

All Saints Sunday – November 5, 2023
Text: Revelation 7:9-17
Theme: No Room at the Inn...YET!

Our Lord spent his whole life being an outsider. From the moment of his birth he was shunned by the vast majority of society. Luke tells us,

“And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.”

In the cold Judean night, there was no one willing to make room for a poor pregnant girl about to give birth. But that was okay, because it set the tone for the rest of our Lord's life. No room in the inn, no room in the synagogue, no room in our government, schools or clubs, no room in our hearts. The devoutly religious of the day shut Jesus out. What kept him going is the same thing that keeps us going, our Father's promise that one day we will not be shut out, but rather we will be at home in our mansion with Him. Until then we are hemmed in, behind and before. We are hemmed in by our gracious Father's love and promise.

Today we celebrate All Saints Day, and we hear from St. John as he describes his revelation while on the island of Patmos. This morning, we like Moses, are taken to the top of a high mountain and given a glimpse of the Promised Land. Only, unlike Moses, who was never allowed to cross

into the promised land, we will not only enter this land, we will live there eternally with no chance of it ever being taken from us. This is the land of never being excluded but being completely included. This is the land of true love and harmony. This is the land of pure joy. St. John describes a new world - the world that you and I will one day inhabit, the world where all the saints who have gone before us are right now.

You know, Jehovah's Witnesses read this text from Revelation and determine that there will be 144,000 people in Heaven. But if that is so, why does John go on to talk about a great multitude worshipping at the throne of God? Revelation is not to be read literally. Revelation is a *revelation*, a vision, so, the astute Bible student looks for the deeper meaning of the text.

John tells us that there are 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes. 12,000 is $12 \times 10 \times 10 \times 10$. 144,000, $12 \times 12,000$, is the Biblical number of the whole Christian Church on earth and in heaven. Twelve is the number of the Church - 12 tribes, 12 apostles. 10 is the number of completeness. All of God's Law is in 10 Commandments, and 1000 is 10 cubed - absolute completeness. So, what we have here is not an effort to tell us how many people will be in heaven. What we have here is a family portrait of everyone in the family - a perfect cube of God's people ($10 \times 10 \times 10$) within the square of heaven (12×12).

When our Lord came to this earth, there was no room for him. As his disciples, we have felt that same feeling often - there is simply no room for us in this world. We don't fit very well. We are often outsiders. Sometimes, even our fellow Christians roll their eyes at us when we hold our ground. No, we will not speak disrespectfully of our government regardless of whether we agree with the current administration. No, we will not lie even if the truth will get us in trouble. No. We will not live lives that in any way fail to honor God even if we are sorely tempted because the Devil makes whatever it is look like so much fun. And yes, we recognize that that makes us outsiders in the world.

But we also recognize that we are insiders in the New Jerusalem. There was no room in the inn. The Jews were not willing for Jesus to have any room in their system. Throughout His ministry, it got no better, so Jesus, sick and tired of not having a place to lay his head, bought their whole city. He literally bought Jerusalem right out from under them and founded a New Jerusalem in its place: Jerusalem the Golden.

He paid with his life and his soul. He was damned so that he could own Jerusalem and remake it into what He had intended for it to be. On that Easter morning, not only was Jesus resurrected, but so was Jerusalem. For all of us who have died with Christ will also be raised with him. And on that day - that wonderful day that St. John sees from high atop that mountain in his revelation, we will be the radiant and beautiful

Jerusalem the Golden. We will be they who shout, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

We will be complete. A cube is a perfect shape. There is no adding to a cube nor subtracting from it or it ceases to be a cube. Jerusalem is ours, bought with the holy, precious blood of Christ. And we are Jerusalem, his holy and unblemished bride. A perfect cube.

As we struggle through life with all its ups and downs, on All Saints Day we remember the perfection that awaits our arrival. Jerusalem is bigger than our jobs and our families and our social commitments. Jerusalem is where all whom we have lost to death await our arrival as they rejoice and celebrate. Jerusalem is our real place in this universe. Jerusalem the Golden,

"Around the throne of David, the saints, from care released, raise loud their songs of triumph to celebrate the feast. They sing to Christ their leader, who conquered in the fight, who won for them forever their gleaming robes of white."