"The Great Harvest of Souls" - Revelation 7:9-16

Turn tonight if you would again to the seventh chapter here on the book of Revelation. We'll finish up the seventh chapter. And while we turn our attention there, again this whole chapter is a grand parenthesis. It's an interlude is a great way to understand it. So you're getting a glimpse back, kind of what's happening as the fruit of the earth is being realized and they're appearing before the throne of God in heaven. And so we're dealing with believers. And those believers are of two different basic types as the Holy Spirit broke this down into two parts last time, as we gathered together last Thursday, we saw the 144,000.

This time we're now going to turn our attention to the Gentile believers and their place during the Tribulation. As we do so, it's so important for us to bear in mind and to keep in view that God's grace doesn't change even during the Tribulation. He's still gracious. He's still kind. He's still unwilling that anyone should perish. He cannot change His nature. And so there will be a gigantic multitude of tremendous harvest during that period of time. And so we're going to see tonight this great harvest of souls. And we're going to get a description of what happens because even though the world is rightly deserving (and we'll look surely at that tonight) of God's justice coming and His judgment coming and really His wrath actually being poured out on the earth but, in His wrath, just as He is in your life, He never applies more pressure than is necessary, amen?

And He's always good. Even when He's giving us a...when He takes us to the woodshed, He only gives as many stripes as we need. When He allows bad things to happen to good people because He's trying to get our attention, He only lets it go as far as is necessary to accomplish His loving purposes. Never lose sight of that. It's easy to
do here in these central chapters of the book of Revelation. You can almost...and it's just like, "Oh, more judgment." Well, it's true. There will be more judgment. But the point of this message is there will be people maybe, you know, maybe the Rapture happens tonight. Wouldn't that be an awesome thing to have happen? You know, instead of Harvest Fest, we're at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. I vote for that. I can toss my two cents in but even in all of the things that are going on, the Lord is faithful to redeem from all tribe and tongue and nation and kindred and spirit. He's at work gathering in this harvest. And so no matter what we might think about God pouring out His justice and His judgment on this earth, mankind will be deserving of it, but God will be gracious in it.

And so as we leave these messages in digital archives, as we leave these messages on that wonderful medium we know as a computer hard drive and there it is. Can you imagine if the Rapture were to happen tonight and, you know, some group takes over this. You know, maybe it becomes a community center or something and they're going through the computer and they're going, "Hey, have you ever seen this crazy guy, Jeff? He's talking about...where did all those Christians go again? Oh, yeah, they died. They all went to heaven. You know, he said something about that." And they're like fast forwarding to find the part where there's this great multitude.

And so what we're doing now is preparing, those of us who are here, for that time because we need to be busy about our Father's business. But we're also leaving a legacy so that the truth would be known to those who are actually left behind. It's an important part of what we're doing here even tonight. And so don't forget to leave your legacy with your family, with your friends, of the truth of God's word. So should the Rapture happen, they're gonna be without excuse. They will know exactly what happened and they'll be going, "Now is the day of my salvation," and they'll give their life to the Lord. I believe billions will come to Christ during that period of time and I
think that that's the picture we see tonight. So let's ask God to speak through His word as we study it together.

**PRAYER:** Father, we just are so in love with You, Jesus, and we ask tonight that You would move in this place to continue to teach us, instruct us, remind us of the truths of Your word. And, Lord, You authored these words. You spoke them by the Holy Spirit to a bearded guy in a cave. Lord, he had no way of understanding what we understand today in our modern world but Lord, as he revealed these truths and wrote them down, God, to those that would hear the words that were authored by the apostle John, God would we grow, Lord, into that incredible image of the church during the last days. Lord, help us to be busy about our Father's business. We bless You, give You this time. Use it please for Your glory, Jesus. It's in Your Name we pray, amen.

Remember that this chapter, all of it, the entirety of it, there in chapter 6 verse 17, "**For the great day of his wrath has come** (the question is asked) **who will be able to stand?**" (Revelation 6:17) So this is still the answer. And so those of Israel that we've already seen and those who are of the Gentile nations. And so two parts, verses 1-8 and then verses 9-17. And tonight we look at this other group.

Verse 9 now and goes on to say here in the seventh chapter of the Apocalypse, "**And after these things I looked, and behold a great multitude which no one could number...**" (Revelation 7:9) And so it appears that this will be a sea of people like has not been known ever before. And if you remember the entire purpose really for the Lord pouring out His wrath, it really is to bring to conclusion the Age of Grace. It's to bring in that final harvest. It's to see to as many as would receive Him, to them He will give the ability to become the sons, the daughters of God to receive salvation through Christ.

