Rev 7:14 And he said to me: These are the ones who are coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

I have always thought this particular verse one of the most beautiful of all of scripture. I say that because of the rather colorful and some might think, gruesome way that the gift of salvation is shared with us. Just think of what this verse tells us. We have been given this wonderful bath, a bath that makes us completely pure and yet that bath we are told is blood! And our minds reel with this knowledge. Washed clean, washed clean in blood? How is this possible?

It is by thinking through these words that you grasp and realize the wonderful lesson that our Lord is giving us. This washing is not about us. For that matter, you should even be able to grasp that this washing is not something that we have done or accomplished, because no matter how hard you try in this world I can guarantee that you and I will never be able to take a bath in blood and come out clean and white. It is impossible for us. I can even pretty well guarantee that any maker of laundry detergent could tell you point blank that anything you put in a tub of blood they will not be able to clean with their detergent pods no matter how many you throw in the tub. In other words, the only way this blood washing can be done is by and through the Lord our God. In truth it is done, actually, has been done by our Lord and Savior Jesus.

Let’s simply look closer at the message that the Apostle John was given to share with us in this wonderful book of Revelation. The chapter we are in is a chapter highlighting the victory, the eternal victory of the Lord Jesus and what He has done for us. Our theme will be: **VICTORY IN JESUS.**

The first thing to notice about this vision given to John is the vast multitude found before him and he makes it quite clear it is a multitude **“that no one could count.”** It is important to see those words, because just before our verse we heard about the marvel of the “Church on earth.” And then there were numbers, the numbers of the sealed: 12,000 from Judah, Reuben, Gad and so forth until you find 12 names listed. And yet, our words, “that no one could count” is of the same group. It just goes to remind us that the numbers are not meant to be taken literally but symbolically. Three (the number of God) times four (the number of the world) times ten (the number of perfection). That is the twelve thousand. Times itself, is 144.000 the symbolic number of sealed in Jesus. It can’t be a real number, because of what the text says and because if it is, we are wasting our time, heaven is already full!

This multitude is from **“every nation, tribe, people, and language.”** Jesus is for everyone. The only thing that counts before the Lord is faith in Jesus. That faith is clearly reflected as this group is found **“standing in front of the throne and of the Lamb.”** And then they sing: **“Salvation comes from our God, who sits on the throne and from the Lamb.”** Jesus and his father are responsible for this salvation. And it is made clear by Jesus himself: **“In fact, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, so that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.”** God’s word is clear. The only way to be in this group is to be a believer in Jesus and what He has done.

Shortly after this burst of joy found in heaven at the completeness and sureness of what Jesus has done, we then find one of the elders around the throne of God asking this question of John. **“These people dressed in white robes, who are they and where did they come from?”** John prefers that the elder give the answer and I don’t blame John. Yet I do want to point out to you an important thing. They are called **“people.”** These are not the angels or cherubim or seraphim or elders or beasts or any other creature of heaven. They are called “people,” those who were created to live on the earth and those who were subjected to sin because of Adam and Eve’s fall into sin. In other words, this vision is about us and what God has done for us in Jesus. I find that simple fact very comforting.

Here is the answer given. **“These are the ones who are coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”** Let’s just stop there and contemplate this wonderful truth.

First, these people “are coming.” What is interesting is the verb tense of the participle used! It is a tense that says this is a present and ongoing coming. Without any doubt, this phrase “great tribulation” simply refers to this sinful and troubled world of ours. Even in Psalm 23 this world is called **“the valley of the shadow of death.”** In Acts 14:22 we are reminded, **“We must go through many troubles on our way to the kingdom of God.”** There are other reasons for clearly understanding this phrase to simply be a reference to the struggle and hardship of this sinful world, a world that would hate us and destroy us if it could, but we will keep it simple. Every believer in Jesus faces this **“great tribulation”** and we get through only because of Jesus.

 And that is the joy of the next phrase. **“They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”** I have already spoken of how impossible this is you and I. It is clear that this washing and this cleansing are found in and only through Jesus.

 To help you grasp this all the more, let me share with you a couple of questions and answers as they are found in our Lutheran Catechism, the Kuske Edition of 1998. First we will look at question 201 and its three answers. Everyone who has ever taken catechism with me should know this question and answer. I often say it is the most important question and answer in the whole book. It says, *“Of what does Christ’s resurrection assure us?”* Answer: *“Christ’s resurrection assures us that: He is God’s Son, He is our Redeemer, and that He will raise us from the dead.”* It is all about Jesus and what he has done. Remember, saying Jesus is your Lord and Savior is not permission for you to live in sin. Faith hears, follows and believes that Jesus is God and Lord and yes, Redeemer by grace through faith.

