

All Saints Sunday
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Today is "All Saints Sunday", when we remember those saints who have passed from this life into the next. They are friends, relatives, fellow church members.

We remember them in sadness because we miss them and the part they played in our lives. The joy they brought to us and the investments they made in us that helped shape us into the people we are.

Yet, we do not grieve as those without hope. We have a hope, grounded in the promise of God, that death doesn't have the final word. Our God is a resurrection God, who brings life out of death.

St. John reminds us this morning that God loves us so much that we are called His children. Children of hope in a life beyond what we can see where God is revealed in all his glory. Where we will be like him and see him as he is! Who else can claim that?

Therefore we can say with the psalmist, *"I will bless the Lord at **ALL** times"* and we gather to *"glory in the LORD... and exalt His name together!"*

God's people, His "saints", are a people of worship. David calls us to worship in the Psalm from today.

From our reading in Revelation, John pulls back the curtain to give us a glimpse of what our life with God will be like... what heaven will be like.

In his unveiling of the future, John writes to his hearers in the first century and has a message for us today.

As John draws the curtain to "what soon must take place", we get an idea of the things he saw while he was praying in the spirit that Sunday morning.

He "saw" and wrote about a lot of things, many of which are difficult for us to understand. They have been interpreted and reinterpreted over the years to the whims of changing news headlines.

This morning, I am not going to answer all your questions about this apocalyptic book and all that John has described in his vision of the end of the world. I would rather state the obvious.

Of all that John describes from his vision about heave and all that takes place, one thing is very clear. There was worship.

Chapter seven gives us a snapshot of Heavenly worship (one of the many). We read of a great multitude gathered... so large it couldn't be counted (so we know there must have been more than just Lutherans). There were people from every tribe, every language and every nation along with angels, and creatures all focused on worshiping God who was seated on a throne and the one known as "the Lamb".

Their worship included singing. We have the words to some of their songs: *"Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!"*

"Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen."

And worship didn't get out in one hour! John tells us that they worshiped God day and night... they never stopped!

So, I'm thinking, that if that is what heaven looks like... if that is what we who are the saints of God will be doing for eternity, we better tune up our voices!

Worship has been defined as *"our response to an encounter with God"*. Not an action as much as a reaction, a response evoked by a vision of God's glory. So worship is not limited to what happens here on Sunday morning. Worship is a way we live our lives in response to the God who is active 24/7.

The focus of worship is on the worth of an object of worship. In worship we are ascribing worth to God. Intentionally declaring who we believe God is and that we value him above all else. We say *"We put you, God, #1 in our lives!"*

When John wrote revelation, his message brought clarity to the true object of worship.

John lived at a time when rulers were considered divine. As a sign of loyalty, citizens of the Roman Empire were obligated to appear before the magistrate to burn incense and declare *"Caesar is Lord"*. Those who refused to do this were dealt with.

What the Caesars knew was that human beings are made for worship. Everyone has something or someone that they assign ultimate value and worth.

What we are devoted to, what we worship, shapes our lives. *"What we revere, we resemble."* (Os Guinness)

Worship gives our life meaning... it reveals what or who we value most. What we love and adore and focus on forms us into the people we become.

John's picture of heaven is full of people who love, adore, and focus their attention on God:

- God on the throne – exalted above all others.
- God the triumphant one – to whom is due thanks, honor and glory forever and ever.
- God, the Lamb – who redeems us and calls us *"Children of God"*.
- God, the Shepherd – who guides us to springs of the water of life.
- God, the supplier – who fills our hunger and quenches our thirst.
- God, the comforter – who wipes away every tear from our eyes.

This is the God we worship. The One we respond to with gratitude and thanksgiving. The One to whom we give glory.

So, would you join me in blessing the Lord... exalting God's name together by singing Hymn # 835 *"All Creatures, Worship God Most High"* (verses 1,4,6)