And as our world is going now, you can kind of see why the Lord would choose, at a period of time, to do this very thing because it is getting more and more difficult to find
churches that do this. You can find churches that do all kinds of things but they're not doing this. They're not studying God's word. Neither are they standing for the truth that is contained in God's Word. And in saying that, I mean to point fingers at no one but to simply say the church itself has lost its first love, exactly as scripture says would happen in the very last days. That we would become Laodicean. That, in essence, the church would start worrying about all manner of things other than the actual preaching of the gospel and the preaching of truth that should come into one's life when one does become a child of God.

And again you cannot take doctrine and divest it from duty. If you're one of God's kids, you must then begin to live like a believer. And it doesn't all happen at once and it is a growing thing. We do become transformed into the image of Jesus. And so it's supposed to be a lifelong process. The problem is much of the church is no longer teaching the process of sanctification. They're teaching, "Just say a couple a prayers and then you keep all of your sin, all of your filth, all of your garbage. You can go about your business. God has no intention of being at work in this world. He set it in motion. He's taken His hands off of it and so it really doesn't matter what you do." That is not the God of our Bibles.

And so the Lord eventually will lose, in essence, the vitality of the church as a way for people to come to faith in Christ and so He's going to do something different. And it's called...He's gonna pour out His wrath on this world and they're gonna be forced to choose between real persecution (and there is real persecution in our world) but worldwide persecution and kind of this marginal thing called religion.

"And after these things I looked..." (Revelation 7:9) After what things? The sealing of the 144,000. Again, always ask yourself those questions. After which things? The sealing of the 144,000. So this appears to be to me the fruit of those 144,000 evangelists flooding the world who are now on fire who had a picture of
Messiah, who now know that Messiah is none other than Jesus Christ and they are going throughout the world, "Do you know Messiah?" And they are going to be preaching the gospel.

And so this number "...that no one could number, out of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues..." (Revelation 7:9) And I love the fact the Holy Spirit uses four different Greek words here and they are so diverse as to leave no doubt what's being said here. If you thought that maybe ethnos wasn't enough, in other words, people of ethnicities or you perhaps thought that as you're seeing these...that it was just simply a race issue or maybe it was a language issue, the Holy Spirit uses all four words to determine basic humanity. And so He's saying whether it's a race or whether it's a people group or a government or a language or whether it's someone who simply has a like type world view, that's what He saying. It doesn't matter what your differentiation is and why you are in one group versus another, the harvest is going to come from all groups of all mankind, all over the entire world.

And they're "...standing now before the Lamb (next to the throne), clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands..." (Revelation 7:9) And remember the palm branches were always branches to the victors. The palm branches were brought out. They were generally waved and then thrown into the road in front of the victory parade. As the conquering king came, the palm branches were a sign that the victor was there. And so these are victorious...obviously people who have now given their life to Christ. They're clothed in that same righteousness that you and I will have and they're standing before the throne and before the Lamb.

"...and crying out with a loud voice and saying, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!' And all the angels stood around the throne, the elders and the four living creatures and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying 'Amen! Blessing and
glory and wisdom, and Thanksgiving and honor and power and might, Be to our God forever and ever. Amen.'" (Revelation 7:10-12) It's like a worship service. You can just see them singing and crying out, much like we just were. Voices raised in unison, proclaiming a singular thing, "Great is our God!"

"And then one of the elders answered, saying to me..." (Revelation 7:13) And I want you to notice this very carefully and this is how we know that these are not members of the church. They will become, as soon as they turn into a martyr, a member of the body of Christ but the church has already been snatched away. The church has been raptured. The church is already in heaven. And so these folks come later. And so the elders, remember the elders represent the church of all ages, and the elders have no idea who these people are.

Notice what it says. "...and he said to me, 'Who are these who are arrayed in white robes? Where did they come from?' And I said to him, 'Sir, you know.' And so he said to me, 'These are the ones who came out of the great tribulation...'" (Revelation 7:13-14) And so this is a forward view of the remaining passages that we will see as we go from here to chapter 19. This is the fruit of the entire Tribulation period in the Gentile world, of every tribe and tongue and nation. These are the non-Jewish believers that will come to faith in Christ during the period of the Tribulation and whether they come one by one or whether they’re slaughtered en masse, they will be those people who will be martyred during the last Great Tribulation period of time, which is the last 3 1/2 years of what we call the "Tribulation Period" or "Daniel's 70th Week". These are the ones who come out of the Great Tribulation.

