

Sunday Sermon: October 8, 2017 A Service of Comfort and Strength in the Promises of Jesus

Sermon Text: Revelation 7: 9- 17

Sermon Theme: Do Not be Afraid

1. Jesus has won the victory
2. Jesus gives us the victory

⁹ *After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.* ¹⁰

And they cried out in a loud voice:

“Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”

¹³ *Then one of the elders asked me, “These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?”*

¹⁴ *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.” 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 spread his tent over them.

¹⁶ *Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst.*

The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat.

¹⁷ *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.”

How do we respond when some evil person stockpiles guns and shoots people who are watching a concert? No one is ever ready when evil shows itself so clearly. When things like this happen we are all affected, we all suffer in some way, whether they happen to us directly or indirectly.

There are many ways we could respond. We can be shell-shocked because it hit so close to home, in our hometown. We can become angry and have knee-jerk reactions to all the things we see on TV. We can become depressed because there is danger around every corner. We might even begin to hope because this world seems so horrible.

But even though we might get caught up in the news casts, social media reports or our own emotions, there is another reaction we should have: faith and trust in the Lord. In the middle of all of our mixed emotions and troubled thoughts, the voice of Jesus is calling to us. **“Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest.** I am here for you, don’t lose hope.”

In the middle of these earthly troubles where sin is seen in very real ways we should not be afraid. We cling to our Savior. He has won the victory over the world and he gives that victory to us.

In our Gospel this morning, Jesus described this world and it wasn’t very pleasant was it? Yet, as we listen to him speak, we have to admit that what he says is true. We live in a world that is deeply troubled.

⁶ You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. ⁷ Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸ All these are the beginning of birth pains.

There are many people who claim that if we work together hard enough and work together enough we will be able to create one great peaceful world. We will be able to have a blissful coexistence on this earth. Jesus says there will be no such peace on earth. We will experience trouble. There will be fighting and wars, natural disasters and tragedies all because of sin.

But these troubles are not just on a global scale. Jesus tells us to be ready because they will be on a personal scale as well. Listen again to Jesus. **At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, ¹¹ and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. ¹² Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold.**

Many claim that we are becoming more loving, more accepting, more enlightened, more spiritual in our views today concerning society, morality and religion. Once again, Jesus says that's just not true. He says that instead of being more spiritual and more enlightened, the hearts of minds of many are growing more sinful. Many will turn away from the true faith to something that is more pleasant to hear, something that is more accepting of sin, something that is more enlightened than God.

Jesus tells us that because of this lack of faith in him it will not be love that rules the day, love will grow cold. We see that wickedness and hatred all around us in the way that others treat each other. Maybe we even see it in ourselves and the way we treat others.

Jesus speaks very honestly to us so that we will not be surprised when we see these things. He isn't saying this to drive us to panic and fear, he is saying this so that we go to him in these times of trouble and cling to him in faith. Jesus gives us hope and comfort because he has overcome the world. When was Jesus was explaining to his disciples all that he must do to save the world they were troubled. Jesus said this to them, but it also applied to us. ³³ **"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."**

Jesus tells us, **"Take Heart."** We don't have to be afraid when these things that happen all around us. We can face the troubles in the world because we have a Savior who has overcome the world. He has won the victory over this world and the power of sin, death, and the devil that often rule over it. I can give you hope and comfort.

This morning we used two Psalms of comfort which directed us to "take heart" in the Lord. Which show us his promises of comfort and safety from the Lord. We read of the power of the Lord to protect us, **"My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth."** We sang of his enduring love to save, **"God is our fortress and our deliverer, our rock and our refuge."**

The almighty God of creation is the same almighty God who uses his power to protect and guard you and me from evil. He is the God who stands as our stronghold in times of trouble, fear and doubt.

Our God is not just an earthly God for earthly troubles. Our God is the God of earth and heaven. He cares about your body and your soul. His promises certainly apply to us while we are here on earth, but also far beyond this earth to the glory of heaven.

