

Sermon Series – Revelation 12:7-12

Preached on St. Michael and All the Angels Sunday, September 29th, 2013

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St. Michael and All the Angels Sunday

Old Testament Reading: Daniel 10:10-14; 12:1-3

Psalm: Psalm 91

New Testament Reading: Revelation 12:7-12

Gospel Reading: Luke 10:17-20

Do not fear Satan, for you not only have the angels to protect you, but also wield the mighty weapons of Jesus Christ and His Holy Word.

I cannot understand this world's fascination with war. Some people visit battlegrounds of the civil war while they are vacationing, while others purchase books and maps of World War I or II. Additionally, most people will stop and watch a war movie if they happen to notice that one is playing on the television. War terminology is even mixed into our sports, such as football. Teams "put up a strong defense" or "blitz the quarterback" before he "throws a bomb". There is simply a fascination with war, so today's reading should be of great interest to you – not only for this reason, but for its spiritual implications as well. In our reading today, from the book of Revelation, a war is being described in heaven between the angels who love and obey God and the angels that decided to turn and fight against God. So many people are afraid to read the book of Revelation, but we must keep in mind a couple of points. First, the book of Revelation is contained in Holy Scriptures, which means that God has something He wants to tell His children. Second, since the book is contained in Holy Scriptures, it therefore is both inerrant as well as infallible, just like the other books of the Holy Scripture. You certainly would not skip over Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John and neither should you skip over the

book of Revelation. All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable to us.¹ Additionally, this book is not only by Jesus Christ, but it is a revelation about Him, too. Lastly, the book of Revelation is both a blessing to the one that reads it as well as the one that hears it.² The blessing we hear today from this text is that you do not need to fear Satan, for not only do you have the angels to protect you, but you also have the mighty weapons of Jesus Christ and His Holy Word.

Our text today starts out with God sending His angels to cast the devil and his followers out of heaven. Is it not interesting that God has no time for the devil? A battle is taking place in heaven amongst the heavenly hosts and the Almighty is not even concerned. Instead, He sends His archangel, Michael to take care of matters. God sends Michael to battle the adversary and those angels who turned against God. Michael did exactly what he was told to do. He fought with the devil and his followers and cast them out of heaven. I am not certain that people today truly comprehend what the angels do at the Lord's command. It is interesting to me that today's festival is called the Feast of St. Michael and All the Angels Sunday. This festival has been celebrated in the Church for hundreds and hundreds of years. In many Anglican, Episcopalian, Lutheran, and Roman Catholic congregations, today is formally known as Michaelmas. It is a day in which we focus our thoughts on God's use of angels both as his servants and our guardians. We do not spend nearly enough time talking about angels. Of course, you see them usually around Valentine's Day, you know the little tiny baby clothed in a diaper and flying around shooting arrows at people. Unfortunately, that depiction is such a misnomer. This is nothing like the angels as God revealed them to us in His Holy

¹ 2 Timothy 3:16

² Revelation 1:3

Scriptures. In fact, angels are very powerful and mighty. Michael is a warrior angel who fights the Lord's battles. In our first lesson today, we read about Michael's power and might in Daniel. Truly a very different portrayal than the flying cupid representation we see in books and magazines. As I was preparing for today's sermon, I came across a brilliant description of angels from Scripture on the Lutheran website CyberBrethren.³ The author of this page has some thoughts concerning the angels that I would like to share with you. Please note, as I discuss the importance of knowing about angels, that we are not to worship them. I am simply informing you and acknowledging their place in God's plan of salvation. I will paraphrase from the CyberBrethren website:

What did the good angels do? Good angels enjoy the blessings of being able to see God. They get to see God and to stand in front of Him and worship Him. They are in the immediate presence of God beholding his great glory, majesty, and power. This is called the Beatific vision of which all Christians one day will share with them in heaven. How wonderful! Some day, you and I will be with the angels in heaven worshipping the Lord Almighty, together. God's Word reveals the following about the activity of good angels. Good angels praise God. They are the Lord's servant in the world for His Church. God sends angels to serve and protect Christian believers in their work and their callings in life. They attend to the dying. They care for children. Angels are deeply interested in all that occurs within the Church. They adore and take great joy in the work of Jesus Christ for the salvation of the world. They rejoice over one sinner who repents. Also note that Holy Scripture mentions the presence of angels at every great

³ I hope that the link continues to work. The page contents were written by A.L. Barry and the website address is: <http://cyberbrethren.com/2013/09/27/angels/>

event within the kingdom of God. They were present when God gave His Law on Sinai. They were present at the conception, birth, resurrection and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ. Angels will come with Jesus when He returns again at the last day. The Bible tells us that angels are present in the public worship of Christians and God uses His angels to help the family and to preserve law and order. How are we then to treat angels? We need to praise God and thank Him for all His good angels. We are told that we are to take care not to offend the angels through sin and unbelief. However, the Holy Scriptures are very, very clear that we must not pray to angels or offer them our worship. As believers we have the privilege of having angels surround us and protect us. They are working to do God's good and perfect will in our lives. Our hope and trust is always in God whom we know assigns angels to watch over us and see us through whatever difficulty in life that may come our way. The Lord sends His angels to care for us in order that, someday we may join them and all the company of saints in heaven to sing His praises for eternity.

