

The title for today's message is: **Saints on Earth and Saints in Heaven**

John said: **Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne.**

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

It's All Saints' Sunday. This is the Sunday when we are reminded, once more, that our God is not a God of the dead but of the living.

Today, we recognize that those who have died in Christ are not dead but alive!

Today, we remember that Christ's Church not only includes the saints on earth but also the saints in heaven.

What does that mean? It means that whenever and wherever the Church gathers on this side of heaven, we see only a small part.

For most of the saints have already passed through this vale of tears and are now in God's eternal presence.

We, the saints here on earth, are in the minority. We're just a small fraction of all the Christians who have ever lived.

When we realize this, that we are but a small fraction of the Church, it should not fill us with sadness.

With the eyes of faith, we discover that when we gather as God's people, it's never less than with all the saints of heaven!

This is how Hebrews describes it: But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.

You have come to innumerable angels in festive gathering, to the Church of the Firstborn, whose names are written in heaven.

You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect.

And to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks a better word than Abel's.

So today when we gather for worship, we aren't the only ones present. The angels of heaven are also with us.

The spirits of the righteous made perfect are also with us, they're the saints of heaven.

But most of all, when we worship, Jesus is here. He is here with His body and blood, giving to us His new covenant of forgiveness.

The saints in heaven are not that distant and far away. It is as the Book of Hebrews says: They surround us.

They are that magnificent "cloud of witnesses," worshiping with us and encouraging us to run the race of faith.

And by God's grace, we will one day join that triumphant-victory celebration without end.

All the saints gather as one, standing before the throne of God clothed in white, living Christ's cross-won victory to its fullness.

They chant aloud: "We are saved by our God who sits on the throne and by the Lamb!"

Yet, others also join the saints in worshiping the Blessed Trinity: the angels, the elders, and the four living creatures.

That heavenly choir sings: “Blessing, glory, wisdom, thanksgiving, honor, power, and might be to our God to the ages of the ages!”

That’s the liturgy of heaven. The liturgy centers on the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. As it is heaven, so it is on earth.

Christian worship centers on Jesus Christ. Here, on earth, Jesus is present to bless us with His words of pardon and peace.

Born of the Virgin Mary, He is here with His body, and also with His blood, to give us His forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.

Worship, as it is supposed to be, points us away from ourselves and our interests toward Jesus Christ and what He wants to give us.

It also points us to the altar where we recall Christ’s sacrifice and what His Holy Supper gives us.

It’s God’s service to us through His Word and Sacraments. Salvation belongs to our God

And my friends, that is what He gives us here in His Word and Sacrament!

We do not come here to be entertained but to be edified. We come here to be strengthened in our faith.

We also learn from the saints and angels living in heaven how to worship God.

And, how to receive His gifts in faith, and how to confess Jesus as the founder and finisher of our faith.

“Who are these saints?” the Apostle John asked, referring of course to the saints in heaven.

The answer? “These are the ones who are coming out of the terrible suffering.” They are people like you, and like me.

They have had their share of heartache and pain. They struggled day by day, hanging on when it may have seemed hopeless.

They are people for whom faith didn't come easily. They are people who struggled to trust and believe in God.

By faith, they knew that God was still in control, that He still loved them, forgave them and was still keeping them in the faith.

Look, we are not yet living in the reality that John saw. No! We're in the Church Militant. Which means that we continue our struggle, awaiting our deliverance.

But the Church in heaven and the Church on earth are not two different churches. We are one Church, one communion.

The intense suffering the book of Revelation mentions is the life of the Christian under the cross, which all believers experience.

Such distress becomes real when the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh assault and attack us.

Therefore its only through the righteousness of Christ that we can delight in the eternal presence of the living God.

We are saints because of the cleansing blood of the Lamb who has also washed their sins away has also cleansed ours, as well.

The white robe of Christ's righteousness that clothes them is also our beautiful and glorious dress given us in our Baptism.

We are one with the saints in heaven because we are one with our Lord and savior Jesus Christ.

In heaven with the prophets and apostles, martyrs and confessors, there is also the multitude of ordinary Christians.

Look, the Church here on earth lives in this reality, knowing what awaits us is already ours, even if we do not yet experience it.

And so, here on earth, the Lord's Supper is at the center of it all. Here, is the Lamb in His glory.

Here in our worship, is the Lamb's blood that washes us clean from our sin.

Here, right now, God gives us the future, as we journey toward that unveiling made know to us in the book of Revelation.

And so here the saints on earth, those covered in the blood washed robes of Christ.

Gather with the saints of heaven around God's throne to chant and sing His praises.

While you are here on earth, you can't be any nearer to the saints in heaven than here in His Supper.

The future world is here. Although it's hidden from our eyes, it is still present.

Yet one day, one day, you will see it in its full splendor. Then you, too, will shine with Christ's glory.

To whom with His Father and the Holy Spirit we praise and honor, not only in this age but even into the ages of ages!

Amen.

The peace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all. Amen