

**Sermon for End Times 3 – Saints Triumphant**  
**November 12, 2017**

**“Victory Celebration”**

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from the Lord our God, the Almighty. Amen.

Dear bride of the Lamb, part of his holy Church, Jesus told the parable of our Gospel about the wise and foolish virgins to make clear the point: be ready! Be ready for Jesus to return at any time. He’s told us that he is coming soon, and he urges us to be and to stay ready so that when he arrives, he’ll bring us into the wedding banquet.

In our second reading from Revelation, Jesus opens the door, just a crack, and gives us a peek at the wedding banquet, the wedding supper of the Lamb and his Church.

It’s a celebration, as you would expect at a wedding reception. The people who are there are very happy. They’re celebrating a victory:

**Alleluia! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for his judgments are true and just, because he has condemned the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and he has avenged his servants’ blood that was shed by her hand.**

The great prostitute has been condemned. To make a long story short, the great prostitute is the apostate church, attacks on God’s Word and God’s saints that come from within churches and religious organizations and from people who claim to be on God’s side, but are against God. All of that is summarized as “the great prostitute” who in chapter 18 is condemned and punished.

And the immense crowd in heaven is cheering her punishment in hell. “Alleluia! Her smoke goes up forever and ever.”

Should we really cheer for that? Should it make our hearts glad to see a glimpse of that celebration?

While God offers his salvation and forgiveness to all people, those who reject it and by doing so move in with the great prostitute, will be punished and that is good.

The great prostitute’s crimes are very real and very horrible. She has corrupted the earth with her immorality. And not only has she corrupted and led many people astray with lies and false teachings, but God will also avenge his servant’s blood that was shed by her hands, like the earthly lives of the many prophets murdered in Jerusalem by the religions leaders who hated God’s truth spoken by the prophets. “His judgments are true and just,” and it is a good thing, worthy of heavenly celebration, that God will depose all of his enemies, destroy their power and influence completely, and send them to suffer in hell forever.

In contrast to the judgment against the great prostitute and all the unbelievers, the angel says to John, “Write! Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb.” And most certainly that is a blessing, and a good thing to have written down for us to read and savor today!

You’re invited to the wedding, and not just as a guest, but to be in the wedding, as the bride. Jesus loves you, the Church, and in order to enjoy perfect harmony with the Church, Jesus has condemned and punished all his enemies, and “Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, by cleansing her with the washing of water in connection with the Word. He did this so that he could present her to himself as a glorious church, having no stain or

wrinkle or any such thing, but so that she would be holy and blameless." You are one of the stones of the Church. "His bride has made herself ready, and she was given bright, clean, fine linen to wear," says the sound of the roaring crowd, and John quickly answers the question, "What is this bright, clean, fine linen?" The Holy Spirit reveals through John, "In fact, the fine linen is the "not guilty" verdicts pronounced on the saints." God's people are clothed with Christ's righteousness. You are clothed with Christ's righteous, given to you in Holy Baptism, in Holy Communion, in the Word of God which connect you in faith to the death and resurrection of Jesus. "Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb." You are one of those. You are blessed, and you are invited to join in the victory celebration.

Alleluia! It means, "Praise the Lord," in English. Alleluia! It's said four times in these verses among the statements of praise. Why praise the Lord? Three reasons are given here for us to praise the Lord.

Alleluia! His judgements are true and just. Praise the Lord because not only are his judgments for heaven and hell accurate, but also as-promised. Those who reject him are rejected from heaven, and those who believe in him are not put to shame, but receive the crown of glory. His promise that the Church will prevail, and the gates of hell cannot hold it back, has been fulfilled with his people safe in the glory of heaven.

Alleluia! "The Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns." Not only has this always been true since before God created this world, but in heaven, God's ruling of all things will be fully on display before our eyes, no longer hidden like it is for us now on earth, where it looks like evil scores a lot of wins in the war of good and evil, but in heaven, the reality will be right in front of our eyes. The Lord our God, the All-mighty, reigns."

Alleluia! Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory, because the wedding of the Lamb has come." The harmony of the Garden of Eden, total peace and agreement between God's people and God will be fully restored, so that our thinking and will and desires will perfectly match God's thinking and will and desires.

This is a good-news glimpse into the wedding banquet that's coming, and it is meant for your encouragement. It's coming, and it's yours. The total victory of our God, the total blessing of heaven, it's coming, and it's yours.

You are blessed, because the words of the angel are spoken for you: "Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb." He also said to me, "These are the true words of God." Amen.

**Text:** *Revelation 19:1-9*

*God gives us a brief picture of the triumph celebration that is coming for God's people.*

After these things I heard what seemed to be the loud sound of an immense crowd in heaven, saying:

Alleluia! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, <sup>2</sup>for his judgments are true and just, because he has condemned the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and he has avenged his servants' blood that was shed by her hand.

<sup>3</sup>A second time they said, "Alleluia! Her smoke goes up forever and ever."

<sup>4</sup>Then the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures bowed down and worshipped God, who sits on the throne, saying, "Amen! Alleluia!"

<sup>5</sup>And from the throne came a voice that said, "Praise our God, all you his servants and you who fear him, small and great."

<sup>6</sup>And I heard what seemed to be the roar of a large crowd or the roar of many waters or the sound of loud rumblings of thunder, saying:

Alleluia! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. <sup>7</sup>Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory, because the wedding of the Lamb has come.

His bride has made herself ready, <sup>8</sup>and she was given bright, clean, fine linen to wear.

(In fact, the fine linen is the "not guilty" verdicts pronounced on the saints.)

<sup>9</sup>The angel said to me, "Write: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb." He also said to me, "These are the true words of God."