

Sermon Text: Daniel 12:1-3

Theme: We Go Forward – Shining as Part of God’s Living Legacy

In his sermon message for us last week, Pastor Bigelow shared with us the urgency for us as a congregation to move FORWARD. Judgment Day is coming, when all people will have to stand before The Judge of all mankind. The only way to be judged worthy of heaven, the only way to be declared “Not Guilty” of sin, is through the one and only Savior, Jesus.

Today, that urgent message continues. Yes, The Day is coming when Jesus Christ will return in all his glory. We want many, many more to join us as the Saints Triumphant who are described this way in Revelation chapter 7, “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 in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: ‘Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.’”

But when we read our Bibles, you and I may not feel like we are Saints Triumphant. Instead, you and I may feel like we are sinners defeated. In his Word, the holy and just God demands that you and I be perfect or die. Not only have your sins and my sins earned for you and me our physical death, but more importantly you and I deserve a never-ending death in the fires and torment of hell. Because of your sins and mine, the Lord God has every right to say to you and me what he said through his prophet Jeremiah, “I will bring disaster upon them, even my fierce anger...I will pursue them with the sword until I have made an end of them.”

However, there is Good News for you and for me to hear on this “Saints Triumphant Sunday”. As we heard read earlier from Daniel chapter 12, “Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life...” It is only by the grace of God that there are those whose souls, at the time of their death, enjoy everlasting life in heaven. On the great Last Day, when Jesus returns in all his power and all his glory, their body will come out of its grave and join the soul for the life that never ends in heaven with all the Saints Triumphant.

How is this possible? Because our loving Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, came to this earth to take the place of sinful mankind. Jesus willingly lived, suffered and died on the cross to pay in full the price for all sins. Jesus rose again to assure sinful mankind that the price for all sins has been paid in full. The glorious resurrection of Jesus also assures believers that they, too, will conquer death and, as Saints Triumphant, live forever in the perfection of heaven.

But what about you? How are you able to be confident that you are a Saint Triumphant? By the grace of our Savior-God, it is Jesus alone who makes you a Saint Triumphant. Jesus lived in your place. Jesus suffered hell in your place. Jesus died in your place. Jesus won the forgiveness of all of your sins. The empty grave of Jesus means that as you die believing in him as your one and only Savior from sin, you are able to look forward to the day when your grave will be empty as well. Jesus' victory over sin, is your victory. Jesus' victory over death, is your victory. Jesus' victory over the devil is your victory to enjoy as well.

For all of us who, by the grace of God, know the Lord Jesus as our one and only Savior, our death is not an end, but a beginning; the beginning of a life that will never end as a Saint Triumphant in the perfect joys of heaven. And when our bodies wake up from the sleep of death, soul and body will be reunited once again to be with our Lord and Savior together forever. As Paul was led by the Holy Spirit to write in his first letter to the Thessalonians, "We do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words."

The Good News that encourages you and me today, the Good News that comforts you and me today, the Good News that you and I are Saints Triumphant, is Good News that we want many, many more to hear and believe. So as a congregation, we go FORWARD joining with the Apostle Paul when he writes in chapter one of his letter to the Colossians; together we offer our "thanks to the Father, who has qualified [us] to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." Looking forward to that great and glorious Day when our Savior returns in all his glory, looking forward to our own resurrection from the dead, along with all the Saints Triumphant, as a congregation we go FORWARD. As we do, we pray, "Come, Lord Jesus, Come." Amen.