

Revelation 19:5-9

Have you ever started reading a book that was so **riveting** - filled with so much **drama** and **excitement** - that you just couldn't wait to see how it **ends**? If you **have**, then maybe you've even **cheated** a little, and **skipped** right to the last chapter of the book. **If** you have ever **done** that, then you realize that skipping to the end **changes** the way you read the **rest** of the book. When you already know the **ending**, all that's **left** is to find out how the characters **get** there. And that's **exactly** what we are going to do this morning. We are going to **skip** to the **ending** - not just the ending of some **novel**, but the ending of the **world** as we know it. Last week, we looked at the **second**-last chapter - the Day of **Judgment**. But **this** week, we're going to skip to the **final** chapter - where the **Saints** are **Triumphant**. Today we're going to examine what it will be like for **us** to experience **The Joy Of Triumph** as we live **forever** with the Lord in **heaven**. But we're **also** going to see how we can **enjoy** that triumph in part **now**, while we are still here on the **earth**.

Our text comes from the book of **Revelation**. Those who have read the book of Revelation from **start** to **finish**, know that it can at times be **difficult** to **understand**. John uses lots of different **pictures** and **symbols** in this revelation of future events. So, it's **good**, when we're reading the book of Revelation, to always keep in mind the **clear** truths we know from the **rest** of Scripture. The truth that is being illustrated in **today's** text is the fact that **after** Judgment Day, **all believers** will live with our God in eternal **glory**. Listen again to the first few verses, *"From the throne came a voice that said, 'Praise our God, **all** you his servants and you who fear him, **small and great**.' And I heard what seemed to be the roar of a **large crowd** or the roar of **many** waters or the sound of loud rumblings of thunder, saying: '**Alleluia!** For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. Let us **rejoice** and be **glad** and give him **glory**, because the **wedding** of the Lamb has come. His bride has made herself ready.'"*

As we consider those words, the greatest **emotion** which comes through is **joy**. Think about any **large** gathering of people where everyone is **excited** and **cheering**. What comes to mind for **me** is the noise of the "12th man" - the fans who have gathered together in a professional **football** stadium. We all know how **loud** that can be. It can even get to be **so** loud that people can't even hear **themselves** talking. That's the kind of sound which the Apostle John is **describing** in our text. But **why** was it so loud? **Why** were the people so excited? They **weren't** cheering for a **football team**, they were praising their **God**. This section of the Book of Revelation comes right after John had described how the Lord

would conquer **all** of His **enemies** on **Judgment Day**. And these people who were gathered around the throne of God, were **celebrating** God's great **victory**.

It's hard for us to even **imagine** what it would be like to be a part of that celebration. It's hard, on the **one** hand, because our mortal minds have a difficult time comprehending **heavenly truth**. On the **other** hand, it can be difficult to imagine because we know how **little** we **deserve** to be a part of such a celebration. What's the **requirement** to enjoy the bliss of **heaven**, and to worship at God's **throne**? It's **perfection**, isn't it? That's why you and I **don't deserve** to have a place in this picture of the triumphant saints. **None** of us are **perfect**, so how could we possibly celebrate **victory** with our God, when we know that we have deeply **offended** Him with our thoughts, words and actions? When we examine our lives here on the earth, we realize that the last chapter of **our** story doesn't **deserve** to be one of **victory** and **triumph**. Because of our **sins**, we **deserve** only **punishment** and **condemnation**.

That's what makes the picture we have before us today all the more **beautiful**. **All those saints** who are worshipping at the Lord's throne are also **sinners**, just like you and me. Whether we look at Adam and Eve, or Noah, or Abraham, or Moses, or David, or any of the **others** - they were **all sinners**. So how can **they** be shouting in **triumph**? Let's look at the words of our text once again. The picture is that of a **wedding** between the **people** of God and the **Lamb** of God. John wrote, "*His bride has made herself ready, and she was **given** bright, clean, **fine linen** to wear. (In fact, the fine linen is the '**not guilty**' verdicts pronounced on the saints.)*" The **reason** the people are able to stand before the throne is that they were **given** the right clothes to wear. They were given **fine linen**, which we are told "*is the '**not guilty**' verdicts pronounced on the saints.*" These saints have been **declared** to be not guilty - not because they **lived** perfect lives while they were on the earth, but because they were **given** the perfection of Jesus.

