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Trinity Lutheran Church
Decatur, Illinois
All Saints' Day Sermon
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“The Bridal Suite In Paradise”

God's PEACE is ALWAYS YOURS' in Jesus.

Hear the Word of God from Revelation 21,

“Then one of the angels.....said to me, “Come! I will show you the bride – the wife of the Lamb.’ And he carried me away, in the Spirit, to a mountain great and high. And he showed me the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a Bride, beautifully adorned for her husband. It shone with the glory of God, and its’ brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel.”

DEAR FRIENDS IN CHRIST,

So what is heaven going to be like? Inquiring minds want to know. What will it look like? Who will be there? What will it feel like? Smell like? Taste like? We long for a glimpse of heaven to carry us through this dying world. But where can we get such a glimpse? 1st Corinthians 2 says, “*No eye has seen....no ear has heard....no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him.*”

It's been said, “*A picture is worth a thousand words*”; but with God, “*a Word is worth a thousand pictures.*” By God's grace the disciple John was given a glimpse into heaven, and he wrote down what he saw in the Book of Revelation. John gives us a “*Preview of Coming Attractions*”, in the book of Revelation, by using many pictures to reveal heaven to us. John speaks of heaven as a *Holy City, Radiant Bride, Precious stones, Pearly gates, Streets of God, the Tree of Life, the Throne of God, the Conquering Lamb, the Spirit flowing like a river from the throne of God, and no more curse.* Heaven is unlike anything we'e ever known, seen, heard, touched, smelled, taseted, or imagined. We can only get glimpses of it through God's Word and sacraments.

Revelation 21 says, “***I (John) saw the Holy City – the New and Heavenly Jerusalem – coming down, out of heaven from God.***’ The Book of Revelation distinguishes between 2 cities: the heavenly holy city God establishes, and the earthly sinful city man builds called Babylon, hearkening back to the Tower of Babel, the city of man’s rebellion, of those who wanted to be ‘*play God*’. The sinful city that man builds on earth – called Babylon – stands in for this whole sinful world, and is described in Revelation as a Drunken Prostitute, with crooked merchants, corrupt politicians, immoral bedrooms, filled with false religions and demons, and ruled by satan. That’s Babylon, the city man builds – and in Revelation 19 it is utterly destroyed to ashes at the coming of Christ.

But then, Hebrews 12 describes the heavenly city like this: “***But you have come to Mt. Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous ones made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.***” And Revelation 20-22, describe the heavenly city, as a place in which there is “***no more suffering, mourning, crying, pain, sin, death, devil, demon, or curse.***” And Jesus has purchased you and me to be His bride, He embraced us as His bride in Baptism, He gives us an appetizer of the Wedding Feast in the Lord’s Supper, and he will soon take us – His bride – to the Honeymoon suite of heaven, to live happily ever after.

John then sees and describes the Bride of Christ - which includes all the believers in heaven - of which we are already citizens through faith in Christ, we just haven’t arrived yet. In Revelation 21 an angel says to John, “***Come! Let me show you the Bride – the wife of the Lamb.***” Which lamb? John 1:29, “***The Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world,***” now risen and reigning in heaven. And when John sees the Bride – the church of Christ – he describes the bride as follows in Revelation 21, “***Then I saw the Holy City – the New Jerusalem – coming down out of heaven, from God, as a bride, beautifully adorned for her husband (which is Jesus – and by her husband).***” And John also sees the great wedding celebration already beginning in heaven in Revelation 19 where he adds, “***I heard the roar of a great multitude.....crying out.... ‘Hallelujah! Our God reigns! Let us rejoice and be glad and give Him glory, for the marriage feast of the lamb has come, and His bride has made herself ready, fine linen, bright and pure, was given her to wear.’***” Page 2

