

INTRO - I just returned from preaching at the 65th anniversary of Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in Jacksonville, Florida. I served there as pastor from 1983 to 1991. I still have fond memories for many of God's faithful people in that congregation. One of those was a professional lady who worked at the headquarters of a regional bank, and regular servant at church, Marguerite Bell. One day as she entered church for worship, I asked her how things were going at work. She said, "Not good. Its tough. But retirement is coming soon. So I can deal with the difficulties."

I. If you asked the people of the seven churches to whom John writes and shares his revelation about how things were going in their lives and their churches, the answer would be. "Not good. It's tough."

A. Actually John knew their struggles and had a term for what God's people faced. In Revelation 7:14 he says, **"These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation."**

1. These disciples of Jesus believed that Jesus had died to pay for the sins of the world. They believed He had risen and defeated sin, and Satan, and death.

2. But, this was a time of persecution by various leaders in the Roman Empire. You could be tortured, and executed for being a Christian. And many were. They wondered, "Why, if Jesus was victorious over the forces of evil, why were they facing these persecutions, these struggles?" Unfortunately, that tribulation, those questions, even led some of the followers of Jesus to be unfaithful.

3. That is the reason God gave this revelation to John, and why John wrote this book, to assure people that, even in the trials of life Jesus is still Lord and Savior.

B. The time of the Great Tribulation is the time that God's chosen and holy people spend and struggle in this sinful world.

1. You and I are in that Great Tribulation. The world around God's people has always rejected and worked against the Lord.

2. Jesus teaches in John 15, ¹⁸ **"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you."**

3. And we struggle with our own doubts, our own weaknesses, our own sins.

4. We are in this tribulation.

II. Marguerite found strength because she knew that retirement was coming. We have something even better.

A. For people in the tribulation who struggle with our own failures, listen to the elder at the throne of God.

1. **"Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?" . . . "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."**

2. I have an old BC comic strip which shows the lady washing robes in the river, and unfortunately, the river turns red. Yet the clothes turn white. The red is blood coming from the cross of Jesus.

3. In the midst of our struggle, **the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sins!** His forgiveness defeats our failure and the sin of the world.

B. In Revelation, Jesus is not only the lamb who was slain, He is the good shepherd. Did you hear what this revelation tells us about the loving care of Jesus?

1. First, v 15 ff, ¹⁵**“Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence. ¹⁶They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. ¹⁷For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”**

2. Life with our Good Shepherd will be so good compared to this world.

3. We are in God’s presence, no more suffering, comforted by our Lord.

III. Marguerite knew that retirement was coming, delivery from the trials of work at the bank, so she kept serving faithfully, in a trying situation of big finance, as a Christian.

A. In fact, John’s purpose in this book is that people will see the care of Jesus and will remain trusting Jesus love, His life and death and resurrection, through their tribulations.

1. It’s His plan for **a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages,**

2. That’s His plan for you.

B. God wants us to know His forgiveness is real so that even dirty robes are made white in Jesus’ blood. He wants us to know that heaven is waiting where he cares for us, and takes away all suffering, and wipes every tear.

1. So knowing that, trusting God through the tribulation, he wants us to trust Jesus. He calls us to love, because of Jesus love.

2. He calls us to live the beatitudes of today’s Gospels, because we have heaven waiting.

3. Our lives should point to Jesus, the sacrificial lamb and the Good shepherd, the Lord and Savior

CONCLUSION - My brothers and sisters in Christ, I understand the Great Tribulation, and I know that you are in it. The world is evil. People attack your faith. You have doubts. You seek to follow Jesus and fail. But God gives you a vision today, the vision of Revelation.

1. All believers will be in that **a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, .**

2. God **washed [our] robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.**

3. In heaven **he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence.**

Because Jesus because is victorious in this life, because He has heaven waiting, we can continue believing in Him and living for Him.