"...and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (Revelation 7:14) There's always only been one name under heaven whereby men may be saved, amen? And it is at the name of Jesus that every knee will bow, every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. And now these
folks have all understood that but they understood it, the...what we like to call, the hard way, amen? 'Cause right now it's fairly easy.

If you're here tonight, you can leave this building as a new creation in Christ Jesus. You can simply bow your knee tonight to the King of kings and the Lord of lords and you need not worry about all this drama because you'll already be there with the saints, with the 24 elders. You will be the ones who'll be going, "Hey, where'd these guys come from?" Because, remember, they're at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. They're enjoying...in His Presence is the fullness of joy. They're in heaven. They're with the King of kings, Lord of lords. They're in this amazing worship service. They're not privy to all the stuff that's going on on the earth. They don't know everything.

"And therefore they are before the throne of God..." (Revelation 7:15) There's only one way that you can come into the presence of God, amen? That's it. There's only one. There aren't two. There aren't ten. There aren't many paths. There aren't many doors. There's one door. There's one path. There's one way. “There's another way that seems right unto man but the end thereof is death.” And so the elders are going, "Who are these?" Well, they are in fact those who came to Christ during this incredible time where the Lord is pouring out His wrath on the earth convincing people once and for all, "You must choose this day whom you will serve."

And people are making that choice. They're saying, "Man, my friend that lived next door who told me about Jesus was right. When I went to that VBS...when I attended that Harvest Fest at that crazy church that's in the old Teledyne building down there on the corner of Knox and Vermont...when I went there, they told me about Jesus. And they said something about this crazy thing called the Rapture and I thought they were, frankly, nuts. But they were right." And all of a sudden that gospel message bears fruit.
And then the evangelists are going, "Look, hey, you think you had it messed up. We knew Messiah for 3,000 years. The prophets had told us. Our fathers, the patriarchs, had told us. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob told us about the coming Messiah. They even said where He'd be born. They told us when He would come. They gave us this incredible picture and we didn't believe them." And so can you imagine those Hebrew evangelists who now know the Lord Jesus. You talk about someone who's convinced beyond anything that we can possibly imagine because they will, in fact, now mourn the One that they pierced.

And again remember you and I put Jesus on the cross, not the Jewish people. They were simply responsible in that the plot was the plot of the Sanhedrin. It was Caiaphas and Annas who carried it out and, in that sense, without the Jewish trial, Jesus would have never been put to death. That's all that's being said there. It was a Jewish trial. Pilate was gonna wash his hands and let Jesus go and they said, "Oh, no, you can't do that because this man blasphemed and according to our law, you have to kill him." But it was you and I that put Jesus on the cross. He died for my sins and your sins. Everyone's sins.

And so now here these evangelists go out into the world. It's like, "Now, Isaiah 52 and 53, He would be...the chastisement of my peace was put upon Him and by His stripes, I was healed. And the government shall be upon His shoulder and He shall be called Wonderful and Counselor and Mighty God." Can you imagine all of those Hebrews now having the whole picture and the gospel message has come alive to them? They're gonna be running around, "Dude, you need to get saved right now! We played around for 3,000 years and look what it got us. We believe."

"...and He sits on that throne and will dwell among them." (Revelation 7:15) And I want you to see this. The Lord is now dwelling with His people. "They shall neither hunger anymore..." Revelation 7:16) Oh, man. And during the Tribulation,
men will hunger and women will hunger and children will hunger. "...they won't thirst anymore..." (Revelation 7:16) And they will be thirsty. The seas will be affected. The water supply will be affected. Crops will be affected...everything will be affected during that time. "...the heat won't strike them...for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to the fountains of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." (Revelation 16-17) So this incredible picture of this harvest, a global harvest.

One of the reasons that we're shifting gears ever so slightly to do more missions work and to be actively engaged in other parts of the world, not just go visit but go and plant churches and stay and do the things that we're doing - because the Great Commission is so that there can be this great harvest, amen? And if we don't go with the gospel, if the gospel isn't presented, then this great harvest is gonna take a while longer to occur. We want the harvest to come so we need to be engaged. Those shoeboxes you all are putting together that we are gonna put in that semi and send thousands of them around the world, every one of them is the gospel to the uttermost parts of the world. That's why we do that. Sure, it's to bless children. We want to do that as well but the real blessing is "These things came from Jesus. These are His toys. This is His bubble gum and He sent it to you."