And talk about saying “YES TO THE DRESS”, John says, “*And the city (which is the church in heaven – the Bride of Christ).....shined with the Glory of God, and its’ brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel.*” But on our great wedding day in heaven, we won’t be singing: “*Here comes the bride!*” No! We will be singing with the faithful ones in Matthew 25, “*Behold! The Bridegroom cometh!*” We’ll be singing, “*Here comes the groom!*” Why? He paid the betrothal price of His own blood, so that we could be His bride, and live with Him forever, in the Honeymoon Suite of heaven. We will be giving all glory to the Groom; not to ourselves, the Bride. Why? Without Jesus’ blood there would be no marriage with sinners, no forgiven Bride, no access to the Bridal Suite, and no Honeymoon in heaven, that defies all earthly descriptions! And yet, while all of the Bride’s glory was earned and purchased by the Bridegroom; yet, out of true love for His bride, our Bridegroom Jesus, has given His beauty and glory to us His bride. John says, “*I saw the wife of the Lamb.....who shined with the glory of God, and her brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel.*” Isaiah 61 adds that this is the Bridal beauty we have already been given through faith in Jesus, when it states: “*He has clothed me in garments of salvation, and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, even as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.*” Our bridal beauty is the righteousness of Jesus, as precious as priceless jewels, which is ours’ now by faith and in heaven by sight.

As John continues his tour of heaven he notices something missing in heaven. There’s no temple in the city, which is strange. You’d expect a place of worship in heaven, since the highlight of heaven will be its’ thunderous, saintly, angelic, Christ-centered worship. But then John notices why there’s no temple, He says, “*The Lord God, Almighty, and the Lamb (Jesus) are the Temple...and the bride (all believers) are its’ pillars.*” The vision John gives us is that in which there is no building in which to worship, for all of heaven is centered around God the Father, and the Lamb Jesus, on the throne, encircled by the Holy Spirit, the angels and saints worshipping and praising our saving Bridegroom in Paradise Restored. In other words, instead of a structure or building set apart for worship, dare to imagine the entirety of heaven, and the entirety of the city of God, all praising God - all made possible by the blood of the Lamb, and our Bridegroom, Jesus. The entire city, kingdom, and new creation of God is overflowing with the thunderous praise of God the Father for his rescue plan, to the the Lamb for His rescue, and to the Holy Spirit for delivering that rescue to us; not just one building, on one city block, behind closed doors, by a few people. All of the redeemed of God, risen and reigning, are, and will forever, praise our saving Lord, and loving Bridegroom. Page 3

As John continues His tour of heaven, he tells us, ***“There will be no need for the sun, moon, or stars, solar power, or green new deals, for the Lord God, Almighty, will be its’ light, and the Lamb will be its’ lamp.”*** Notice! It does not say that there will not be a sun, moon, and stars in heaven. It says there will be no need for them, because the Lord will be heaven’s light, and the Lamb will be its’ light. The sun, moon, and stars will most likely be there, because Romans 8 says, ***“All creation will be made new again.”*** However, in the new creation, the luminous, glorious, presence, of our once-dead, now risen and glorified Savior, together with the glory of His Father, and the Holy Spirit, will provide overwhelming light and life for God’s people in heaven. As a result, John adds, ***“The nations will walk in its’ light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it,”*** sort of like the Wise men bringing their gifts to the Christ-child, and guided by Bethlehem’s star. It will be sort of like an eternal Christmas service, an eternal Epiphany, and an eternal Easter, as Christ, our Bridegroom, forever reveals His love to His bride, the church, while we, the bride, will give Jesus the gold, frankincense, and myrrh of our praise to Jesus.

John next notices that God’s city is a Gated Community, but notice, its’ gates of Pearl are never shut. The open gates speak of freedom, safety, and welcome for all to this city. The Bible says, ***“There will be no more night there.”*** No more cover of darkness. No getting lost in the dark. No more anything that goes with darkness: criminals, thieves, robbers, prowlers, demons or devils. In fact, John explicitly says, ***“Nothing sinful (notice it’s in the present tense – those who are still sinful and unrepentant)...nothing sinful will ever enter the city.”*** The Good News is: ***“Our sin doesn’t rise with us in the great resurrection on the last day! And thus, it doesn’t enter with us into God’s city.”*** We will finally live in sinless city! It will be Paradise Restored, and the Garden of Eden to the Max!

