

## Family of God, Watch This!

‡ God celebrates His family (vv.17-20)

‡ Blessed in building (vv.21-23)

‡ Peaceful in prayer (vv.24-25)

In the name of Jesus, whose promise secures us as members of God's family, dear brothers and sisters:

If your whole family went home last night, what would you think if a sister or brother stayed outside in the dark? Wouldn't you call them in? "I don't think I belong here." "Of course you do! This is our house, yours too. We're a family! Come on inside. Don't stay out here in the cold."

Unrealistic? It often happens to people who feel they don't belong in church. "What if I'm not part of God's family? How do I know God loves me and wants me to be His own? Do I really belong?"

Feelings are so misleading! God never lies! You care enough to ask. God cared even to send His Son Jesus to tell us about a sinful son who ran away and then wanted to come home. His forgiving Father was just longing for him, watching the road. I'm right there with you, amazed at God's open arms and loving heart! Baptized in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, sweep your doubts out the door. God put His Name on you. God chose you. God made you His own by sending Jesus to suffer and die for you, then rise again to shout God's satisfaction with Jesus' sacrifice in your place. For all the SAINTS TRIUMPHANT who have gone before us, we give thanks. And they give thanks for you! Across the pages of history Isaiah the prophet shouts: **Family of God, Watch This!**

‡ God celebrates His family (vv.17-20)

Like kids in the pool: **Watch This!** Cannon balls and flying belly flops are so much more fun with an audience. And God is so excited about making you SAINTS TRIUMPHANT. **God celebrates His family.** Prophets like Isaiah look ahead and see multiple events as one. *Over the river and through the woods to God's great house we go. It looks like one grand mansion there Through the blinding, drifting snow. Over the river and through the woods There's something you need to know. The porch comes first while we're here in church, Struggling here below.* Saints militant now...triumphant there!

**Family of God, Watch This!** God can't wait until you and I feel right...or until we come looking for Him. Remember God's anxious call in the Garden? "Adam, where are you?" The LORD God found them and promised a Savior Jesus through the womb of the woman to reconcile His **family** in pure joy.

**"Watch this! I am about to create new heavens and a new earth."**<sup>1</sup> Would you think your father didn't love you if he said, "I'm building a new house with your own room and bathroom." **"Watch this! ...The former things will not be remembered. They will not come to mind."** No love? "We're going to forget everything bad before and just enjoy forever together." **"Rejoice and celebrate forever, because of what I am creating."** You and everyone hearing this, don't stay out in the cold! **"Watch this! I am about to create Jerusalem to be a source of gladness, and her people will be a source of joy."** Not just a house, **God celebrates His family** with a whole city. Sadness and heartache – as kids say, "Aw gone!" Not only God's **family** is joyful. God shouts, **"Watch this!...I also will be glad because of Jerusalem, and I will rejoice over my people."** Take your happiest moment ever times a million, and you're not even close to God's joy over you and His **family**. **"The sound of weeping will not be heard in her again, nor the sound of crying."** Militant, we struggle here when some die young. But God says only to spare them from evil. (Isaiah 57:1) Don't wait out in the cold. Come in where it's warm by the fire of God's love.

<sup>1</sup> EHV ~ *Evangelical Heritage Version* (<http://wartburgproject.org>). NPH, © 2017. Order: 800-662-6022.

## ‡ Blessed in building (vv.21-23)

In lawless lands of ancient times it often happened that marauders would raid your house or fields. For over 300 years, Europeans prayed, “Lord, deliver us from the fury of the Norseman,” a.k.a. the Vikings! Still today Christians face death and confiscation of their property from religious enemies and humanistic Christian-haters in government. But in God’s future home of light, there will be no more futility from wasted work, or mold on the walls, or hail holes in the roof. *“For the days of my people will be like the days of a tree.”* You can count the rings and see the big ones where plenty of water spurred growth. **Family of God, Watch This!** *“My chosen ones will enjoy all the work of their hands.”*

Exactly what God means by all this, our finite, earthbound minds cannot grasp yet. But with death or mourning gone, sorrow and sighing fled away, it’s all good. To make it legal and lasting, God put it in writing. He told John in Revelation, *“Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.”* *“Yes,” says the Spirit, “they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them.”* (14:13 NIV84)

*“They will be an offspring who are blessed by the LORD, and their descendants will be with them.”* For us to have *offspring* means marriage by God’s design. *Descendants* means generations of grandchildren and great grandchildren. God wants a family! So God gives us faith to be **Blessed in building**. Imagine neighborhood excitement if a sweepstakes van stopped at your door. Here’s a lifetime times a million with God aiming His love and light at your heart and home for Jesus’ sake.

How close is God’s care **in building**? For over thirty years this congregation and community has been blessed by something they’ve never seen. In the summer of 1986, right before we moved here, morning, noon and night I was building my desk. I needed to cut raised panels on my table saw, but did not know how. As I prayed, I walked across my basement shop and took a book off the shelf. It opened to an article showing the whole set-up. “Who cares? Why tell us that story?” Because God is not like you and me, so wrapped up in ourselves and our sin that we don’t care about anyone else. Details too tiny for God? He knows the exact number of hairs on your head. While **Blessed in building**, Gods **Family** is...

## ‡ Peaceful in prayer (vv.24-25)

**Family of God, Watch This!** *“Even before they call, I will answer. While they are still speaking, I will hear.”* To give me a blessing invisible to most but necessary for my work, God answered before I knew my need. This promise is most remarkable if you look across the page in the EHV. In verse 12, the LORD complains, *“I called, but you did not answer. I spoke, but you did not listen. You committed evil in my eyes, and you chose that which does not please me.”* By nature we don’t even care what God cares about! And what is God’s solution? God created a heavenly city for His family to celebrate forever as SAINTS TRIUMPHANT! How? It’s the miracle of God’s grace. We sin, so He dies to take our sin away. We die, so He rises again to give us life everlasting. We’re afraid, so He keeps coming with His promises to bless us again and again. We fear He might not want us in His family?

Guilt and fear want to imprison us. A jailer felt it long ago. An earthquake woke him up to open prison doors. By law he was dead anyway, so he took out his sword, but then heard a prisoner shout: *“Don’t harm yourself. We’re all here!”* On his knees in that cell: *“What must I do to be saved?”* *They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.”* (Acts 16:31 NIV84)

*Your household* by faith, but will animals be in heaven? Our last verse could be literal about animals alive on Judgment Day and translated with all creation to be *“into the glorious freedom of the children of God.”* (Romans 8:21 NIV84) *“The wolf and the lamb will graze together, and lions will eat straw like cattle, but the serpent will eat dust as its food.”* Even if this is just picture language for bliss beyond **Peaceful prayer**, it means pure joy and unending peace without any sorrow or danger or doubting or fear. *“They will not harm or destroy on my holy mountain, says the LORD.”* And God does not lie!

Out here on the porch we can’t imagine what’s inside. But SAINTS TRIUMPHANT are waiting to welcome with us home with the **Family of God**. Stay close to God’s Word. Soon, soon...rest! Amen.