God showed that love by taking care of our greatest need first. From the time of the first sin, God showed a love for sinful people. Man sinned against God. This sin caused a separation between God and man that we couldn't do anything about. But God could and God did. He still loved us and promised a Savior who would win the victory over sin and death to take away our sins and to give us a place right next to our heavenly Father in the halls of heaven.

God didn't say that a Savior might come some day, he declared his Savior as a fact that was already a truth for Adam and Eve when he said it. All those who believed in this promise of a Messiah believed it as if they stood at the foot of the cross themselves.

God sent his Son, Jesus, to take those sins on himself so that we would not have to experience the eternal punishment sin deserves. This was our greatest need.

By his work on the cross, Jesus has won the victory over the devil and destroyed the devil's power. Yet, the devil still works very hard to try to destroy the good that God wants. The devil tries to tempt us away from the God who loves us. He uses evil people and tragic, terrible events here on earth to try to shake our faith in a God who saves. He tries to raise doubts that God is really watching over us, that he really cares about us, or that he really loves us as he says he does.

Because Jesus has won that victory on the cross, because he has taken care of our greatest need we can be sure that he will also watch over us while we are here on earth. The Apostle Paul writes, **He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how we not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?** Paul asks us a question, "If God took care of your greatest need in taking away our sins and giving us a place in heaven, don't you think that he will take care of you while you walk here on earth. The answer of course is yes. Our God cares about our greatest need, our smallest and every other need in between.

Jesus has taken care of our greatest need, he has freed us from the sin that would affect our body and our soul. Jesus gives us his victory as our own. We can live as conquerors, as victors, in this sin-filled world. Paul says, **"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who**

loved us. I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We may not feel like conquerors, we may not even act like conquerors when we have doubts and fears, but we are still conquerors through Jesus. We keep our eyes focused on this victory even in these troubled times because nothing can separate us from the love that God has for us, nothing can separate us from the victory has given to us .

In our reading from Revelation, we see this victory in a wonderful vision of heaven. Many times we forget that earth is not the goal of our life. It is not the place where we are supposed to stay. Heaven is the goal for a Christian. The glory and joy of heavenly home far surpasses anything that we will experience on earth.

Listen again to the great news that the elder speaks to John: **After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb..... 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..... Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat.¹⁷ 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.”**

As we look at this picture of the kingdom of heaven from Revelation, we see that those who are experiencing the victory of heaven are not those who have led a free and easy life. They are not the ones who have never had any trouble or trial. We see that they are experiencing the glory of heaven even though they came through the trouble and tribulation of a sinful earth. God did watch over them, God did give them what he promised them. He carried them through their trouble on earth and then when the time was right he carried them to his side in heaven. Jesus victory is their victory. His blood has washed away their sins and gives them the glory of heaven.

Our hope in the Lord does not come because we will never experience troubles or problems, pain or fear again. Our hope in the Lord does not come because we will never again experience a mass shooting or terrorist attack again. Our hope in the Lord comes because despite all of these earthly troubles, Jesus can and does watch over us and brings us to our heavenly home.

We see in heaven the fulfillment of all those things we want on earth but don't often get to experience. In heaven there will be eternal joy, peace and happiness.

“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. That tent of protection that is often spoken about in the Old Testament

¹⁶ **Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst.**

The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat.

¹⁷ **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.”

There will be no sorrow, so sadness, no sin, because all of these things will be gone. God has wiped them all away. We will have joy in the victory is ours.

We have a God who makes a promise to watch over and who does watch over us. We do not need to be afraid of anything that will happen here on earth, we are conquerors through our Savior, Jesus. Nothing can take away the victory that Jesus has already given to us. We can live in the strength of Jesus knowing that no matter what tribulations we go through, our eternal victory is secure.

We are safe in the hands of our Triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We can and do live in the strength of our God and the victory he gives to us. Thanks be to God he gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Thanks be to God. He has overcome the world. Amen.