

ALL SAINTS

MATTHEW 5:1-12

“WHAT DID JOHN SEE?”

NOVEMBER 1, 2009

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

What Our Lord describes on the Mountain, St. John sees in his vision. He sees a great multitude of the poor in spirit made rich in the grace of Jesus Christ. Theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. He sees those who were persecuted like the prophets. They have come to their reward. They have left behind all mourning, meekness, hunger, and thirst. Day and night they serve the Lord in His Temple. They are satisfied. St. John sees the saints of God purified and gathered about the Lamb who has freed them by the outpouring of His Blood.

And notice this: he sees no stars, no celebrities. He does not name the apostles, martyrs, or prophets. He does not name kings or reformers or saints commemorated by the Church. They are there, to be sure. But he does not see them or notice them. All he sees are saints. They are all loved and honored by God. It is not so much that they are ordinary. He does notice that they are from every tribe and nation. But his attention is firmly fixed not upon them but upon the Lamb. In this he is like them. For he sees that all the saints and all the holy angels and the four living creature are worshiping the Lamb.

Salvation belongs to the Lamb, to Jesus Christ, and to Him alone. Yet He gives it away to men. These saints around Him are saved. Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honor and power and might are His. They will be His forever. But He bestows them upon men, men who hated and rebelled against Him, men who forgot or neglected or abandoned Him. He has brought them out of the great tribulation. He has purified them with fire. They suffer no more slander or false accusations. No one steals from them, betrays them, or hurts them.

They are also free of gossip, jealousy, lust, anger, and fear. He has brought them out of sin. No one sins against them and they themselves commit no sins. The later is the greater. For we are more hurt by our own sins than by the sins of others. But they are free. He has made their robes as white as snow, they have no sin. He has cleansed their hearts and consciences. He has distilled them to their finest essence, to their truest selves. For in removing guilt and regret, shame and fear, He has made them truly men as He is truly a Man. He places palms of victory in their hands. They have overcome the evil one by the Blood of the Lamb. They reap the benefits and the glory, of His sacrifice. They reap where they did not sow. They buy and eat without money or cost. He relieves them of all burdens and bestows His own inheritance and perfect love upon them. And of all their joys, here is the greatest: **Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, is in their midst. He is with them.** That is the definition of “blessed:” to be with Jesus.

This is the Lamb who was slain but who lives. He did not love His life to death. Instead He loved them to the end. For He loves His Father. This He shows in perfect obedience. He does not ask, “**Where is the Lamb?**” as Isaac did, for He is the Lamb. He looks for no scapegoat, no mercy, no rescue. He lays down His life in perfect love in order to draw all men to Himself and show His love to creation. And so His Father loves Him and in Him He loves them. He loves His saints, washed in Blood, drowned and raised again in water, fed with the Holy Food of the cross and the empty tomb, anointed with His own Holy Spirit. His Name is upon them. And as He is holy so then they are holy. They belong to Him. Salvation is His, so salvation is theirs. The Kingdom is theirs. Their robes are white. The palms are in their hands. Psalms of praise are on their lips. They are His. He is theirs. They are poor, mourning, hungry, and persecuted no more. But they remain in heaven as they were on earth: blessed. For Jesus is theirs and Jesus is with them.

The only difference between them and you is that they have already passed through death and you must still abide in it. Your day will come. Your sins will end. Your sorrow will flee. But even now, like them, you are blessed: Jesus, your Holy Lamb, is in your midst. He is with you. The Kingdom of Heaven, the Kingdom that is theirs, is yours. You are the Temple of the Holy Spirit, the object of angelic protection and prayers. For you were sealed and anointed in the holy waters of Baptism with the fullest Name of God, not YHWH or Jehovah or the Lord, but the fullest Name. You were sealed with water and the greatest and most intimate Name: **Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.** You were pulled out of those killing waters to new, everlasting life. You are here today to receive anew the forgiveness of sins, to be absolved, to hear the Word, to pray and praise your God, and to finally join in the most direct communion, to eat His Body and drink His Blood, to have Him come inside of you, to penetrate your heart and soul, to join you to Himself.

The great multitude that John saw was not simply those who had already come to heaven while He was exiled on Patmos. If it were we could expect that St. Mary and his friends and loved ones who had gone before him, and also all the saints of the Old Testament, were there. They were, of course, but there was more. For John saw the culmination of creation. He witnessed the great multitude after the resurrection on the Last Day. When he was transported to heaven he was also transported out of time. So he saw people who weren't even born yet, like St. Augustine, Gregory the Great, Martin Luther, and his own great-grandchildren. And I bring this up because this means that he also saw you. What he describes in chapter 7 is not about **“them,”** the saints of God. It is about you. These are your people. You are there. St. John looked and saw the American and African, and German and French and Russian and Finnish saints, nations and tribes not yet invented at his time. He looked and saw them all, including you, in white robes, with a palm branches, singing: **“Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honor and power and might are His.”** Maybe you didn't know this, but you are in the Bible.

That is your future, foretold in God's Holy Word and seen by St. John. So it does not matter what happens on next week, what they say about you at work, whether your children respect you or not. What matters, what endures, is that the Lamb who was slain lives. He will bring you home. Yours in the Kingdom of Heaven. Yours is blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honor and power and might. For yours is Jesus.

In + Jesus' Name. Amen.