



[Pastor Steven Billings](#)

**Sermon for the Feast of All Saints**

November 7, 2021

## Honor for the Godly

### Psalm 149

*<sup>1</sup> Praise the LORD! Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise in the assembly of the godly! <sup>2</sup> Let Israel be glad in his Maker; let the children of Zion rejoice in their King! <sup>3</sup> Let them praise his name with dancing, making melody to him with tambourine and lyre! <sup>4</sup> For the LORD takes pleasure in his people; he adorns the humble with salvation. <sup>5</sup> Let the godly exult in glory; let them sing for joy on their beds. <sup>6</sup> Let the high praises of God be in their throats and two-edged swords in their hands, <sup>7</sup> to execute vengeance on the nations and punishments on the peoples, <sup>8</sup> to bind their kings with chains and their nobles with fetters of iron, <sup>9</sup> to execute on them the judgment written! This is honor for all his godly ones. Praise the LORD!*

Hallelujah! Did you know that this Psalm actually begins and ends with that word? Translated into English, it's as you heard it read: "Praise the Lord!" But if you look it up in the original Hebrew (which, of course, I did) you'll see the word "hallelujah."

Just before the last "hallelujah," the unnamed psalmist writes: "This is honor for all his godly ones." We're left with two questions, then, that I hope to answer as we contemplate this psalm: 1) Who are the godly ones? and 2) What is the honor ascribed to them?

So, who are the godly ones? They are first of all, the ones who shout "hallelujah!" They praise the Lord. They're glad in their Maker. When they rejoice in their King, it's not the earthly king that's meant, but the King of heaven and earth – their Maker. So they sing a "new song" as they gather together in "the assembly." They're pictured in our text as praising God's name with dancing and musical instruments – the tambourine and the lyre. Moses' sister Miriam takes a tambourine in hand in Exodus 15, singing praises to the Lord for His victory over the Egyptians. The lyre – which is a kind of small harp – is used throughout the Old Testament in making music to praise the Lord. And King David praised the Lord with dancing in 2 Samuel 6(:14). So exuberant was he in his dance that his wife wasn't very happy with him. Apparently, she thought his behavior was undignified. But David didn't care. He was praising the Lord; that's all he cared about.

Our world needs more of this from us, beloved. How often are we silenced in our praise because we're too concerned with how it will look or how it will sound to others. We might be criticized, we might be made fun of, but who cares? Shouldn't we care more about what God thinks than what the world thinks? Never let the world stifle your praise of God. Never let the world intimidate you into cutting off your hallelujahs. You have much to thank and praise God for, just like His people of old.

The people in our text praised Him for delivering them from their enemies, executing vengeance on the nations and punishments on those who had oppressed them.



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Sometimes God opened the earth and swallowed their enemies. But sometimes He gave them strength to take up the sword and defend themselves, involving them in the victory.

This hearkens back to the days of Joshua, Gideon, King David, and others, through whom God delivered them by military action. And for this they praised God. Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, echoes these same sentiments in his Benedictus, praising God for delivering His people. Oh, how the mighty hand of God had been seen throughout their history, giving them victory after victory!

But the greatest victory God ever accomplished was not one in which He defeated an enemy monarch or broke the teeth of their oppressors. It was when He allowed Himself to be bound in the Person of His Son, on whom was executed the punishment for all sin for all time. He poured out His judgment against the sins of all people when Jesus, the Lamb of God, was slain upon the cross. There the final atonement was made, the ultimate Sacrifice given and accepted by the all-righteous Judge on behalf of the godly ones.

So, who are the godly ones? The elder in today's reading from Revelation 7 answers the question best: "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. 7:14b). This is that "great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands." These are the ones who serve him day and night in his temple, are sheltered with His presence, and who neither thirst nor hunger nor weep anymore.

Their honor is in their faith. They rejoice in the One who was bound for their sake, the One on whom the Father executed the justice that was due them. And now they honor Him with their praises, "crying out with a loud voice, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!'" They add their voices to those of the angels, saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen." They're honored for their faith.

There are certain saints that we honor throughout the year, through whom, for whom, and by whom God has done marvelous things. Among these are the apostles and prophets through whom God has given us His Holy Word. There are also those who, like Martin Luther, were used by God to teach His Word, to maintain and promote God's truth as it's presented in His Word. There are the many martyrs who, over the centuries, have given their lives in witness to Christ and His Word. Add to these *all* those who have departed in the Faith – your loved ones, your friends, fellow church members, especially those whose names will be called later in this service. We honor them all, for surely they all made sacrifices for their faith.

These honored ones are called saints, for to be a saint is to be one who has been made holy. To be made holy is to be washed in the holy blood of Jesus through faith in His atoning sacrifice for us. The saints in heaven are worthy of honor because they were faithful unto death and have received the crown of life [Rev. 2:10].



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We honor them best, of course, by honoring the One they honor: Christ, the Lamb who was slain, who alone is worthy “to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” (Rev. 5:12). And we honor Him best by placing our faith and trust in Him for forgiveness, life, and salvation.

But, more important than all of this, is the honor that Christ bestows on all His followers. The saints in glory are honored by Christ in being *given* the reward of faith, the crown of life. You and I are honored by Christ in being *promised* the crown of life. When you think of the saints, sure, remember the great works God did through them, and thank God for the inspiration they are to you, that you, too, may be used of Him to accomplish, perhaps, amazing things. The saints, after all, were not necessarily great people doing what great people do. Often they were just ordinary people of faith through whom God did what He does. So, yes, a crown of life awaits you, too, beloved, for you, too, have been made holy by the saving work of Christ. You have washed your robe in the blood of the Lamb and have received the forgiveness of all your sins. Everlasting life is yours, dear Christian. You are a saint who will one day join those who even now live in the sheltering presence of Him who sits on the throne, even our resurrected and ascended Savior. Hallelujah! Praise the Lord! In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.