

Lent, Day 14
Thursday, March 21, 2019

Revelation 7:9–17

It's not always easy to be a Christian. Sometimes we bring this on ourselves and sometimes it's because we have a different worldview than our neighbours. Here in the West that can lead to people not really wanting to talk to us and to challenge our worldview and values. Rarely will that work out into physical violence. However, in other parts of the world violence is exactly what is expected for being a Christian. ABC Action News recently reported that there have been as many as 280 Christians killed in Nigeria, between February and March of this year. In 2018 the number was in the thousands (<https://www.abcactionnews.com/news/world/hundreds-of-christians-killed-in-nigeria-attacks>).

This is not new and the number of Christians who are killed for being Christian globally is staggering. While it is appropriate to lament this sad reality, John receives a different angle of vision. He sees these very Christians—a beautifully diverse multitude—clothed in white, symbolizing their victory and purity. They are worshiping and serving in the very throne room, the heavenly temple of God. They are sheltered by him. Even more John sees the further, later full deliverance when God himself will wipe away their tears.

This is an important picture for John's churches because they are about to go through that very persecution. God is giving them a picture of what is in store for those who faithfully bear that tribulation while remaining faithful to him. You and I may not face violence for our faith in our context, praise God, but we are called to endure faithfully what the culture wants to throw at us. Shall we complain or shall we consider this appropriate worship to God and a celebration of the victory that the lamb has won?

Lent prepares our thinking for this too. In the wilderness we learn to lay ourselves down. Israel went into the wilderness and a different Israel came out of it. Lent is a preparation for our baptism where we lay the "old man" down and come up as the "new man." We practice death and resurrection now to shape us for the life we are called to for Christ's sake.

Prayer

God of comfort, be with our brothers and sisters around the world who face persecution and death for the sake of your name. Grant them your presence and strength to endure faithfully to the end. Make us ready too for what we encounter in our own place, so that we too may be faithful witnesses of your goodness. Amen.