

Revelation 7:2-14, 1 John 3:1-3, Matthew 5:1-12

They in Glory Shine

“We feebly struggle, They in Glory Shine.” Words that we sang in our opening hymn this morning. We feebly struggle. Against sin, health issues, temptations, family life, finances. You name it, we who gather here this morning feebly struggle with these and much more. Each week we come hobbling into this place to be refreshed with the gospel of Jesus Christ, confessing our sins, receiving the forgiveness and once again remembering what God in Christ has done for us on the cross. Such is the picture of the church on earth. The Church militant, as in military because of these battles.

This morning we have a picture of another church. The Church triumphant. It is found in our first reading for the day in Revelation 7. It is a picture of a crowd of white robed saints. Who are they? They are the ones who have feebly struggled in this life on earth. They have come through the great ordeal or tribulation. Is not life it seems a series of tribulations? For us who still feebly struggle we have hope. Our struggles will result in the victory because of Jesus. It comes through the victory of Jesus Christ our Lord. They have had their robes which have been soiled in their feeble struggles on earth, have had them washed in the Sacrificial blood of the Lamb our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. And it is crowd. A multitude that no one can count. They are gathered around the throne singing out “Salvation belongs to our God!”

Though no one is named in this crowd, this year we have those members as well as some of your loved ones who have died and gone to the Church triumphant since last year as part of that crowd. Each one we have known personally, each one a precious child of God, deeply loved. Candles are lighted for each one. Remembering them also encourages us in our own faith journeys.

Becky: the first time I met Becky was at the meeting with the call committee. There we were sitting around a table on a Saturday Afternoon, an enthusiastic, outgoing lady lady came through the church kitchen door and joined the rest of us at the table. This lady offered the virtues of the Laurens community, The work of Bethany Lutheran Church, The Laurens Community Youth Group, the prospect for my son employment in Laurens. That was thirteen months ago. That is when first met Becky. She served on Bethany's Call Committee as they were considering whether or not to call me as their pastor. Of course I too was considering whether I could serve here to From that time I got this sense that For Becky it was about community, the Town, and her church family.

Beverly: On January 23 my phone rang and it was Beverly's daughter calling me to inform me that her mother had passed away. I expressed my concern and had tell her that I was sitting with my dad in Albemarle, NC as he was near death. So I did not get to preside at Beverly's funeral. But I would said something like this. The first time I met Beverly was at the Marian House in Ft. Dodge. She was sitting outside her room clutching her therapeutic cat. I introduced my self as the new pastor. I told her I had a doghound. She grinned. Boy they are stubborn, she said. Not was said after this opening exchange. Demintia makes these visit difficult at times. She received Holy Communion knowing the texts of the service which had been deeply ingrained in her. The next month's visit went better. She asked me how I was adjusting to Iowa. Feebly struggling in this life, now in glory she shines.

Marlene: I first met Marlene about a year ago at the Long House. Just about every month we visited, I asked how things were going and she a couple times tell me, not so good. I just wait. Ready to go to heaven. We would celebrate Communion the foretaste of the feast to kingdom when all God's children are gathered together in the fullness of God's Kingdom. She would receive this foretaste of Bread of wine. She would receive the blessing,

and as left this one time I said, "Keeping Looking up." The smile on Her face expressed the hope she had in God.

Tom: I met Tom for the first time at his home the night before a surgery. We visited, and prayed. About two months ago, right here in church, we recognized our High school graduates. Riley was one of those being recognized and also receiving the blessing for graduates. After the service while the pictures were being taken Tom and I visited briefly, but it was enough to give me an idea of a love of father for his children. "This has been a great day," I said. Tom responded, "Yes, It is! She will do will." I am sure your dad had plans to see you all the way through to your induction into the nursing fraternity. He would have wanted to be there for you.

An another example of God having Tom as dad for his children on Sunday. Many of you may know by now that Tom was hospitalized on Friday in Des Moines for seizures when the family was there for a graduation party. Having passed all the tests, Tom was released from the hospital and told follow up with his local physician. Some wondered why would they release Tom from the hospital so quickly without any information?

Maybe the answer comes to us the next day. Sunday morning when the family is returning home in Laurens. Shawn was driving, he needed practice of course. Tom is riding in the passenger's seat directing Shawn. Just thing, Tom was pretty proud of Riley and what fine driver she has become. And he going to make sure Shawn would follow suit. Anyway, they all encounter a bad thunderstorm, it was Dad who would direct his son through it, as well as navigate through Des Moines traffic. While the other may have been biting their finger nails Tom sat calmly through it all having confidence it would OK.

Shawn your Dad was there for you at that time! A little did anyone know Tom would have just a few short hours to live before God would call him into His eternal presence? And now today Tom gets to enjoy the Green Pastures, and the still waters that his Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ has taken him to.

There was time when Tom wanted Tammy and his mom to out in the boat fishing on a river. On the way out the Tom guided the boat through a narrow channel and got stuck on a sand bar. Their times in this life that we will get burden and stuck in this life. Our Good Shepherd invites us all to come to him. All who are carrying heavy burdens. In Jesus we all find rest and forgiveness. Jesus invites us to take his yoke for the heavy burdens we all carry. In the days head our Good Shepherd

For Tom he has now found his rest from the pain and sadness of this life from a Savior who has followed him with his goodness and mercy, and taken him to heaven where he now at peace with now more pain and tears.

There are many more that you may know. My Dad, Dan Orwig, ... Homer Strampe.

In Faith we know and see the reality. Though we struggle with sin, feebly so, we are at the same time saint and sinner. We are one with them. For your sins have been washed away with the blood of the Lamb on the cross. Believe me their is no cleansing agent better than the sacrificial blood of Jesus. In the just a bit we will be celebrate the feast of victory of our Lord, we will sing "Holy, Holy, Holy,..heaven and earth are full of Your glory." With Angels and arch angels and all the commpany of heaven." Yes our loved ones who gone before will be joining us here on earth. Though much appears hidden, it will one day be revealed, when we are raised from the dead. When we will join all our loved ones, brothers and sisters in Christ in Glory. Though tears well today and in our struggles today, in that day with the triumphant the Lamb our Good Shepherd will us to the waters of life, and God will wioe away every tear."

Now may the peace that passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

