

[OPENING SLIDE]

"Glory Bound"

"Then one of the elders addressed me saying, 'Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?' I said to him, 'Sir, you know.'"

Introduction

[SLIDE # 2] Well, so very fond of her Grandpa, little Jenny crawled up into his lap one day and cuddled close. She looked into "Grampy's" face with her hazel eyes and said, "Grandpa, can you make a sound like a frog?"

Grandpa smiled, and said, "Sure I can, honey. Ribbit. Ribbit."

Suddenly, the little girl leaped from his lap and ran into the kitchen yelling as loud as she could, "Mommy, mommy, we're going to Disney. We're going to Disney!"

The young mom exclaimed, "Honey, *why* do you think we are going to Disney?"

To which the little girl blurted, "Well, you said we get to go to Disney 'when Grandpa croaks!'" [www.sermoncentral.com/illustrations/sermon-illustration-dr-larry-petton-humor-death-children-misunderstandings-83656.asp]

Out of the mouths of babes!

Main Point: Where, in the midst of earth's many sorrows, even the most faithful find themselves in need of a good laugh, of some relief. Good News! Our heavenly Father has not abandoned us to the changes and chances of this life. Our blessed Savior delivers that relief, lasting joy, with assurance that is always on time.

THEREFORE, let us find comfort, and strength in a salvation that is centered in Christ alone! Yes, be encouraged and blessed, holding fast to the promises of God – in life *and* in death – as we who are the redeemed of God, *will* receive the goal of our faith – life forever in Christ.

[SLIDE # 3]

BOUND – IN FAITH – TO THE LORD OF GLORY, WE ARE GLORY BOUND!

Amen.

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Mass casualty events, the very real threat of war and famine, frailty and uncertainty of life ... the needs of self above others – no matter who gets hurt – social upheaval, state-sanctioned licentiousness and perversity. Welcome ... to Babylon – A.D. 90. Whereas, all the above could describe the current climate of our time, John beheld that portrait of our world 2,000 years ago! Solomon had it right when he said:

[SLIDE # 4]

“What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is [truly] nothing new under the sun.” (Ecclesiastes 1:9)

Yet, neither the aged Solomon nor John writes to bemoan or belabor the obvious. John’s pen is not to instill fear and wide-spread panic. Rather, his is to reassure a church in exile ... to remind them that “This Is *Still* My Father’s World” ... and that as long as it is, there is no reason to fear, and every reason to rejoice!

How is that going for you?

It depends on when you ask me? Where, feast days like today are bittersweet as I rejoice to recall sitting and praying with a child of God in their final hours, or to hear their confession of faith, or to comfort loved ones with the hope of the resurrection unto eternal life.

But then, there is also the grief, the pain of separation, the impatience of waiting in the now for the not yet, as I mourn loved ones who no longer walk this earth – family and friends who I deeply miss – people prized and powerfully loved.

How about you?

[SLIDE # 5] Who, like me, may well be feeling the same thing. Where, “to look only to the future,” notes one commentator, “without acknowledging the present is to dump an empty gospel on those who suffer.” (Dawn, *Joy in Our Weakness*, 135-136)

Yes, change *is* coming, John says ... something new is on the horizon. Where, John would bid us to pause a while, in joy and thanksgiving ... not to rush the moment, but – says Barbara Brown Taylor, to “go fishing with the book of Revelation.” (*Feasting on the Word (A)*, 4:221)

Where, the first “fish” drawn from our text is that ...

[SLIDE # 6] WE ARE SUMMONED.

⁹ *After this* (the opening of the first six seals, and sealing of the 144,000 from the tribes of Israel, "prepared to march out in mission"¹) ***I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches*** (symbolizing victory and festal joy²) ***in their hands,*** ¹⁰ ***and crying out with a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God*** (not to Caesar or empire, but to He) ***who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"***

What a parade we have in Rev 7! One to stir the soul. Where, summoned are Adam and Eve, followed by Abraham and Sarah, Moses, Miriam and Aaron ... there's Joshua, and Ruth. And look! Here comes Peter, Paul, and many Mary's! There is Polycarp of Smyrna, last seen, his body set aflame, or Justin Martyr, beheaded rather than compromise his faith in Jesus. There's Patrick, apostle to Ireland, and Boniface, missionary to northern Europe ... O, and Ansgar who brought the Gospel to the Danes, or St. Olaf, Christian King of Norway ... Luther and Mother Theresa!