 Or how about question 208? *“On what basis will Christ judge all people?”* Answer: *“Christ will judge all people on the basis of whether they believed in him and his Word or not.”* That is pretty straight forward. It is about Jesus and what he has done and yes about what Jesus has clearly revealed in his Holy Word. Here is what I know. I am a sinner. I have difficulty every day with sin. And yet, every day I with grateful and yes, humble heart ask the Lord to forgive my sins and weakness and to help my unbelief. I rely totally on God’s grace and mercy and I am thankful that God’s Holy Spirit works in my heart and mind that I hate sin and desire to do what is God pleasing. It is a great struggle that I pray you have too! It is about Jesus and his Word!

 Or how about question 212? *“Why am I sure that I will be with Christ in heaven?”* Answer: *“I am sure that I will be with Christ in heaven because he has risen from death and lives and rules eternally.”*  I so love that answer. Not a mention of us, but the clear statement of BECAUSE! We are going to get to heaven BECAUSE Jesus has risen from death and lives and rules eternally.

 And if you would just one more, question 256. *“Why can I as a believer be certain of God’s forgiveness?”* Answer: *“I can be certain of God’s forgiveness because it does not depend on anything I do but completely on what Christ has done for me.”* Remember, this salvation is not done in a vacuum. It reminds us that we struggle, or as is revealed in Galatians 5:17, **“For the sinful flesh desires what is contrary to the spirit, and the spirit what is contrary to the flesh. In fact, these two continually oppose one another.”** It is in and through Jesus that we not only get the strength but the wisdom and desire to be in this fight. It is when we abandon the fight that we have a problem. As a child of God I rejoice in the battle and though I stumble and fall, yet Jesus of his grace and love, of his victory grants salvation.

 Why all of this? Well, because it all the more helps to define what it means that we are washed in the blood of the Lamb. Our faith is to be in Jesus and his redemption victory, to grasp that He has paid for our sins and grants us forgiveness and eternal life. It is the only thing that counts. This victory of Jesus for us. This washing of Jesus that declares us pure and holy before his Father. It is the only way to be saved.

 And then if you would the absolute joy and wonder of the last words of this section. They say, **“Because of this they are in front on the throne of God, and they serve him day and night in his temple. He who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. They will never be hungry or thirsty ever again. The sun will never beat upon them, nor will any scorching heat, for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd. He will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”**

 Here is what we can expect in heaven. We can expect to be before the Lord God, before his throne and majesty in perfect happiness and joy. That’s the only way I can truly grasp the phrase: **“He will spread his tent over them.”** It means that all the glory, wonder, marvel, holiness, perfection, eternity, and love of the Lord our God will surround us. The end result can be nothing but complete joy and awe for us at such a level I can hardly take it in. This vision is given to us to encourage and comfort us. Please note we do come out of the **“great tribulation.”** God doesn’t promise to end all of our troubles in this life but rather to be with us, strengthen us and guide us in His path that we keep His victory in our hearts and lives. And then, when we are called from this world, then we get the complete wonder of heaven, this tent of God spread over us because of Jesus.

 Do notice how from this point on, we have a list of what won’t be. My entire ministry I have told you and reminded you that when God speaks to us of heaven He always does so in terms of “negatives.” He tells us what won’t be there. That’s because that is the best way for us to grasp the marvel of the place. So let these words sink in. No more hunger or thirst. No more beating sun or scorching heat. No more tears or as another section of Revelation tells us, no more death, sorrow, crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. Again, it is God’s way of helping us grasp the complete joy He is getting ready for us in his heavenly and eternal kingdom.

 Now one last phrase. It is one of the most positive statements of heaven to be found in Scripture. The part that says, **“For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd. He will lead them to springs of living water.”** What absolutely joyful words. Jesus will be our shepherd, literally the words of Psalm 23 come to life! And because sin is completely purged from the world and from us, we will hear his voice and follow his path and dwell in his pastures forever. It really is such a beautiful picture.

 And don’t miss the **“springs of living water.”** Jesus told the Samaritan woman of such a spring of water when he spoke with her. In another section of Revelation we are told that coming out from under the throne of God in the Heavenly city is the river of the water of life from which we may drink any time we like. And spanning that river, is the Tree of Life with its life giving fruit that we are told we can eat from anytime we want. All of this to remind us of the permanency of what God has done. It will never end. It will never be taken from us once we are there. It is ours forever!

 There it is, the whole point of Jesus. That’s why he came to live the perfect life we could not. That’s why he went to the cross that by his blood shed, we could be forgiven. That’s why He rose from the dead so that we could be absolutely sure of this gift of salvation that rests only in His hands. Every soul that grasps this wonder of Jesus is granted this gift. Every one of our loved ones who has been called out of this world with the gift of faith, is there, there right now enjoying this eternal awesomeness of God. Here is our hope in this world of ours. Here is the promise of Jesus to us of not only what is, but what will be for us because of Jesus. And now, you know what the season of Easter is all about. This victory we have in Jesus. Amen.