It’s often been said that the greatness of heaven can first be described by what’s not in heaven. Revelation 21 says, ***“And there will be no more suffering, mourning, crying, pain, or death.”*** Dare to imagine no more rioting and rebellion, no more war or attacks, no more violence or murder, no more suffering or pain, no more plague or pestilence. Most importantly, there is one more thing that will not be there. A lot of people will not be there. Your relatives won’t be there simply because they have the same last name as you do. The guest list is based on repentance of sins, and faith in Jesus as one’s Savior.

Revelation 21 says, ***“Outside of the city are the cowardly – those who were too afraid to die and rise with Christ – the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice the occult, the idolaters, and all liars – their place will be in the lake of fire, which is the second death.”*** In fact, John says, ***“Nothing sinful will ever enter it, nor those who keep on doing what is shameful.”*** Now, if you’re like me, when you first hear those words, ***“nothing sinful will ever enter it (heaven),”*** those words can strike fear in our hearts, because we’re all sinful, and we know it. But wait a second! If you look closely at those verses, it’s speaking in the PRESENT TENSE: that is, it’s referring to those who still are sinful, because they’re unrepentant of their sins: those who are still cowardly, still unbelieving, still vile, still murderers, still sexually immoral, still idolaters and liars will not be in heaven. It’s referring to those who would rather give up Jesus, than give up their sins. In other words, those who refuse to repent of their sins, and who refuse to take Jesus up on the deal that His shed blood cleanses us from ALL unrighteousness, will not be in heaven. But for those who believe in Jesus as their forgiving Savior, Isaiah 51:11 promises us, ***“The redeemed of the Lord will enter Zion with singing, and neverending joy will crown their heads.”***

You and I don’t enter heaven by the Performance Plan—that is, by our own performance, purity, piety, prayers, praise, martyrdom, holy war, or jihad. NO! We receive heaven as a free gift from our Bridegroom Jesus, by the Pardon Plan of His shed blood. Ephesians 3 says, ***“In Christ, and through faith in Him, we may approach God with freedom and confidence.”*** In other words, only those who take Jesus up on His forgiving death will ever enter heaven, which is why John says in Revelation 14, ***“Blessed are the dead, who die in THE LORD.”*** Notice, not just anyone is blessed. And certainly not all of the dead are blessed, BUT, ***“Blessed are the dead, who die IN THE LORD, from now on.”*** And the greek word for “blessed” means “Happy to the Highest Degree”. ***“Happy to the highest degree are the dead, who die IN THE LORD, from now on.”***

On this All Saints’ Day, we remember that death is never the final outcome for those who trust in Jesus. Isaiah 25 declares, ***“The Lord has swallowed up death forever.”*** In 1st Corinthians 15 Paul makes fun of death saying, ***“Where, O Death, is your sting? Where, O Grave, is your victory? Thanks be to God, He gives us the victory through Jesus Christ, our Lord.”*** In other words Christ’s victory over sin, death and the grave, is our victory over sin, death, and the grave, and we’re going to celebrate that victory with our Bridegroom, Jesus, forever in heaven. Isn’t it great to be a Christian? ***Page 5***

In fact, our Bridegroom Jesus has so defeated death that it cannot touch our lives, until God says, when God says, where God says, how God says, and for the purpose God says, which for Jesus' Bride—those who love their Savior—it's always a door to paradise. Which is why Jesus promises us in John 11, ***“I am the Resurrection and the Life, whoever believes in Me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives and believes in Me will never die eternally.”***

Fret not, O Bride of Christ! Fret not dear saints of God! For ***“Your salvation is drawing near!”*** And just as certainly as Jesus laid down His life to pay the betrothal price of His blood to make you His bride, and just as certainly as Jesus rose from the dead, and entered heaven to prepare the Bridal Suite and Honeymoon of Heaven for you, He will come again to take YOU to be with Him, so that where He is you may be also! And we will live happily ever after, face to face with our Bridegroom Jesus. This calls for praise from Christ's Bride! Amen.