The Lamb died for every single person that's ever walked this earth. One of the tragedies of poor theology is that you begin to get the picture that God only died for those whom He saved. That's not true. The Son of God, Jesus Christ, died for all who would be saved. And that can be anyone and everyone. And so He bore the sins of the world, the entire cosmos. That's the word that's used there. Anyone who will ever live, who has ever lived and who will live in the future, Jesus died for. And so now it says every tribe, every tongue, every people group, every language, every geographic location, doesn't matter where you are, now they're going to be finally completely evangelized.
And I want you to also notice that during this time...you see, without the mark of the beast, and we'll actually get there when we begin to put all these pieces together, but by the time the Antichrist reveals himself and by the time the false prophet is revealed and by the time the two witnesses come out into the world, they're going to be roaming around. And there's gonna be all this incredible drama that will be going on in the earth and you're going to literally see the forces of darkness and the forces of light. And they're going to actually be fighting each other for real.

You know, right now, we fight a spiritual battle. It's largely unseen but it's very real. It will actually be a physical scene battle at that time. There will literally be forces of darkness. And so you're going to need that mark to be able to eat. You're going to need that mark on your forehead or your right hand to have clean water. You're going to need that mark to get medical care. You will have to be part of the Antichrist system or you will be dying of starvation. You will be oppressed.

The Antichrist, the false prophet are gonna be furious by the time the Lord’s plans begin to unfold and these Jewish evangelists go forth and people are starting to get saved left and right and the gospel’s going out. Imagine now that the Antichrist, the false prophet realize their time is very short, extremely limited. And all of a sudden, they turn up the heat on remaining mankind. It's gonna be gruesome. It's gonna be horrific.

Jesus, in Matthew 24:9, it says this, "And then they will deliver you up unto tribulation and kill you. You'll be hated by all nations for My name's sake." Again remember this passage, known as the Olivet Discourse, speaks of these last days, the end times. It's speaking of the Tribulation of the church, that it will go through prior to departing in the Rapture, and it's going through all these things and it finally gets down to the brass tacks of all of it. "And then many will be offended, betray one another. They'll hate each other. Many false prophets will rise up and
**deceive many because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.**" (Matthew 24:10-12)

You can see the storm clouds rising in our world, can't you? Can't you see the world turning that corner even now? That the love of many would grow cold? How does a mom put her children in a minivan, belt them in and drive them into a lake to drown because she wants to be set free so she can be with her boyfriend without kids? How does that happen? How does that happen? How does an enraged crazy person drive down a freeway in Albuquerque, pull out a gun because somebody cut him off and shoot at the car, striking a 4 year-old in the head and killing her? How do we get there? How does a young girl in Lynwood two days ago, playing in her front yard, end up in the morgue because some gang banger drives by and decides he wants to unload a couple a rounds? How is it that tonight Pastor Saeed is still in a prison in Iran? How is it tonight that the Yazidis are still being persecuted by ISIS? How is it tonight that Christians in China fear for their lives when they meet to simply read God's word? How is it tonight that if you're a Christian in Turkey, you can't even go to the same stores as other people go to? How is it tonight that if you're a Christian in Aletho, Syria that it's very likely that if you leave your family alone, they'll be murdered?

Now imagine that all restraint is gone and you got two sides. And those sides are clear. 'Cause you see tonight, we still talk about things like moderate Muslims. We still talk about things like, "Well, we can send a gang intervention team. We can go get that guy and we can put him in an anger management class. We can take that woman and perhaps we can rehabilitate her." That's not even gonna be possible during the Tribulation because there'll be two groups of people. There will be "saints" and there will be "ain'ts". There's gonna be saved and there's gonna be unsaved. And the distinction will be so clear, the moment that you announce that you're a believer, you will be persecuted to death almost instantaneously. It's like, "Know Jesus, go home."
Now personally that doesn't sound all that bad to me but I'm old so it's like, "Cool!" It's gonna be horrific. Families separated.

Goes on...Jesus says Himself there in verse 13 in Matthew 24, **"But he who endures to the end shall be saved."** (Matthew 24:13) Amen? What He's talkin' about is, "Look, as that gospel comes forth, even if it's at the end, people can still give their lives to Jesus." **"And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached until all the world has a witness to all nations and then the end will come."** (Matthew 24:14)

You see, there's been revival throughout our history. You look back at the great Welsh revival, the revival that struck here in the United States in the 1820's, 1830's, 1840's. You look at the British revival. There's revival going on even in India right now. There have been periods of revival but there's also been periods of time to where mankind has just gone the wrong way and habitually gone the wrong way. Been martyrs throughout time and it's been costly. But then it's gonna be the norm, if you will.

