

“THE MOST AWESOME PARTY OF ALL”

(Revelation 7:9-17)

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**[PROPS NEEDED: Party favors for all congregants]**

[Cornerstone U.M.C.; 11-5-23]

--I--

1. [11am ONLY... Read CEB Text: Revelation 7:9-17 and Pray]
2. Ok so let's start by having you do what you're all dying to do... take your party favor out and blow on it for just a bit... **[After they're finished...]**

A--You know, practically *everybody* loves a great party, don't they?!

B-- Well, today, on what we in the church call "*All Saints Sunday*," I want us to compare Heaven to a great party, & to suggest that it is, in fact "*The Most Awesome Party of All*"! (your party favors are meant to help you remember that)

3. To see what I mean, let's use today's scripture from Revelation 7 to talk about **three characteristics found at every great party, and how heaven fulfills these.**

**[9am ONLY...** Let's hear the words of that scripture: "*9 After this I looked, and there was a great crowd that no one could number. They were from every nation, tribe, people, and language. They were standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They wore white robes and held palm branches in their hands. 10 They cried out with a loud voice: 'Victory belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.' 11 All the angels stood in a circle around the throne, and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell facedown before the throne and worshipped God, 12 saying, 'Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and always. Amen.' 13 Then one of the elders said to me, 'Who are these people wearing white robes, and where did they come from?' 14 I said to him, 'Sir, you know.' Then he said to me, 'These people have come out of great hardship. They have washed their robes and made them white in the Lamb's blood. 15 This is the reason they are before God's throne. They worship him day and night in his temple, and the one seated on the throne will shelter them. 16 They won't hunger or thirst anymore. No sun or scorching heat will beat down on them, 17 because the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them. He will lead them to the springs of life-giving water; and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.'*"

--II--

4. First, every great party has **A GREAT PURPOSE** -- a great reason for happening.

A--We can throw one in honor of a birthday, wedding, anniversary, graduation, holiday, retirement, school break, or even for no *apparent* reason at all.

B--Well, Verse 15 of today's scripture describes the purpose of heaven this way: *"This is the reason they are before God's throne. They worship him day and night in his temple, and the one seated on the throne will shelter them"* -- the ***purpose of heaven, in other words is to celebrate God's presence through praise and worship.*** <sup>1</sup>

C--The problem today, of course, is that many of us shy away from the practice of praise.

1--Maybe we think we're too "sophisticated" to get excited about our faith.

2--We're like the man who didn't know the difference between a "*Fan*" and a "*Fanatic*": He thought that a "*Fan*" was someone who jumps up & down & yells & screams at football games; & a "*Fanatic*" was someone who say "Amen" in church!

D--Yet, Author Steven Cole says that Praise is *"Praise is both a natural and necessary response to fully appreciate the object being praised. It needs to be expressed."* <sup>2</sup>

1--Well, just as we can't really *enjoy* watching a sports game if we can't clap and yell for our sports team, so our relationship with God can only be truly enjoyed when we can learn to express our feelings for Him.

2--Now, that *doesn't* mean we all have to be overtly emotional in order to worship God, but simply that true worship gives us the freedom to express ourselves in *whatever way* and in *whatever fashion* we're comfortable, without judgment. <sup>3</sup>

5. A second characteristic of a great party is that it has **GREAT PEOPLE**.

A--By "great" I don't mean "famous," "rich" or "important," but simply people who love and know how to have a good time with each other.

B--After all, it's *people* that make a party a party -- you can't have a "party" by yourself (unless, of course, it's a "pity party"; but those aren't much fun!).

C--So in Verses 13-14 we find the writer, John, learning the identity of those who were "*wearing white robes*" around God's throne -- he says "*these people have come out of great hardship. They've washed their robes & made them white in the Lamb's blood.*"

1--In other words, ***the great people of heaven are the "saints" of God*** -- anyone and everyone who has called Jesus Christ Lord and Savior throughout time. (...some of whom we'll celebrate in just a few minutes)

2--John Newton, author of the great hymn "Amazing Grace," once wrote:

*"When I get to heaven, I shall see three great wonders there:*

*-the first wonder will be to see many there whom I did not expect to see;*

*-the second wonder will be to miss many people whom I did expect to see;*

*-the third and greatest of all will be to find myself there."* <sup>4</sup>

3--*The story is told of a little boy who was taking a tour with his Sunday School class of their Sanctuary & was told that the beautiful stained-glass windows contained pictures of the various saints (St. Matthew, Mark, John, etc.). Later his teacher asked her class, "What is a saint?" And the little boy raised his hand & said, "A saint is a person whom the light shines through."*

4--Well, if you've allowed God's "light" (the light of Jesus) to shine through *your* life, then *you* (as much as any person from the past) are one of God's "*saints*"

7. But a final/third characteristic of a great party is the **GREAT PERSPECTIVE** -- or the "emotional climate"/ambiance -- found there.

A--Have you ever heard of a SAD party? Probably not. And you're not likely to, because parties (by definition) are always *celebrations* of something or someone (even "going away" parties or receptions at a funeral that celebrate someone's life).

B--That's why Verses 16-17 talk about the *perspective* of heaven, saying that because God through Jesus Christ is with them,... "*they won't hunger or thirst anymore,... the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them. He will lead them,*" and that "*God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.*"

C--In other words, Heaven is a place of great HOPE and JOY because *God* is there to take care of us -- *that* is it's "spiritual climate"/perspective.

D--Over 100 years ago, the hymnwriter Eliza Hewitt wrote words to describe this:

*"Sing the wondrous love of Jesus; Sing his mercy and his grace.  
In the mansions bright and blessed He'll prepare for us a place.  
When we all get to heaven, what a day of rejoicing that will be!  
When we all see Jesus, We'll sing and shout the victory!"* <sup>5</sup>

--III--

7. Great parties, you see, have a *Great Purpose* for happening, *Great People* there, and a *Great Perspective* that guides everything.

A--Well, the **Purpose** of heaven is *to celebrate God's presence through praise & worship*

B--The **People** of heaven are *the Saints of God* who've called Jesus their Lord and Savior throughout all time.

C--And the **Perspective** of heaven is one of *Hope and Joy* -- where there are no tears or sadness or sorrow.

8. Today (All-Saints Sunday) reminds us not only what heaven is *like*, but also for us as the "Saints Below" to be spiritually prepared to join the "Saints Above" in this "*Most Awesome Party Of All.*"

9. [PRAYER]

10. [ALL-SAINTS SUNDAY RITUAL OF REMEMBRANCE...]

### **ENDNOTES:**

<sup>1</sup> This points out that there we'll find no social classes, no races, no Democrats, Republicans or Independents, no Methodists, Baptists, Roman Catholics or non-denominationalists. Instead, we'll find a spirit of unity centered around the worship of God -- of *who* He is and of *what* He *has* done, *is* doing, and *will* do in our world.

<sup>2</sup> <https://bible.org/seriespage/psalm-150-priority-praise>

<sup>3</sup> If we want to praise God by lifting our hands, or clapping, or dancing in the aisles... that should be okay. And if we want to praise God by sitting quietly, or kneeling reverently... that should be okay, too. The point is to celebrate God's presence in whatever way is most helpful to us. After all, since we're going to be praising and worshiping God for all eternity, we might as well get used to it down here on earth!

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.quotes.net/quote/16032>

<sup>5</sup> The United Methodist Hymnal #701, lyrics by Eliza E. Hewitt, 1898.