



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

November 19, 2023

Pastor James Enderle

3rd Sunday of End Times; Saints Triumphant

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

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 84

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

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

Lord, Keep Us Watchful for Our Triumph! Let Hallelujah Resound!

1. Your _____ are _____
2. The _____ still _____
3. We are invited to a _____
4. We are the _____, _____ in _____

Welcome to worship today at Morrison Zion Lutheran Church. We exist to glorify God. We have set out to do this by gathering around the Gospel so that we may grow in the Gospel and go to others with this Gospel.

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

I want you to think about a time where the noise was so loud. I was thinking back because recently we had a newborn baby. The baby was crying and the other three kids were crying and that was the first time with four kids crying. Okay, that's maybe not the loudest noise but it was right after the newborn baby, and it was a little bit more than I expected.

What about other times of loud noises? I don't know if any of you are concert goers but if you go to a concert, you can sit way back, or you can go in the front and they have those huge speakers. I remember going to concerts and maybe about 2-4 days later my ears stopped ringing from the loud noise.

Or maybe you can think about being at a football game where the crowd is cheering and it's getting to be an important play and your team is on defense and they need a big stop and everyone is cheering and making noise. It feels like the stadium is shaking and everyone is involved and it's just crazy. There are other times you can maybe think about where you have been around loud sounds. It's something different when you have this echoing through your bones.

As we get a glimpse of what heaven is going to be like today, John tells us that we are to **let the Hallelujah resound**. We are going to hear a few times that there is this multitude, thousands upon thousands, and this roaring it talks about, like rushing waters and thunders that are shouting Hallelujah. As we look at it, we're going to see why. Why can they shout Hallelujah? We will see what it means for them and for us today as they shout Hallelujah and why we, too, can shout Hallelujah on this Saints Triumphant Day.

John begins with his vision. In so much of Revelation we have to take and understand that this is a vision and these things are representing things. It's always a little bit difficult to understand when things are happening. He writes letters to churches, so he is talking to people then, but also he is showing us visions that sometimes are things that have happened way in the past, or things that will happen, and then things that kind of are in between the things that have happened but then have lasting consequences. We see a little bit of that today as we look at our section.

It says: ***After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting: "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for true and just are his judgments. He has condemned the great prostitute who corrupted the earth by her adulteries. He has avenged on her the blood of his servants." And again they shouted: "Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever."*** What do we have here? It's a picture of God being victorious. He is victorious over what? He talks about this great prostitute. In the chapters before, we know that a lot of Revelation is pictures of battle and struggle. God is going to win a victory. Here it talks about a great prostitute. Here it's described as one that is called Babylon—a woman who deceives. Often Babylon is she who was going to deceive from inside the church. What she was going to do was lead people away from Jesus, help them to not focus on what was important, but maybe start focusing on what they wanted or to help them think "This is what MY god would look like." There is a deception inside the church and then later, in [Chapter 18](#), it talks about how people will be deceived by her and then they will go to luxury and be deceived.

What does it say here though? It says that the smoke from her goes up for ever and ever. The truth is he is saying *your enemies are defeated*. This great Babylon and her deceptions and all the other deceptions have been defeated. That's the truth. In heaven, everything has been defeated. God has done this and even though now we don't experience it all, we know that it is true; that God has defeated your enemies.

What could we say that this is about, inside the church and outside the church? At the end, it says in the last verse, Verse 9, ***"These are the true words of God."*** You can think about all those deceptions outside the church and inside the church as messages that are trying to attack the truth. These are things that are trying to lead you away from Jesus and the truth that you are loved, you're forgiven, that God has a plan for you,

that there is a heaven, that there is a God, and that there is a Redeemer. There are people and things inside the church and you know outside the church, there are so many of those things that want to deceive you and take you away from the Lamb.

I was listening and talking about confirmation class and our vicar course and they talked about how important it is for people ages 13-20 to really be in the Word. Why? Up until that time you are being taught mainly by your parents. If you are in a Christian day school, you are really in the Word. But then as you start getting into high school and college, what happens? You start getting all the other messages. It's not that you didn't hear anything before, but predominantly you were hearing the truth (if you grew up in a Christian household). As you go into high school and then college and then outside of college, you are bombarded with other "truths," because even though the war is defeated, the truth is that *the war still rages* on for us today. So it looks like that—we will be bombarded by different messages and people trying to lead us astray. The devil, the great prostitute, great Babylon, doesn't want people to know that he has been defeated and God has won.

What does that mean for us? Even though we know that the battle is won, we will have challenges in this life. We will have struggles. We'll have sin. And we'll have doubts. The great tempter will want to deceive you and make you think that God hasn't won, that God doesn't love you, and make you question "If God loves me, then why would He let this thing happen?" There are so many deceptions that can make you question God.