You see, we're gonna see global implications to these things. The entire world will be affected. Right now, here in the United States, it's pretty tough to say that we, as Christians, are being persecuted. We're being harassed. We're being demeaned, diminished, castigated, I suppose, at times but to say that we're really being persecuted, that's just not even accurate. We don't even know what persecution is. For us, persecution is we went down to the store and, you know, the guy in line sees that you got a "I Love Jesus", you know, you're wearing "What Would Jesus Do?" wristband or somethin' and he calls you some kind of name. That's about as far as our persecution really goes here but that's not true in a lot of the world.

It will come true to where not only will we be suffering like everybody else is suffering, the whole world will be suffering like no one in the world is suffering right now. And that is a whole different ballgame, isn't it? You see, 'cause there are spots...if you're a Christian and you happen to be in Yemen right now? That's a bad thing. I would
encourage you not to go to Mecca during the Hajj, which just happened. Can you imagine how crazy that would be, that 2,000 people could be stomped to death walking around a black stone cube called the *Kaaba*?

So there are some places that are kind of like this now. I love the story of the 40 Martyrs of Sebaste and you know that story. It's from about 320 A.D. and it takes place in what is northern modern Turkey today. But there was a legion of the locals there which would've been relatives to the Armenians, the Armenian Christians that occupy that land now. They were captured by the Roman army's 12th Legion and one of their punishments was they were told they must convert to worship Caesar. And at that time Emperor Licinius had sent out an edict that all soldiers were to sacrifice to pagan gods and these Christians replied, "You can have our armor. You can have our bodies but our allegiance belongs to Christ." And so they were forced out onto an icy lake. They were stripped of their clothes, forty of them, and they were forced to stay out there all night. One by one, they began to succumb to the temperatures and eventually all but a handful of them by the morning were already dead and at the very wee hours of the morning, one final soldier finally gave in. And that final soldier as he gave in kind of scurried across the lake and that was the deal. You give in, you get to go free. And a Roman centurion watching that story unfold before his eyes, as those men were out on the ice singing praise songs to God, as they died one by one, that Roman centurion watched what happened and as that one soldier left, because they were singing a song, that was *The Forty martyrs of Sebaste* and so as the one left, the Roman soldier threw his garments off, went out onto the ice and died with the other thirty nine so that there would still be forty. That's the kind of faith that it's gonna take in the last days to stand for Christ.

You read all that's going on in our world right now. As we sit here tonight, there are around 180 or so Christians that every twenty-four hours die specifically because they're Christians. Around the world between one hundred million and two hundred
million people live in at least a place of peril, if not direct threat of their very life, for simply proclaiming faith in Christ. Now imagine it becomes global. Now imagine that there are billions of people in that very same place except the heat is turned up infinitely. Open Doors USA says in their world watch list that right now if you were to track these things and you look at the areas of persecution, North Korea is number one on the list by the way, they have very limited access to North Korea but it's believed in the last six years, at least 100,000 people have professed faith in Christ and died in North Korea. We didn't even hear about it. South Sudan, same story. So normal and so regular are the deaths of Christians there that they don't even get reported anymore. It's just another war death. But they're literally dying because they believe in Jesus. Voice of the Martyrs, much of the same thing said by them. Their belief is that around 100,000 or so Christians lose their lives every single year simply for one reason, one reason alone, they profess faith in Christ. It's horrific. Now imagine the sum, the total, number of men principally, handful of women, who died defending the United States of America in the Vietnam War was a little less than sixty thousand. There's almost double that that die simply because they profess faith in Christ every year.

Now imagine the enemy takes all the stops out and the Holy Spirit is no longer restraining that evil because you know who's restraining the evil right now in south Sudan? Christians. You know who's restraining the evil in Armenia? Christians. In China? Christians. It's people saying, "Look, we're keeping an eye on this. We're watching you." The Chinese government, not wanting to look like they are, a Communist dictatorship, allows certain amounts of freedom but in other areas where they're not being watched, it's not good. Now imagine the Lord just says, "Look, I'm taking My people out but I'm gonna send an evangelistic force into this world like the world has never seen."

