✠ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. ✠

In our prayer of the day, we prayed that God would help us to follow the saints in all virtuous and godly living. Why? Because they point us to Christ, they have died in the faith, and they have been proven able to stand. This is why St Paul tells us that "we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses let us run the race and look to Jesus the founder and perfecter of our faith"

John receives a revelation from heaven. He's there on Patmos. Exiled. Old. Beaten. Tired. All of his friends are dead. His country is destroyed. And he sits there alone on Sunday having church by himself and receives this revelation. In which he sees the way that the world always is. There's always war, famine, pestilence, and death. He looks and he is shown the earth. With bad rulers, and worse rulers. With seditions and rebellions. With wars and flames. With nations rising and falling. He sees panic and fear on the earth and he asks, in all this wrath and evi and disaster, he says *the day of wrath has come and who is able to stand?"

Then our reading picks up. Just after he is shown the vision of earth and asks "who is able to stand" the angel lifts up his chin and points him toward heaven where he says "after this I looked and behold a great multitude that no one could number...standing before the Lamb."

These are the ones who are able to stand. The saints. Those who have been washed in the blood of the Lamb, fed the body of the Lamb, and nourished by the word of the Lamb so that they dic ir the faith of the Lamb. That is what a saint is.

They are able to stand because they put their trust in the Lamb. And we prayed today that God would help us to be like them. To learn from them that we might one day receive the same reward. The saints of the Old Testament, the saints of the New Testament, the saints of history and the saints of now. They are able to stand because they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb. You should know their names; you should know their stories.

Like Saint Adam with a mess for a family. Like Abel hated by his brother. Like Moses who tried to be faithful but everyone hated him for it Like Aaron who was older and better spoken but always

had to stand in Moses' shadow, Like isaiah and Jermiah who were nothing but faithful to God from their youth but were hated and despised. Like Peter, Paul and Matthew, like Lawrence, Martin, Athanasius, Augustine, Monica.

Even now with your own local saints. Including your unborn children whom you never met. Your parents and grandparents. Their Christian ancestors, People you are named after but never

John looks up and sees them all. But the last crowd is bigger than the rest. Not a bunch of famous people whose names you should know but a vast crowd of nameless saints who lived out quiet and peaceable lives that were godly and dignified.

He looks up and sees mothers and fathers and sons and daughter He sees:

Farmers and teachers
Businessmen and homemakers
Welders and factory workers
Engineers and machinists
Veterinarians and doctors
Soldiers and veterans
Nurses and janitors
Paramedics and police
Electricians and plumbers
Shepherds and location managers
Financial advisors and dentists
Hairdressers and preschool teachers

These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

"Therefore they will be before the throne of God and they will serve him day and night in his temple: and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence, They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymores the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

John looks up and that is who he sees. So if you miss your dead family and friends who have died in the faith; this is the place to be. Because this is the closest you will ever be to them on this side of heaven because this is the place heaven and earth come together. And this is the place that will strengthen your faith so that you will one day be where they are.

Because being a Christian and trying to survive this life to enter into heaven is not easy and it is very mesy. None of the saints were perfect and neither are you. Being a saint of God whom saint John sees in the reading does not mean you are perfect but that Jesus is and that by grace through faith, He imparts that perfection to you.

The gospel didn't say the saints are perfect but that they are blessed. That even if you are poor in spirit, sad, meek, hungry, merciful, pure in heart, persecuted or reviled, you are blessed because your reward is great in heaven. You are blessed because of what Christ has done for you.

This is why Christ gives us all the saints. Not because they were perfect in this life but because they died in the faith and were made perfect in Him. In our prayer of the day, we prayed that God would help us to follow the saints in all virtuous and godly living precisely for that reason.

Because when you look down everything is on fire and no one is able to stand. When you look up., the saints are standing before the lamb pointing us to Christ. The bible says since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses let us run the race and look to Jesus the founder and perfecter of our faith. You need examples in this life. You need heroes. You need people to look up to.

Run the race towards heaven. Your destiny is to be numbered with those whom John sees. So run the race. And as you go the saints will encourage you. because surviving this life is not easy. Paul says it is a race for which you need a cloud of witnesses.

✠ In Jesus Name ✠