I think some of the greatest deceptions are about ourselves, that we're not good enough. The devil is very good at pointing and saying "Remember, you did that thing. You can't forgive yourself for that. Why should God forgive you?" "You see how you broke that relationship with that person and they are not forgiving you. God can't forgive you." We are deceived by the devil to question God and His love and His victory. Though the battle is won, our enemies are defeated, sin, death and the devil—we live in a world where we still face and experience many of the consequences and the struggles of that war because we live with sin and we live with death. We see the consequences of sin in death, and it's a struggle.

But what does God give us to strengthen us and to remind us that the battle is won, that He has us in His hands? He continues with the Hallelujahs and this great vision. As he talks about what this Hallelujah will sound like, and there is another Hallelujah as the twenty-four elders fall down and worship, they praise God, it says, ***"Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, both great and small!"*** And then these beautiful words: ***Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: "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. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God's***

holy people.) Then the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!" What is true? *We are invited to a magnificent feast.* Blessed are they who are already at that feast.

Think about why God/John describes heaven as a great feast, a wedding banquet. What do people often say is one of the greatest days of their lives? Maybe the birth of a child, but maybe wives are hitting their husbands and saying "Remember, our wedding day." Why is a wedding day so special and exciting? Your friends and your family are there. It's a feast. It's a celebration of what love there is and what God has given you and what is to come. Think about that not just for one day but for eternity. How beautiful it is to be feasting with our Lord! We use the picture of a feast, but we know it falls so short of what it is really going to be like. It's going to be magnificent! All of the great things—perfection!

Why is it perfection? Why do we know that this is true? He talks about them wearing fine linen (the bride is), bright and clean. Who is the bride? We are invited to the wedding feast, but do you know in fact who the bride is? *We are the bride, robed in white.* Why? Why are we the bride, robed in white? It's the love of God, the love of Jesus for us, for the Church. It says here that the fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God's holy people. The translation of that might not be the best. It talks more about how we have been justified; these holy and righteous acts have been made holy.

We saw that last week in our Gospel Lesson where Jesus talks about the sheep and the goats. Jesus says to the sheep, "Come," but they say "We don't remember when we served you and were good enough to be called into your presence." We know we fall short. We know that we don't deserve it. We know that we are no better than anyone else, but what has happened? We have been clothed in righteousness.

Paul writes this in Ephesians as he talks about what this relationship of Jesus being the groom and the Church being the bride will look like. He says this as he talks about marriage: ***Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.*** [\(Ephesians 5:25-27\)](#) So in heaven they stand, holy and blameless, the bride of Christ, the Church. We know that is what our Saints Triumphant are doing now. They have been washed and cleansed and forgiven of their sins. That is true for them, that they didn't deserve heaven, but they have been given righteousness and all of their deeds have been washed and made righteous through the blood of the Lamb.

What is true is about us? Right next to the Lamb is the Baptismal Font. Last week we saw another baptism, the miracle where God washes us and cleanses us, what these words are exactly talking about. We stand washed and made holy through the waters of

baptism. How beautiful it is to know that we don't have to fear our sins and all those assaults of the deception. Who can we point to? We can point to Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. When the deceiver comes to deceive you, you can say "I am a baptized, redeemed child of God. You can say nothing about me because I stand righteous before God because of what Christ has done for me." What does that cause us to do?

In this section, we have four Hallelujahs. On Easter Sunday we say Hallelujah (this is "Praise the Lord"), do you know that in the New Testament this is the only time that Hallelujah is written? Here we hear it four times as the people are praising the Lord for what He has done and where they are the glory in which they now stand. Now think about those loud noises, the loud voices again. Some loud voices and noises we don't like (like my children crying), but some loud voices are so glorious. When your team wins the victory and there is the cheering, it's amazing!

A few years ago, Kanye West was exploring Christianity and he talked about how cool it would be instead of filling a stadium to cheer athletics, what if it was filled with Christians and they were singing praises? Can you imagine that? Lambeau Field not filled with people praising the athletes but cheering God? Do we have to imagine what that would look like? This is what heaven is, and greater than that, as all the people gather together and sing those praises. I think God gives us a glimpse of that as we sing His praises today, as we get to taste what it is to praise His name.

I remember some of these hymns we sing today. How great it is to gather together and praise what God has done, is doing, and will do forever. We lift our voices up today and praise and share the great news of what God has done for us and for those He has called home to heaven. We praise His name because we want others to know that they are redeemed and forgiven as well. So today and forever we can raise our voices, letting the Hallelujah resound in a glorious, magnificent sound, greater than anything you can imagine, greater than the rushing waters and loud peals of thunder. The sound of beauty that proclaims what God has done for you and for me and for our saints, now and forever. Amen.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. [\(Philippians 4:7\)](#) Amen.