It's estimated right now on the earth that there are probably between 250,000 and 400,000 Christian missionaries on the entire planet right now. Well, look at the results
of that. Now imagine that you have the most on-fire Christians that the world has ever seen and they have nothing to lose because if they die, they truly believe as Paul wrote to the church at Philippi, "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain," (Philippians 1:21) amen? They're living it. It's like, "Well, what do I got to lose? I'm going home to see Jesus. It just cost me my life." It would go on in verse 20, Paul goes there in Philippians chapter 1, "...according to my earnest expectation and hope that nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by my life or by death." (Philippians 1:20) That's gonna be a reality during the Tribulation.

So the persecuted church in our world is a picture of these things. Many today do pay the price and we must, and are, supporting efforts all over the world to try and minister to the persecuted church. We need to do more and we need to send more people and more resources to their aid. But the world is gonna go that way. That's the direction it's traveling.

When you think of these things, the picture that you really need to get, and this is the important part really of this passage and it is so important that you can't miss the revival here because that's really the picture that we need to see. As you break this down, "After these things I looked, and behold (it says there in verse 9) a great multitude." (Revelation 7:9) It's a great multitude. It's just like at Pentecost. Remember what happened at Pentecost? Here these guys, the Holy Spirit breathes on these knucklehead disciples and Peter, old foot-in-mouth, goes and preaches a sermon and 3,000 people get saved. Peter...was a...Hebrew evangelist, amen? Now here he...now imagine you got 144,000 Peters. Now I don't know what their, you know, their preaching to salvation rate's gonna be but I think it's gonna be pretty high. And so there will be a tremendous harvest of people that will be born out of this. The gospel message hasn't changed. That'll still be the same gospel message. They're not
gonna need to learn something new. They're gonna be able to pick up that Bible and go, "Hmm, ah, right here. Romans' road. I got it."

Paul, writing to the church at Corinth in 1 Corinthians 15:3, it says there, "For I delivered to you first that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, that He was buried, that He rose again on the third day according to (those very same) scriptures." That's the gospel message. He died. Buried. He rose again, amen? His birth, His death, His burial, His resurrection. That's the gospel message and "He that believes in me, yet though he shall die, he shall live for I am (Jesus said) the resurrection and the life." (John 11:25)

Same message. It's not gonna be all that complex. All the fluff will be gone. All the things that we focus in on. They'll still have the scriptures. They'll still have Bibles. Matter of fact, there's gonna be a lot...there'll be a higher Bible-to-people ratio actually unless the Antichrist goes on a...some kind a spree rather like Hitler did in Kristallnacht when he took all of the books throughout basically all of Germany and basically burnt them, especially those who were Jewish or had anything to do with Christian religion.

You see the heart of God is to save. 2 Peter 3:9, a very familiar passage to us. "For the Lord is not slack concerning His promise (amen?) as some count slackness, but He is longsuffering towards (us, towards humankind, towards people) not willing that any should perish..." amen? You see, God's perfect will for all of mankind is that all people should come to faith in Christ. That's His will. That is exactly what He wants to happen. Not everyone chooses to believe. Not everyone chooses to receive that grace gift but from God's side of the equation, He is unwilling that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. That's God's...that's God's take on it. It's why He sent Jesus into this world, not so a handful of people could get saved but so that all could get saved.
Sufficient for every last sin ever committed was the blood of Jesus. By everybody, all of us, the totality of all of humankind throughout the ages, Christ died for that. And I think it's important that we don't come to the wrong conclusion about God's grace. God rejoices. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints. But He does not delight in the death of the wicked. God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. He delights in the death of saints 'cause that just simply means we're coming home. It's why there's such a difference between a Christian memorial service or a funeral if you wanna call it that. I almost have a...I call them celebrations basically. Like out of the tent, into the mansion, man. Park the RV. Go home...in Jesus' name, amen?

You see, God doesn't delight in the death of the wicked. He delights in the death of the saints. And so as these saints are getting saved and they're given their last breath for the cause of Christ, the Lord's saying, "Come on home." He's always done that. That's why Paul could say with such confidence there in the second letter to the church at Corinth that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. That's why he could say that with such confidence. He knew that no matter what happened to him, remember as he's talkin' about his trials, he says, "Look, I've been shipwrecked. I've been stoned. I've been thrown off a wall. I've been huffed out of cities. I've been beaten. So what? So what? 'Cause really the end of it, you lose your life, you gain heaven."

