

**Exploring Scripture for November 5, 2023**  
**All Saints Sunday**  
**Revelation 7:9-17**  
**The Rev. Greg Batson**

This scripture is one of the lectionary selections for All Saints, the day set aside for remembering the faithful who have died and are now joined with God in eternal life. The book is formally known as “The Revelation (Apocalypse) to John”. It was written towards the end of the first century, probably under the reign of the Roman Emperor Domitian who persecuted Christians in Asia Minor. While the author is listed as “John” in the title, this person is not the same John who wrote the Gospel or the Letters of John. Instead, it appears that this author was an itinerant early Christian prophet who traveled throughout Asia Minor.

The passage is one of several visions found in the book of the heavenly court, God sitting upon a throne, surrounded by a host of heavenly beings and the Lamb (Jesus Christ). Following a section re: the 144,000 of Israel (12,000 x 12 tribes), the scene expands to a “great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white with palm branches in their hands” (v.9). Along with the elders and angels, they sing praises to God and the Lamb. These represent the martyrs, those who have died because of their faith.

The following verses reflect the severity of the persecution under the Romans. “They have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes white in the blood of the Lamb” (v. 14). In apocalyptic literature, the “great ordeal or tribulations” was the final act before the martyrs would be vindicated by God. We see that vindication in the final verses: the ceaseless worship of God; no more hunger, thirst or scorching heat; the shepherd guiding them to springs of living water; God wiping away every tear (vs. 15-17). This text reflects our hope for eternal life without suffering. The troubles of this world have been replaced by the joys of heaven.

On All Saints Sunday, we remember by name those who have joined this heavenly multitude. It is a reminder that even as we grieve the loss of family and friends, death is not the final answer. As Christians we are a people of the resurrection, and this vision from Revelation gives us a taste of the life that is to come.

Questions for Reflection:

- 1) What saint in your life mentored you in the Christian faith?
- 2) Does this vision of heaven give you hope in eternal life?
- 3) What loved ones do you want to remember this All Saints Sunday?