

**Matthew 5:1-3**

November 7, 2021 All Saints' Day (Observed)

Years ago the Christian tradition was to place a palm branch in the folded hands of dearly departed loved ones. This would bring John's vision to mind. *"After this I looked, and behold a great multitude...standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, 'Salvation belongs to our God...and to the Lamb!'"*

This vision that God gave to John is a picture of heaven in the future. It is like turning to the very last page of the book and showing us what is written there. Will it come to pass? Yes, for thus it is written. Yet the question we are wanting to ask is this: Will it come to pass for me? Is this vision in Revelation the last page in my book?

Countless pastors, the one speaking from this pulpit included, have been asked this question by concerned church members. But not until they were laying upon their deathbed. Then they want to know: Am I part of that multitude in John's vision? Will I be dressed in a white robe holding a palm branch in my hand? Is this beautiful picture the last page in my book?

They are not wrong for asking such questions. And we are not wrong for, ourselves, wondering the same things, yet perhaps ashamed to ask. No one has perfect faith. But all Christians have doubts mixed in with their faith.

We know our own book very well, for we have written each and every page. And on each and every page of our life there is written all the sin and shame, the turning away from God, the lustful thoughts, unkind words, and selfish deeds that make up our life. This is your book and mine. Is our book the book of a saint? We know within our hearts that we have hardly lived like saints. No wonder we live with doubts.

When the elder in Revelation asked John, *"Who are these clothed in white robes? Who are these holding palm branches in their hands?"* John did not answer. Instead, he said, *"Sir, you know."* And so for us, we turn not to the elder for the answer, but to Jesus. "Jesus," we ask, "Am I part of that great multitude? Does John see me there in his vision of heaven? Is this also the last page of my book?" And Jesus turns to you, my friend, and says, *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*

This is the answer that you need, now and upon your deathbed. *"Blessed are the poor in spirit."* Not the rich in spirit. Not those who have something to offer God. The poor in spirit. Those who have no saintliness of their own. No works, no wisdom, nothing at all to offer God. These are the saints, who are saints not because of what they do and what they give, but because of what God does for them and gives to them.

This is you, my friend, because of what God has done for you and what He has given to you. He made you, He redeemed you, He sanctified you. In your baptism He gave you the white robe of Jesus' holiness. The same robe John sees in his vision. That robe is yours now. It is white having been washed in the blood of the Crucified One. And it is yours forever. No one can take it from you.

In the Holy Supper Jesus gives to you the assurance you need that, yes, you are part of that great multitude because Jesus, here, gathers together all His saints, His saints in heaven and His saints on earth. This blessed and holy communion is a picture of the last page of your book. Jesus gathers His saints here and now just as He will when the book is turned to the final page.

You are the poor in spirit because of everything Jesus has done for you, and everything He has given and still gives to you. And because this is who you are, you are in John's vision of heaven. For Jesus says, "*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*" Not, theirs can be the kingdom of heaven. Nor even, theirs will be... But He says, "*Theirs is, right now, the kingdom of heaven.*"

Do you hear what Jesus is saying to you? He is saying that Yes, John's beautiful vision of heaven is the last page of your book. How does He know? How can He speak with such certainty? Because He wrote the last page Himself. Jesus wrote the last page in your book.

And here is it: "*After this I looked, and behold a great multitude...standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands.*" And you are there, for you are redeemed by the Lamb. You are His saint, declared to be holy by His own mouth when you were baptized.

But what about each and every page of your book upon which are written all your sins? Take a look, my friend. Open your book and look. And you will see that on each and every page of your book there is a word written. It's written on every page. Written in big, bold letters. Written in blood. And that word which Jesus wrote with His own blood on every page of your life is the word: FORGIVEN, yes, FORGIVEN. No page is left out. He has written FORGIVEN on each and every page.

And that is why, my friend, He could, and He did write the last page of your book. Jesus sees you in heaven because in heaven is where Jesus has placed you. "Blessed," He says to you, "are you, My dear saint, for yours is the kingdom of heaven." Amen.