These tribulation saints are not gonna be like the people that we see on the earth today. And I have to tell you that it really does bug me because there are a lot of people who call themselves Christians. And whether they're saved or not I won't debate but I think people who genuinely love the Lord also genuinely love God's word and love prayer and love God's people and love to gather together and fellowship with the saints. And they're not the type of people that show up to church only when they need something or show up at church twice a year. They're Easter and Christmas folks.
You know, they come on rolling in and they speak the same three Christian words: "God bless you, man."

You see, it's not gonna be that easy in the Tribulation. It's gonna cost you your life. So I'm kind of thinking while it's easy we might wanna tell people about Jesus, amen? 'Cause their excuses are gonna get...you think people have excuses now? You would not believe some of the... Can I just tell you, let me, honest time, pastor to the people, I do not have a book that keeps track of when you don't come to church, ok? 'Cause people are always...they're comin' up to me, "Well, I'm sorry I missed the service last week." Just sayin'. Don't keep track. Don't have a book. I don't have one of those little clickers. There's no censors in the pews. I have no way of keeping track of all the saints. And if I could, I wouldn't do it. It's between you and God. But I can tell you if it's hard for you to make it to church now, it's gonna be near impossible for you to make it to church then. It's easy now. You just get up and come. Then it's gonna be... it's gonna be a moving church 'cause every time the Antichrist figures out where anybody's at that loves the Lord, he's gonna come after them.

Right now the only people that come after us are people that disagree with us and they say mean things and I kind of take that as a challenge. It's like I try and figure out some way to out love them. It's like, "Really? Ok, well you know Jesus loves you." They hate that when you say that, by the way. You ever wanna make somebody mad who's just really kind of trying to bag on you, just tell them Jesus loves them. Like, "Shut up about that Jesus!" I can't. I'm one of His disciples. The Holy Spirit dwells in me. I can't do that.

But it's gonna get really difficult. How'd they get those white robes? Same way you and I got them. Isaiah chapter 1 gives us that beautiful picture as Isaiah's commissioned, sent out into the world and says there in verse 18 of Isaiah 1, "'Come now, let's reason together,' says the Lord, 'Though your sins be like scarlet,
they'll be white as snow and though they're red like crimson, they'll be white as wool and if you are willing and you're obedient, you shall eat of the good of the land but if you refuse and rebel, you'll be devoured by the sword', for the mouth of the Lord has spoken." (Isaiah 1:18-20) He's saying, "Look, you can choose. You wanna be washed and made white? He wants to do exactly that. The choice is yours. And these are the ones that come out of that time where they have the opportunity to be victorious but it's gonna cost them everything. Every culture. Every background. Every geography. Won't matter where you're coming from.

As the angels stand around the throne, I want you to notice that their faces are on the ground and they're worshipping God. You know, sometimes our worship is fairly hollow and I'm not picking on anybody tonight, by the way, but I know in my own life, sometimes my worship is a little hollow. You know, I have my favorite songs and I have my favorite beats and tempos and I even have my favorite genres of music (Reggae), um, well not really but yeah, we do that, don't we? And you guys ever tune out when like a song just...the band will start to play a song that you don't particularly care for and you're just like, "No, not that one. Lord, somebody at Walmart wrote that on a cup from McDonalds." You know, we totally disrespect the song. It's okay, you can say you do it. Give you a little secret - you're not worshipping the worship team. You're not worshipping music. You're not worshipping because you're a church. You're worshipping the true and the living God and it should always be vibrant. And it should always be "raise the roof" loud, amen? It should be because it's coming out of here, not out of here. Out of here just means you kind of...maybe you know the notes, maybe you know the words, maybe you kind of remember the tune and it's really catchy. These guys are worshipping simply because of the presence of God. Oh that we would be in the house of God worshipping because the presence of God is here. He's always worthy of that worship.
And so they shout out things like, "Thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever and ever!" They're not going, "Land the plane, man. I gotta go. I got stuff to do." It's like, "You know there's a, there's a...there's one of those before Christmas sales that happen on Friday. I'm refusing to even give it honor." Yeah but you see how we are? It's like, "I got stuff to do, man." There ain't nuthin' better to do than worship God. And we worship Him in song and in word and in prayer. We speak holy things to each other.

You know, God gets a smile on His face when we talk to each other about Him? It's a cool thing. You know when you start finding yourself speaking in Bible? I love speakin' in Bible. Just try and rattle off like as many things about the Lord as you possibly can. And after a while you find out your speech has so been seasoned with Him that you can't carry on a conversation without talking about Him, without praising Him. That's what's going on in heaven.