Where if we crane our necks, stand on our tippy toes, we'll see ... many who we knew well ... summoned in the faith by their Savior: a beloved husband or wife, a father, or mother, or child. Look, it is June ... and Joan! And you, child of God, *you!*

[SLIDE # 7] Where, looking at the cover of this morning's bulletin, the Reformation artist Albrecht Durer fires our imagination that we, too, will be in that number ... fresh from of fray ... with a song to sing. Where, even now – what we do here – is but a dress rehearsal for that day, rendering divine service back to Him, who meets us here – with His Word, most blessed assurance. What more is there to say but:

¹¹ *And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God,* ¹² *saying ... "Amen* ["yes, yes, it shall be so"]! ***Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen."***

Let us not tire of hearing the call – to get back, time and again to this! "I need Thee every hour!" the hymns says. I know I do. How about you? Would you go there with me ... to that deeper well? To drink deeply of the mysteries of God. Summoned, we'll go ... and be refreshed together.

¹ Brighton, *Revelation*, 193

² An old burial custom puts a palm branch into the hands of a departed Christian, so as to symbolize faith and hope. (Poellot, *Revelation*, 109)

Where, we rejoice also to discover that ...

[SLIDE # 8] WE ARE SEALED.

¹³ Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes (a symbol of our Baptism into Christ, a symbol of purity, holiness and the radiance of God's glory³), **and from where have they come?" ¹⁴ I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation** (that is, "the suffering through which the children of God in all ages pass before they enter into the eternal kingdom of God"⁴). **They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.**

A while back I read about a seasoned Christian who said, *"In this life God places us in His oven. In here it's hot and it hurts, where no one likes being in the oven. But when life is over, and the bell dings, God takes us out of the oven and says, 'Well done . . . good and faithful servant, well done!'"* [www.sermoncentral.com/illustrations/sermon-illustration-joe-bertone-humor-suffering-endurance-trial-81864.asp]

Indeed! We are sealed for eternity by the blood of the Lamb. Where, a seal in John's day indicated "the security of an official document – the authenticity, ownership, and protection of the one who imprints his seal." (Dawn, 136-137)

Child of God, you are sealed – in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. [Amen.] Where, the songs we sometimes sing in this life – written in minor key – aren't the ones that define us. The one witnessed by John – written in major key – in a full throated, 4-part harmony, is the one that does.

What is that makes us sing – this mark that identifies who and whose we are? Nothing short of the blood of Jesus poured out for you and me on Calvary's cross – distributed in our time at this altar – the intersection of heaven and earth. Where, as we face those struggles in our lives, we rejoice that our deepest needs are satisfied by this present sealing of Jesus, of a blood that covers us all.

"I am Jesus' little lamb, ever glad at heart I am" ... not because of what *will* become of me, but because of what, even now, *is* become of me ... we are covered ... we wear *His* robes ... we are reborn to live!

³ Like those of our baptismal garments, confirmation robes and Pastor's vestments.

⁴ Poellet, *Revelation*, 111

Wherein, the final “fish” we draw from pool of the Revelation is that ...

[SLIDE # 9] WE ARE at the last SUPPORTED.

¹⁵ “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 shelter (“tent/tabernacle”) them with his presence. ¹⁶ They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. ¹⁷ For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

“In the ancient Middle East, a person who came under the tent of a host automatically came under that host’s care, provision, and protection.” (Peter, CJ, 27:2, 135)
Wherein, summoned *to*, and secure *in* the presence of the Lord, we enjoy exactly that – His care, His provision and His protection.

