

THE SERMON

Twenty-first Sunday in Pentecost
All Saints Sunday

Sunday, November 2, 2025

With a Grateful Heart
Thankful for Our Heritage of Faith

Revelation 7:9-17

Beloved Church, before my son Martin was born, Pam and I decided to prepare his room with a special touch. We not only painted his room, but we also decided to buy used pieces of furniture and give them new life by recycling them, giving each piece a new lease on life. We visited yard sales and thrift shops, where we found pieces in some of the most amazing places.

One of these pieces was an old rocking chair that we bought from a family in York. The owner shared with me that it was his grandma's rocking chair, the one that had been in her living room for many years. And the one that his grandmother used to rock her children when they were little.

We didn't go into many other details. Still, through this small talk with him, I understood that this rocking chair was very dear to him. It wasn't particularly beautiful or valuable in monetary terms, but it held stories —perhaps countless stories — for him and his family.

When I recall this conversation, I imagine a grandmother rocking and reading books and her Bible every morning, where she taught her kids, and perhaps grandkids, about her faith.

In my vision, that chair represented more than just a piece of furniture; it symbolized a heritage of faith passed down through generations.

Today, on ***All Saints' Sunday***, we gather to remember and give thanks for our spiritual heritage – not just personal family histories, but the great cloud of witnesses who have shaped our faith journey.

The passage from Revelation 7 gives us a magnificent glimpse of this heritage and challenges us to consider our place in this ongoing story.

Let's look at what John describes in Revelation 7:9:

"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 before the Lamb."

I have to confess that every time I read this verse, I have goose bumps just to imagine this picture. This was a great multitude of people that no one could count who were present before the Lord.

The first observation of this text, and I don't know if you have noticed, it says that there was **diversity in this gathering**. This isn't a homogeneous group, but rather a beautiful, colorful picture of God's creation. Our heritage of faith crosses cultural boundaries, transcends racial divisions, languages, nations, and geographical areas, because before the Lord, we are one. Therefore, when we speak of saints, we're talking about ordinary people, like you and me, from all walks of life who lived extraordinary lives of faith.

I have to share with you that this gives me such relief, because nowadays, there is so much hatred against those who don't meet the standards. Those who were not born in the place, or those whose native language is not the same spoken in the nation, or those whose beliefs are different and they worship God differently.

We make differences in immigration status, the color of the skin, the way we speak, or the geographical origin. But here the text says that it was a great multitude with no difference. This is the image that I have of heaven, a place where nobody will need a visa, a green card, or proof of citizenship, because the Lord

will receive us all without distinction. Amen, and Amen.

The second observation that I would like to share with you is **their position**. The text says that they were ***"standing before the throne and before the Lamb."*** These saints found their ultimate purpose in worship. Their lives pointed to something greater than themselves. They understood that true fulfillment comes not from personal achievement but from standing in the presence of God.

To stand before God in the life of a Christian is a profound and multifaceted experience. This experience touches identity, purpose, accountability, and intimacy. It's not just a theological concept; it's a posture of the heart, a way of being in relationship with the Divine.

A third observation of this passage, we find it in verse 14, where we learn something crucial about these saints: ***"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."*** Our spiritual ancestors weren't perfect people; they were individuals who faced trials and tribulations but remained faithful. There are so many examples of people who not only gave their lives for the sake of the Lord, but they lived lives consistent with the gospel.

In other words, this refers to believers who have endured intense suffering, persecution, or trials. People who didn't escape hardship but *passed through it faithfully*.

Now, when I was a young fellow, and I read for the first time this text, I was wondering what it meant that **"...they have washed their robes..."**

As I studied the word, I understood that robes often symbolize one's life, character, or spiritual state. Washing the robes implies purification, repentance, and transformation. It's an active response. These individuals chose to be cleansed.

But the text continues, and it says: **"...and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."**

This part of the text really sounds like a paradox, but it is a paradox of grace: blood, which stains, becomes the agent of cleansing. The Lamb is Christ, whose sacrificial death brings forgiveness and righteousness. White robes signify holiness, victory, and belonging in God's presence.

I know, the book of Revelation is a book of much symbolism, and at the same time, it invites us to reflect on our own journey of faith.

So, now, consider some of the saints we remember today. And I would like to invite you to concentrate on

those who are closer to us. The Charlton church founders. Those who built and sustained this church through challenging times.

Perhaps family members who demonstrated unwavering faith despite hardships, or unknown believers who preserved and passed down Scripture through these almost **220 years** since this church was founded. Ordinary people who lived extraordinary lives of service.

Friends, their legacy challenges us in three specific ways, and I would like to share with you those challenges:

First, the **challenge of remembrance**: We must actively remember their stories. Not just names and dates, but the substance of their faith. *What made them persevere? What can we learn from their struggles and triumphs?* Remembrance isn't passive; it's an active engagement with the past that shapes our present.

Second, the **challenge of responsibility**: Verse 15 tells us they "**worship him day and night in his temple.**" We inherit not just their stories but their mandate to worship. Their faith wasn't just about personal salvation but about active service and worship in God's kingdom. Praise the Lord, we are

here gathered to continue worshipping the same Lord whom our ancestors did.

The third and final challenge that I would like to mention this morning is the **challenge of response**: The saints we remember today responded to God's grace with lives of gratitude and purpose. Verses 16-17 remind us of God's promises: "***Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst... For the Lamb... will be their shepherd.***" Their response to these promises was lives lived in faithful service.

So how do we live as grateful heirs of this spiritual heritage?

First, let's ***practice intentional remembrance***. That means creating spaces to share faith stories across generations. Document and preserve our church's history. And pretty soon, as we celebrate our church's 220th anniversary, I am sure we will have regular reflection on the testimonies of faith that have shaped us to become Charlton Church today.

Second, let us ***accept the mantle***. Recognize we're not just beneficiaries but custodians of faith. Actively participate in passing on the faith to the next generation. So here comes the question. What are we doing for those next generations?

Finally, let us ***express gratitude through action.*** Let us honor their memory through continued service. Build on their foundation through faithful innovation. Share their stories with the next generation.

Like that old rocking chair in this man's grandmother's living room, our heritage of faith holds stories of God's faithfulness across generations. The saints we remember today weren't perfect, but they were faithful. They leave us not just memories but a living legacy. A faith to be lived, a hope to be shared, and a love to be expressed.

Let's honor their memory not just with words but with lives that reflect the same faithful witness they demonstrated. Let us pray:

Eternal God, thank you for the saints who have gone before us. Help us to honor their memory by living lives of faithful witness. Give us the courage to carry forward the torch of faith they've passed to us, that future generations might know of your faithfulness. In Jesus' name, Amen.