



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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November 13, 2011

3rd Sunday of Endtime: Saints Triumphant

Sermon Text: [Revelation 19:1-9](#)

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Ezekiel 37:15-28](#)

Second Lesson: [Revelation 19:1-9](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Matthew 25:1-13](#)

Blessed Are Those Who Are Called to the Marriage Feast of the Lamb

“Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb”; that’s what the angel said. We’ve heard that a few times this morning, right? The word “blessed” we hear all the time here in church. We hear it in God’s Word, the Old Testament, the New Testament. It’s all over in there. But the words that lie behind this word and the meaning of the word “blessed” is something I think you and I get confused about on this side of heaven. Literally the word “blessed” can be translated “happy” but that doesn’t do it justice. Jesus says things like “blessed are you when you are persecuted.” When is the last time you felt happy when someone was attacking you? It’s just like when he talks about our joy in Christ. Our joy in Christ is not that we are happy happy giddy giddy all the time. It’s that we have a joy that is not dependent on our outward circumstances. Even when we go through the suffering, pain and anguish that we go through on this side of heaven, we know that we are blessed. The best case I read for this word is that it really means “spiritually happy are those who” do whatever God is talking about. Spiritually happy, which is not the same thing as earthly giddiness or earthly joy.

I think what I just read to you from Revelation really helps us to understand all the struggles that you and I have on this side of heaven with “blessed are those who” do this or that as God talks about. We see something about our God in this truth and why God can send his angel to tell John to write “blessed are those who are invited to the marriage feast of the Lamb” because they have something that we don’t have on this side of heaven. They have a clear understanding of God. They have a clearer understanding of why his truth and his ways and his judgments are just. You and I believe it. You and I walk by faith on this side of heaven and trust it. They have it by sight. They have it in perfection. And they have a more complete understanding than you and I will ever have on this side of heaven. As we take a look at these words this morning, hopefully we’ll see exactly what that means, and we’ll be able to apply it to our lives.

In this section of the Revelation given to John, the vision of Judgment Day had just taken place. Now the imagery shifts to, not the vision of what happens on the day of the Last Judgment, the vision shifts to heaven, to those who are living in the glory of God and in God’s presence. It describes them as what sounds “like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting: Hallelujah!” You hear that in here and it sounds like John is trying to put into words what he can’t really explain.

He says they shout “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for true and just are his judgments.” True and just are God’s judgments. On this side of heaven, we have a head knowledge of that, right? We have a head knowledge that God’s judgments are always true and they’re always just. But honestly, do you experience things in life that lead you to question whether his judgments are true and just? When he lets certain things happen in our lives, when he lets certain things happen to our loved ones, when they go through physical difficulties, are we always ready to shout out “Hallelujah! God’s judgments are true and just”? Or are we closer to Job in the second part of his book and want to shake our fist at him and say “God, what in the world are you doing?”

Even as we go through all these things that at times tear us apart, God tells us we are blessed. We are spiritually happy if we learn to focus more on him. But we are doing that by faith, right? We are just doing it believing what God has said, not seeing it. Blessed are those who are called to the marriage feast of the Lamb because those that went through those things that we didn’t want to see them go through, those that went through all of the physical and the mental anguish that they endured here on earth, to great extent and lesser extent, we are told they are now in heaven saying “Blessed are we. Praise God because his judgments are just and true.” They are seeing it from that side, and they are really saying “Lord, maybe we questioned you, but we were wrong. True and just are your judgments and we see it now. We see how you used it all for our eternal good. It may not have brought our earthly happiness, but man o man, when we are here in heaven, we can see it was for our eternal good. True and just are your judgments. All the things that threatened us and worried us are gone. No more sorrow. No more suffering. No more tears.”

The one who attacked us... “He has condemned the great prostitute who corrupted the earth by her adulteries. He has avenged on her the blood of his servants.” All the things in life that God’s church looks around and sees and thinks “God, where are you,” when we get to heaven, we say “God, you did everything perfectly. You did everything right.” That’s why blessed are those who are called to the marriage feast of the Lamb.

Again we hear him shout out “Hallelujah!” Hallelujah... that’s a word we sing usually every Sunday. It’s all over in the Old Testament. Did you realize the word “Hallelujah” is only used four times in the New Testament? It’s in these verses I just read to you describing what the Saints Triumphant are saying in heaven as they see who God is and what God has done. They even say “Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever.” So they rejoice even that God has avenged them by condemning Satan and his evil angels and all the wicked to hell forever. This is something I think on this side of heaven you and I can’t understand how they could be singing “Praise the Lord” on that if everything is perfect in heaven, because when those who oppose you or those who oppose me get what we think is coming to them, do we cross over into some kind of sinful thoughts in our minds? In heaven, they’re not. They are simply praising God because now they see that God did everything right. That included condemning those that needed to be condemned. It’s not gloating. It’s not delighting in others’ suffering. On this side of heaven, that’s what you and I might do. It’s acknowledging

that God's judgments are true and just because he did everything he said he would do. He brought them to heaven and he sent those who rejected him to hell. That's the truth of what they are shouting Hallelujah about and what they are praising God about.

So those that are enjoying the marriage feast are then directed to praise God, and it sure sounds like they do, right? Now it really sounds like he is searching for words. It says "I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder." It just seems like he is trying to put into words what can't be put into words. It's kind of like experiencing being in Lambeau Field and celebrating your team's score to the power of infinity, isn't it? It's that kind of thing that he is trying to put into words for us. These are the words that Handel took for us in his Messiah and tried to put them into that kind of setting in Handel's Messiah. "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready."

So how is the bride of Christ, the church, how is the bride of Christ made ready? "Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." Then John writes in his vision, "(Fine linen stands for the righteous...)," it's just one word. It's not righteous acts of the saints. It's just one word there and it's better translated the "righteous verdict pronounced on the saints." The word "acts" is no where to be found in the Bible that God inspired John to write. That's the translation. It's probably not the best translation, because this fine linen was given to her. The fine linen that was given to you and me and to those who are in heaven is the life and death of Jesus who lived in our place and died in our place to take away all of our sins and take away all the times that you and I doubted God, when you and I questioned his judgments, when you and I shook our fist at him and acted like we knew better than he does. That's our righteous proclamation that was made over us. Christ lived and died to take away all of that stuff. That's why we are blessed to be invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb because God has done everything for us. He has made us righteous. He has given us heaven. On this side of heaven, we believe it by faith. But the Saints Triumphant, those who die in the Lord believing that Jesus' blood and righteousness covers them, they are right now experiencing it by sight.

That's why we pray "Lord, keep us watchful for our triumph" because then we'll truly know what the word "blessed" really means.