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Pentecost 24 B – All Saints Sunday - Nov. 7, 2021

“The Church Triumphant”

Read: Revelation 21: 1- 8 /Memorize: Revelation 21: 3 NLT

As a Christian, should our greatest concern be about going to heaven? Should that be our only concern? I hope you’ll join me in saying, “No!” I say that because I don’t think it was God’s greatest concern. If it were, wouldn’t God just whisk us up to heaven, once we believed rather than take a chance on losing us?

Instead, God lets us live on earth, sometimes for many years. Perhaps you’ve heard the saying, “He or she is so heavenly minded, they’re no earthly good.” God’s plan always involved people and His plan for them to do earthly good. If that weren’t the case, He would not have created them. The snake used their weaknesses when he introduced doubt about what God said to Adam and Eve. They could not have understood because they had never experienced temptation or death, but they did not talk with God about it.

By the way, it wasn’t God’s plan that we die. I say that because there was another tree in the Garden that wasn’t forbidden, the tree of immortality. The only tree that God forbade them to eat from was the tree that led them to believe they could be God’s equal.

When sin entered the world death came with it. Death is not our friend. Most people fear it. The fear is often concerned with how and when it will happen; how it will feel and what their final destination will be. That’s the impact of sin, like the devil, it introduces doubt into our minds about who God is and what is His plan for us.

Living for Jesus isn’t meant to get us into heaven. That would make getting into heaven something we control by our works. Living for Jesus is our response to the joy of knowing the love of God. Some of that joy comes from knowing that when we live for Jesus, we are living in obedience to our Heavenly Father. That gives Him great joy, also.

That brings us to a question: Are we human beings having a spiritual experience or are we spiritual beings having a human experience? We were created in God's image and He is a Spirit. He comes to us in Spirit through the waters of baptism, His Word and communion, so we are spiritual beings having a human experience. This part of the experience isn't meant to last for eternity.

God fills us with His Holy Spirit so that we may live our lives for Him. That's the ultimate goal God has for us on earth. He reminds of this in Ephesians when talks about preparing works for us before we were created. Our primary work here is to share the Good News of Jesus with those who don't know it. What gets in our way of doing that?

Sin and temptation. Satan uses difficult times and crisis's to tempt us to doubt God. They may lead us to ask why God allows such things to happen to us. Shouldn't being a Christian give us some benefits, or at least save us from the more difficult things?

In those times, we especially need reassurance and encouragement. Where shall we look for such things? Certainly to God's Word. It may sound strange, but one of the books of the Bible that can give us that reassurance and encouragement is The Revelation of St. John, the last book in the Bible.

God gave St. John, an apostle of our Lord, this revelation on the Isle of Patmos when he was a very old man. Many people think this book is a little scary. There's lots of symbolism and things that appear to be odd until we understand them better. Many people shy away from reading it. If they read it, they tell you how difficult it was to understand.

The book of Revelation shouldn't scare us because it was really given to John as a message of hope for people who were suffering from persecution. Many were dying as martyrs for the sake of the Gospel. As in our time, there were many wondering about that and if the church would survive to the end of time.

That is a misreading of Revelation because the end is not a time, the end is a person, Jesus. He is the beginning and the end. Everything starts and ends in Jesus. All that we have, especially our salvation, is from start to finish the work of God. He wants to remind us that He is coming to fill us up. There will be nothing we lack, nothing that

can harm us, nothing that can take us away from Jesus, that would prevent us from living with Him in that world to come.

In Revelation 21 we hear that good news that all suffering will come to an end in that day. The greatest enemy, death, will be defeated. Even better news, God is going to come and live with us. Just as He lived with Adam and Eve, He will now dwell with us.

That's the wonderful news of heaven that God will be with us and we will be with Him. All those things that have troubled us and caused suffering, will be gone. God will take care of all of them. God gave John this revelation so he could assure fellow believers of one thing: that in the war waged, God would be victorious. When all was said and done, God would welcome all who believe into His Kingdom.

What would that Kingdom be like? All the sadness, all the hard times, all the sorrows would be gone. In this physical existence, we need not worry that those were going to continue forever because in that day they would be gone. Even more reassuring, God Himself would comfort us, wiping away our tears and giving us His presence forever.

In a sense, our times are not much different from when the book of Revelation was given to John. In many parts of the world Christians are still persecuted for their beliefs and their actions.

Why are they persecuted? First, and foremost, they proclaim Jesus as Lord and Savior. Oftentimes, along with words, they do it by caring for people; providing food and shelter to those in need. Satan has stirred up powers against such things because he knows what they do, they lead more people to Jesus. Satan thought persecution and suffering would cause people to flee God, in actuality it brought them closer to God.

The generations who have come before us have built God's Kingdom by going. Sometimes, they only had to go a short distance to find those who don't know Jesus. They went "For the Generations to Come..." because they knew that God wanted those generations to come to Him, also.

As we gather to worship, eat and drink at the table of our Lord, serve God by serving others and in so many other ways, we get little glimpses of heaven. They may last just for a moment or perhaps, for a season, but they are there to encourage us for what is to come.

I believe that whatever picture we might have of heaven, it will be immeasurably more than what we think it to be. I say that because I am certain that being with God, has to be far beyond anything we could ever imagine. Knowing that God is with us, we can face whatever is ahead for now, because someday we will dwell with Him. Because of Jesus, we will live with Him for eternity. What a joy that is to look forward to!