

All Saints' Day and All Saints' Sunday
Cycle A RCL
Revised

Revelation 7:9-17

Revelation 7 contains two visions (7:1-8 and 7:9-17) between the opening of the sixth seal (6:12-17) and the opening of the seventh (8:1-5). The number of the servants of God, 144,000, has military significance, representing a heavenly army made up of 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes. The second vision has all of the redeemed standing before the divine throne. White was the color of celebration in the Roman world, and apocalyptic visions often portray the residents of the heavenly world as attired in white. Some modern scholars have contended that the hymns this company sings before the throne are familiar Christian hymns known to the readers in Asia Minor from their own worship

Psalm 34:1-10, 22

People prayed this extended *thanksgiving* in the temple to fulfill a vow made to God when praying for deliverance in a *lament*. The psalm recalls that the psalmist called upon the LORD in the midst of terror (vs. 4) and was delivered from trouble. Laments often include a promise to teach the congregation about God's faithfulness. (See, for instance Psalm 51:13.) This psalm fulfills just such a promise.

1 John 3:1-3

The opening verses provide commentary on certain ideas in the first chapter of the Gospel of John. Only those who receive Christ the Word are children of God (John 1:12-13; 1 John 3:1). Just as the world did not recognize the Word (John 1:11), so it will not recognize the children either (1 John 3:2). Unlike the Gospel, however, the author of 1 John understands the relationship of the children to God to require mainly moral purity. This sets up the argument in 3:6-8 that the children will not sin and that those who do sin are children of the devil. The idea that Christians would be sinless does not occur in most of the New Testament books, but it does find expression here and in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Matthew 5:1-12

The blessings here begin the Sermon on the Mount and have parallels in Luke 6: 17, 20-23 at the beginning of the Sermon on the Plain. Both Gospels have gotten their material from a common source of sayings known to scholars simply as "Q." For Matthew, the blessings represent advanced teachings, reserved for the disciples alone, whereas Luke directs them as general instruction to the large crowd that comes to Jesus from Judah, Jerusalem, Tyre and Sidon.

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