It's a neat story in Luke chapter 15 and I am gonna try and land the plane now. Coming in. Flaps are down. Landing gear is out. Verse 4 there in Luke 15, "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my lost sheep.' I say to you (Jesus says in that parable) that there will be more joy in heaven over the one sinner who repents than over the ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance." (Luke 15:4-7)

Can you imagine the praise service that's gonna be going on in heaven if over one, more joy than the ninety and nine occurs. Imagine that billions of people have given their life to Christ and they're standing before the throne of God and the elders,
remember the cherubim are leading the elders in prayer and the people who are already there...we, who are already there, we're already praising and now a few billion more people make it to the party. I'm probably sure some of you, like me, can remember a few concerts that you've gone to in your days and you know those coveted seats up there next to the giant speaker stacks to where your ears begin to bleed. Imagine billions of people in heaven crying out to God in a loud voice, "Great is our God and greatly to be praised," Amen?

Don't miss the revival. You see, this Great Tribulation, you can almost miss how wonderful it is if you condense it down to just this horrible war that will be going on. Habakkuk 3:2, it says, "O Lord, I've heard Your speech and I was afraid; O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of Your years! In the midst of Your years make it known; In wrath remember mercy." (Habakkuk 3:2) That is exactly what God will do. Even in His wrath, He's gonna remember mercy. Even in His wrath, He's gonna remember mercy and grace and kindness and tenderness and gentleness. He will have utter control over all that's going on.

And, family of God, let's be honest with each other. We're not going to heaven because we go to church, amen? We're not going to heaven because we're good people, amen? We're not going to heaven because you help people, amen? Not going to heaven because you give, amen? You're not going to heaven because you know all kinds of Bible verses. You're going to heaven because Jesus Christ died for you. That's why you're going to heaven.

"And therefore they're before the throne of God to serve Him night and day."
(Revelation 7:15) And so they are forevermore dwelling with God. Think about it. There they are before the throne of God. God dwells among them. And the word that's used here is just, it's a precious word. It's only used here. It's the only time it's used in the New Testament. But it has the same connotation of what John said, "And
the Word became flesh and dwelt among us..." (John 1:14) So as we give our life to Christ, we're placing ourselves in exactly what Jesus said. "You see, I'm going away and where I'm going you can't come right now but I'm going to prepare a mansion for you, that where I am, you might be also." And so in doing that, what He's saying is, "Look, I actually want y'all to move in with Me."

And so if you know somebody and you're talking to them about the Lord, God actually wants them to move in. He wants you to move in and live and dwell and be in His presence. You see that presence of the Lord wherein there is fullness of joy. That's what He wants for us. That's why He wants all men to come to the knowledge of repentance and be saved. He loves us. And so ultimately even the Tribulation is about God loving lost sheep, so much so that He's gonna allow some things that have never happened before. All so the people will go, "I'll make that choice."

And tonight I simply say to you if you're here and you've never made that choice, tonight please make that choice. Worship team's gonna come back up because I wanna dwell in the house of the Lord forever. That's what I want for us. And the crazy thing is you can kind of sort of do that now. As you walk with Him, as you worship Him, as you represent while you're here...

You know, we do all kinds of crazy things. I mean, I'm shocked at how much money is spent on football and baseball and basketball uniforms and, you know, getting jerseys of famous players and I'm, you know, I'm...I like them, personally. You know, I'm a sports nut but I'm tellin' you this, there's only one jersey worth owning, amen? And it's called a robe of righteousness and y'all are gonna get one when you get to heaven. And we want everybody to go with us 'cause we're all gonna be on the same team. Saints in heaven worshipping God. And you're not gonna have a number back there that says number six billion five hundred thousand, three hundred sixty one, either. Just gonna be saints of the most high God and it's gonna be glorious.
Gonna have some prayer warriors come forward. You don't know Jesus, come meet Him tonight. He loves you. He wants you to dwell with Him forever. And you sure don't wanna wait 'til this stuff happens 'cause it's not gonna be easy like it is tonight. Tonight it's easy. Would you stand? Let's worship and let's pray.

**Closing Prayer:** Father, thank You for this time tonight. God, would You bless us with Your presence. Make us joyous. Give us a vigor, Lord. May we praise You with all that's within us, everything that is within us praise Your holy name. For any tonight that do not know you, Lord, would tonight be the night that they meet the King of kings and the Lord of lords. We ask all this in Christ's amazing name and God's people all said, "Amen".