That's how we know that **we also** will be a part of that great celebration in heaven. We will stand before the throne of our God in everlasting **joy**, because the perfection of **Jesus** covers **all** of our sins. When the Holy Spirit called us to faith, we were **covered** with the robe of Christ's **righteousness**. The joy of the saints that is found in our text for today is also **our** joy. We can **look forward** to **eternity** in the same way a bride **looks forward** to her **wedding** day, because we know that our eternity will be filled with **joy**. Because of Jesus' life and death, we **know** that our story has a **happy ending**. We also know that this same truth applies to all of the **loved ones** we have lost, who died with **faith** in the **Lord**. Already **now**, they

are experiencing the great joy of the **saints triumphant** together with their Savior in heaven.

It's great to know that our eternal joy is **safe** and **secure** in Jesus. It's great to **look forward** to that day when we will **leave behind** all the pain and sorrow of **this** life, and will worship and serve the Lord **forever** as we gather around His throne. But we would be missing **part** of the point if we only looked at that great **joy** as something that is still **far off** for us - something that is only **waiting** for us in the **future**, because the joy of the saints triumphant is **also** something that we experience right **here**, right **now**.

After John witnessed this great scene of joy in heaven, the angel told him, "*Write: **Blessed** are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb.*" In its basic sense, the word **blessed** means "**happy**." Those who are **invited** to the wedding supper of the Lamb - those who have been called to **faith** in Jesus as our **Savior** - have every reason to be **happy**. And that's **true**, even though there is **conflict** and **strife** all around us.

Sometimes our day-to-day lives leave us feeling like there's **no way** we can have joy right now. I know it can be **difficult** at times, but during those times we need to **remember** how the story **ends**. We have been invited to the wedding supper of the **Lamb of God**. So, we can **lift up** our heads, and see **past** the troubles of this world to the joys of **heaven**. At times, that might seem to be the **only** joy we are going to find in this sin-filled world, and honestly, what **more** do we really **need**?

But there **is** more, and I'd like to focus on **one** of those wonderful **joys** which the Lord has graciously provided for His believers. That **blessing** is the gift of the **Lord's Supper**. When Jesus **instituted** the Lord's Supper on Maundy Thursday, He did so to **reassure** His disciples that their sins were all **forgiven** through His body and blood. Even though He would later **ascend** into heaven, and leave them **behind** here on the earth, they **knew** that Jesus would continue to be **with** them. The **communion** those disciples shared with their Lord on that night was one they would **continue** to share with Him **forever**. And the same thing is true for **us** as well. Every time we gather together for the Lord's Supper we can remember our Lord's **words**, and we can look forward with **joy** to the day when we will feast with Him in the joys of heaven.

The Lord's Supper is a meal which has been celebrated for **thousands** of years, and there are so many wonderful **blessings** associated with it. **One** of those

blessings is that we find in the **forgiveness** and **peace** of the Sacrament a foretaste of the **eternal** joys of heaven. When we receive the Lord's Supper, we get a little **taste** of the **joy** that already belongs to the saints triumphant. It's a taste of **heavenly** joy.

Think about the words which are spoken just before we receive the sacrament in the Common Service. They read, "*Therefore with all the saints on **earth** and hosts of **heaven**, we praise your holy name and **join** their glorious song.*" What does it **mean** to sing with the hosts of heaven? The hosts of heaven are the believers who have gone **before** us into heavenly glory. They are people we **love** - people we dearly **miss**. But as we get ready to receive the Lord's Supper, we get to **sing with them**. We get to **join** their song of praise to the Lord. And **then** we come forward to the **Lord's Table** and **taste** a little bit of the joy they are already experiencing **perfectly** at their Savior's side. What an **incredible** blessing. Every time we come to receive Holy Communion, somewhere in the back of our minds we can have the thought, "This is already a wonderful supper **now**, but **someday** we'll experience it in all its **glory**."

On this Saints Triumphant Sunday, let's be filled with **joy**, because we know the **end** of the story. We know that our triumph will last **forever** in heaven because of Jesus. And we know that that joy is ours **today** and **always**, as God **forgives** our sins, and assures us of our **triumph** through Jesus, our Savior. Amen.