

## **Revelation 7: 13-17**

Then one of the elders asked me, “These in white robes – who are they, and where did they come from?” I answered, “Sir, you know.” And he said, “These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore: ”they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

Today we lay to rest our oldest member who very nearly reached the century mark. She saw the beginning, the growth, the strifes and the hard days and the good days of our Synod and they were dear to her. The fourth generation is now taking up the work as they participate in the Lord’s kingdom on earth; and they are inheriting undiminished and undiluted the chief treasure which their fathers brought to these shores: *“The Lord of our God.”* For that we give thanks to him alone.

Time has brought many changes. The world has changed. Our fathers spent many weeks at sea crossing the Atlantic; today we fly from coast to coast in a few hours. Life has changed. The hardships encountered by the pioneers of our Synod are unknown to their children. Their language has changed and the number of those who still speak the tongue of the early immigrant is waning. But the confession of the men of 1848 is still the confession of 1948. The immigrants looked for shores friendly to those who wished to serve God according to the dictates of their conscience and found that in America. We, a hundred years later, are benefiting from a hundred years of God's Grace. Today we have God's Word taught to us in its truth and purity. May we value and cherish this heritage in ever increasing measure and remain faithful in the second century of our Synod's history to the Abiding Word.

When the early pioneers spent days, yes, weeks upon the high seas, threatened by storms, winds, and sickness, and then finally safely reached the harbor of their destination - what joy, what rejoicing and gladness they had.

Something similar but of a much greater magnitude of joy and happiness has happened to the departed. For a long time her ship of life has been tossed by the winds of adversity and tribulation as she wandered in this vale of tears. In all her experiences through life, in sorrow and adversity as well as in joy and prosperity, the departed was hopeful and patient, knowing

this: **“We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.” Acts 14:22** Her knowledge and confession of her sinfulness and unworthiness before God was genuine and deep. Her faith in the forgiveness of sins, resting on the all sufficient merits of Christ, was part of her life. Christ’s blood and righteousness was her glory and only honor. Oh unto God alone is all glory, thanksgiving and honor for the blessings which she showered upon her throughout life.

Although she will indeed be missed, yet a Christian’s sorrow is not like that of the world which has no hope. The Christian has the promise of God that she lives and that now all of her sorrow has been turned into joy. As Christians, we firmly believe that she is numbered with the host arrayed in white of which our text speaks. I would therefore today direct your attention to the words of John as recorded in Revelation and there consider:

**The great comfort and the blessed hope  
the Christian has at the grave of one  
who has fallen asleep in Christ**

**I – The great comfort is that through death the  
departed has been freed from all tribulation**

**II - The blessed hope that through death the  
departed has been taken to her Savior in heaven**

St. John the divine was privileged by a vision sent from God, to behold the glories of heaven. The inspired account of this

heavenly vision recorded in the last book in the Bible has been given to us for comfort and strength, to comfort the Christian in sorrow and to make us heavenly-minded.

One often hears when a person has suffered greatly and then finally dies - the saying: *"It is a blessing that death came; now all ills have been overcome and are ended."* But this saying can be an empty illusion. Death does not bring an end to trouble and affliction for all people. For these words of comfort cannot be spoken over the remains of every person: *"All suffering, affliction and misery has come to a blessed end."* No, my friends, anyone who dies without the Savior will die in their sins and death takes such a person from temporal suffering and misery into the pain and misery of eternal damnation where: **"... their worm will not die, nor will their fire be quenched,"** Isaiah 66:24 Therefore when our text asks the question: **"These in white robes – who are they, and where did they come from?"** Revelation 7:13 The answer is given: **"These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."** Revelation 7:14 So then – those who are poor sinners and have faith and trusted in the blood of Jesus Christ will overcome and conquer death. These people who have been faithful unto death - the Lord will rescued them and bring them to the heaven of eternal safety. And why have they been rescued and saved? There was no merit on their part in this transaction, for before God: **"...all our righteous acts are like filthy**

**ragged...” Isaiah 64:6** But all the filth of their garments has been washed away in the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. **”...the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.” I John 1:7** The white robes are furnished by Christ, already put on by faith in this life by simply accepting the righteousness which Christ gave to them as their own.

This host arrayed in white received, through the means of grace, the righteousness of Christ and they embraced this until their death. For this reason they are before the throne of God, not for any merit on their part but because of the righteousness of Christ and the white garment of his perfect merit. For them death has put an end to earth’s anguish and replaced sorrow with joy and everlasting peace.

Our text says: **“Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat.” Revelations 7:16** The time of distress and affliction are past forever, for he that has mercy on them has led them to their eternal home. No more sickness, neither sorrow nor crying, for the former things have passed away. No more temptations of the devil, the world, and the flesh can come near them and never again be the cause for tears. The last tear that may have remained on their eyelashes, due to the pain of death will be wiped away, without any trace to show their former misery.

Oh what great comfort! Lazarus who endured affliction, died – he came out of great tribulation. His death was an end of all

sickness, poverty, misery and tribulation. All his tears were dried on the bosom of his Savior. This comfort, dear mourners, can also be spoken here over the remains of your departed mother and grandmother. For her death was a great blessing, a blessed deliverance from this vale of tears to her Savior in heaven. She has come out of great tribulation; her robe was washed in the blood of the Lamb and made white. Jesus was her only power, comfort and hope. She is now in the bosom of her Savior and he has wiped all tears from her eyes forever. What is a loss for us is a gain for her.

But this is not the Christians only comfort when standing at the grave of one who has fallen asleep in Jesus. We also have the blessed hope that through death we will be united with God and dwell with Christ in heaven.

Our text says: **“Therefore, they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them.” Revelation 7:15** As long as believers live here upon earth, their Lord is an invisible Lord, yet he lives and abides with them in his Word that is found in the Bible. Christians have a desire similar to that of the Apostle Paul: **“I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far ...” Philipians 1:23** This desire is fulfilled when death takes the Christian from earth to heaven. What a Christian has received here on earth in the means of grace - they can now obtain in richest, endless measure as they see God face to face. They are

now partakers of the glory which the Savior gained for them by his redeeming work.

**“For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.” Revelations 7:17**  
Jesus, their Savior, they believe, trust, and love and he was their only hope and comfort in life and in death, in good and evil days. Christ will now be in their midst and live with them forever. He will lead them to the green pastures of his heavenly Paradise and take them by the hand to the living fountains of water.

We now sense that blessedness in this life can be obtained through the means of Grace, the Gospel and the Sacraments. Today God desires to lead us to the green pastures of his Word, nourish our souls with the living water of his everlasting Gospel, refresh us and strengthen us on our way in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. It was the green pastures of God’s Word and the living Water of the Gospel upon which the departed constantly fed. Now she is enjoying the eternal fountain of living water and the green pastures of Paradise. May Christ so govern our earthly pilgrimage that we see our sinfulness and by faith accept the righteousness of Christ and his forgiveness. We will feed constantly on the green pastures of his Word and so prepare ourselves for the eternal bliss of Paradise.