them to springs of the water of life, the one who will nourish and nurture them for all eternity.

And we also find out in this passage from Revelation just why it is

that these saints are where they are and doing what they are doing and being treated like they are being treated. They have come through. They have stayed the course; they have run the race to completion; they have not given up. They have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb and thereby have identified themselves with the way of the Lamb.

They have refused to compromise or to choose some other way [NIB, p. 626]. Despite how difficult it may have been to do so, these saints have remained steadfast in their faith. Despite undergoing persecution even unto death, these believers have been true to their commitment to God. Despite the hardships of life, these saints have come through with their trust in God intact. What we have here in the seventh chapter of Revelation is a picture of what we have come to refer to in the church as the perseverance of the saints.

Saints persevere. They come through. Saints may not be perfect. They may not always be righteous. They may not always exemplify holiness. They may not make the right choices every time there is one to be made. They may trip, stumble, and fall on occasion. They may be rather poor in spirit, so they may not have it all together spiritually or any other way. Saints may not live stained-glass lives. But when it comes

to faith, saints come through. They don't give up on God. They stay committed to the Lord. God remains for them their rock and their refuge.

*Saints come through in their faith in God.* They come through in another way as well. Saints come through in their relationships with others. Saints come through with respect to God, and they come through with respect to the people around them, especially those persons they love. For saints, great is their reward in heaven for their steadfast faithfulness to God, but they receive something besides the sheltering of the Lamb described in John's vision. Jesus tells us in our Gospel lesson for today what it is they receive. For their loyal commitment to their loved ones as well as to God, saints receive a blessing. They are blessed.

Saints are blessed because their relationships matter to them so much. I think that is what Jesus is teaching us in this portion of the Sermon on the Mount. Saints value their relationships so much that they mourn, they are meek, they are merciful, they are pure in heart, and they are peacemakers. That's how they relate to the people around them, and they are blessed for it. Saints value their relationships so much that

they come through for those people who need them—family members, their friends, their neighbors, their colleagues, their fellow church members. *Saints come through in their relationships just as they do in their faith.*

And so not only can we speak on this All Saints Sunday of the perseverance of the saints, but we can speak of the communion of the saints as well. In Revelation, John shares with us a picture of what perseverance of the saints looks like. It is characterized by white robes, palm branches, shouts of joy, and the reward of the sheltering care of the Good Shepherd. That's what the perseverance of the saints looks like. But what does the communion of the saints look like?

I once heard a story of another vision. In this man's vision he was taken first to hell to see for himself what he could expect to find there. He was ushered into a huge banquet room. On the dining table was a splendid feast. The food set out for the meal was expertly prepared and beautifully presented. A more sumptuous fare the man had never seen. Yet no one seated at the table was eating. They were unable to enjoy the rich servings of the dinner. It seems all of the guests at the banquet had no elbows, so the people could not bend their arms to get

the food to their mouths. The banquet room, then, was a scene of utter chaos. It was a battleground. Everyone there was angry and hostile. It was horrible to witness what the people at that meal were doing to one another out of frustration caused by their desperate need to have their ravenous appetites satisfied and their absolute inability to do so despite the bounty set before them.

The man having the vision was then taken to heaven to see for himself what he could expect to find there. To his surprise, heaven had the same banquet room with an identical meal being served. And all of the people at the feast in heaven also had no elbows. No arms could be bent there as well. There was a huge difference in the atmosphere however. There was no riot going on at the heavenly banquet. The scene was peaceful, serene, joyous. Everyone was eating and drinking fully. Everyone was happy and completely satisfied. There was laughter and singing. How was it possible? You know how. It's the communion of the saints. They were feeding each other.

We have named in this service those who are now before the throne of God with their robes washed white in the blood of the Lamb. They are the saints we have known and loved who have come through the

sometimes difficult journeys that were their lives with a strong and secure faith in God. May the perseverance of these saints serve as a model of faith for us in our times of trial and testing. May we come through in our faith just as they have in theirs.

And as we gather around the table to enjoy the banquet of grace God has placed before us, may we also follow these saints' relational example. Let us look for ways to feed one another, to take care of each other, to meet one another's needs. For as the hymn writer reminds us:

Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love;  
The fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above.  
We share each other's woes, our mutual burdens bear;  
And often for each other flows the sympathizing tear.  
When we asunder part, it gives us inward pain;  
But we shall still be joined in heart and hope to meet again.

So let us be saints together, joined in heart with those we hope to meet again and joined in heart to those we meet each day. As we do we will discover the blessing that awaits us when we, as saints, come through for one another in our relationships.