Where, commentator, Marva Dawn, writes, “We just don’t know enough yet not to trust in him.” As if to say, everything we’ve known thus far – our being summoned and sealed in Jesus, the blessings of our worship together, and the assurances of all that is to come – everything points to one thing: the promises of God in Christ being true. He *has* proven Himself when He brought His Son back from the dead. That He – as He has – will always be there for us – supporting us by His Word, and that there is nothing more He could do to prove His love – in this life, or the next.

Child of God ...

[SLIDE # 10] Rejoice in who you are – **be**-attitude bearers: in the kingdom, comforted, satisfied ... the “*children of God*” (Matthew 5:9; 1 John 3:1)!

[SLIDE # 11] W/every breath, bear witness in word/song to this hope that is in you. God keeps His promises. “*The gifts and call of God are irrevocable.*” (Romans 11:19)

[SLIDE # 12] Rejoice! Sunday’s coming! That final Sunday of our hope and joy!

Conclusion

In the spirit of another World Series, good friends Bob and Stan also loved baseball. Where, one day at a ballgame, they made a vow to each other that, whichever friend died first, that friend would send a message back to earth to let the other friend know if there was baseball in Heaven.

Sure enough, Bob died. Where, after a while, he sent a message back to earth to Stan: "Hey, Stan, I have good news and I have bad news for you from Heaven."

Stan thought about it and said, "Let's hear the good news!"

Bob said, "Well, the good news is there is a lot of baseball going on up here! Mantle is hitting home runs a mile long, Satchel Paige is dishing it out, Ruth and Robinson ... it really is baseball Heaven!"

Stan smiled and said, "That's great, Bob. But what about that bad news?"

There was a long pause. When Bob finally said, "The bad news is ... you're scheduled to pitch here tomorrow night!" [www.sermoncentral.com/illustrations/ser-mon-illustration-dr-larry-petton-humor-heaven-eternity-death-83664.asp]

Where, again, who couldn't use some of that – today, or any day?

Well, good news! Our heavenly Father has not abandoned us to the changes and chances of this life. Our blessed Savior delivers lasting relief, lasting joy, with assurance that is always right on time.

THEREFORE, let us find comfort, and strength in a salvation that is centered in Christ alone! Yes, be encouraged and strengthened, holding fast to the promises of God – in life *and* in death – as we who are the redeemed of God, *will* receive the goal of our faith.

[SLIDE # 13]

BOUND – IN FAITH – TO THE LORD OF GLORY, WE ARE GLORY BOUND!

Amen.

[Friday E-mail:]

"I am a child of God. I am a child of God. I am a child of God." That's what I kept repeating at a certain point on one of my morning walks a while back. Scarcely able to believe it myself sometimes, I, like every other baptized and redeemed soul, cherish such a blessed reminder. Where, at the beginning, the middle and end of it all – "all" being our life – it is the one true constant. It is the most certain thing we possess and count on.

Where, in his commentary on 1 John, Hilary of Poitiers reminds us that this holy designation covers both our past and our present. But it is also our hope for the future ... something the apostle John brings to the forefront in our epistle reading for this coming All Saint's Sunday ... **Revelation 7:9-17**.

"After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands,¹⁰ and crying out with a loud voice, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!'"

It is one of the few glimpses we get from this side, as to the glory of heaven ... of:

¹¹ Angels ... and the elders and the four living creatures ... on their faces before the throne and [worshiping] God, ¹² saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen."

Our life as "children of God" really does carry with it such a note of triumph – even when moments of sadness and grief, the weight of carrying the hurts of others, or our own, grip us. It is the full assurance of John's timely words that covers our past, gives birth to our future, all the while covering our present ... until that day when we, too, will stand *"before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple."*

Child of God, such is our confidence, this day, and every day! Where, attempting to "sanctify the small realities of every day," we may well stumble for a "fidelity [that] is lacking." But by God's grace we are set firmly on the path; where, with each step of the way – come what may – we make our way ... our way home.

So, who are you? Set forth this day with this blessed assurance ringing in your ears, repeat after me: "I am a child of God. I am a child of God. I *am* a child of God." Indeed! You are. *You are.* SYOS