That is more information about angels that most of you probably knew. Again, as for today's focus, our text tells us God used them to triumph over Satan in heaven – now that is good news!

The good news is joyous and wonderful. However, our text today also deals with the destination and location of the trash that was kicked out of heaven. As with any piece of garbage, once it has been collected it must be deposited somewhere. There has to be a landfill where this refuse may be disposed. That destination was our planet, Earth. That means that the slanderer and all of his followers have been sent here to live among us.

Please keep in mind that he is not completely unbridled. In other words, he is not able to do everything he wants, but he certainly afflicts us and causes a great deal of pain in our lives. Once again, the book of Revelation provides us with a Word of Woe concerning the accuser living among us, “But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!”⁴ I interpret this Woe in this way, not only is Satan among us, but he is very angry he wants to slander your reputation and disrupt your faith. He wants to accuse you of things that are not true. He wants to twist God’s Word and cast doubt in your mind concerning the blessed Son, Jesus Christ. From the very beginning of time Satan has attempted to twist God’s Word and cast doubt among His believers. Satan wants us to think we are our own god. In the beginning, Adam and Eve lived in the perfect garden. They had everything they could have wanted and even walked in the garden with God. However, Satan used God’s own words and he twisted them. “Did God really say...” are among Satan’s most seductive words. I submit to you that Satan continues in this very way today. Think about all the different problems that occur in the Church today. Do they not all start with, “But did God really say...”? Usually, the answer is, “Yes. He really said that”, but people have started to question the Word of Holy Scripture. Did God really say that homosexuality is a sin? Yes, He really did.⁵ Did God really say that Jesus was born of a virgin? Yes, He really did.⁶ The list goes on and on. The problem is that Satan corrupts our thoughts and tries to convince us that not every Word from the Holy Scripture is true. Satan wants you to take parts of the Bible out. In the end, you wind up with the “holey” Scriptures and not the Holy Scriptures. Satan will not stop tempting you

⁴ Revelation 12:12

⁵ Genesis 19:1-13; Leviticus 18:22; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9, etc. etc. etc.

⁶ Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23; Luke 1:27,34

to twist the Word of God. You must make sure that are yoked with other Christians so that when you read the Bible you will know the truth. You should tether yourself to a Bible believing congregation and attend Bible study. Perhaps, you should consider purchasing a good Study Bible.⁷ A Study Bible will contain notes, descriptions, and explanations of the text you are reading. God's Word is our weapon against the devil. It is the sword of the Spirit⁸ which is a fantastic offense against the devil and his minions.

God gave us His Word as a weapon against the evil one, but He also gave us protectors. Yes, some angels were cast out of heaven with Satan, but others, those more powerful and fighting with Michael, are with us and sent to protect us against the dreadful foe. The war in heaven was fought and won with Michael at the helm and after Satan was cast down to this world, the angels continue to war with him. Although you are unable to see this war, it is occurring every single day all around you. A seminary professor of mine used this great illustration to describe the spiritual warfare that is occurring around us. He said that the battle against Satan is a lot like World War II. During World War II, D-Day took a lot of lives of the young men in service. The Americans were victorious that day at a great cost of many lives, but it was a turning point of the war. Although the war raged on for almost another year, D-Day is still considered the point at which the war was won. During that period following D-Day, many more young lives were taken. The enemy would not give up without a fight and some of those battles were the bloodiest. Even though Hitler's fate was sealed, the war continued until Victory in Europe Day. Our Christian life is very similar to this. Satan

⁷ I recommend *The Lutheran Study Bible* by Concordia Publishing House: <http://www.cph.org/c-1907-the-lutheran-study-bible.aspx>

⁸ Ephesians 6:17

was defeated and cast out of heaven. When Jesus Christ laid down His life for His children and died on the cross only to rise again in three days and ascend into heaven, the victory was sealed. Christ is victorious! However, we still have time until Christ comes again and during that time there is going to be some heavy casualties. There are still battles and clashes going on. Satan does not want to give up. Until our Lord returns, we have His Word as our sword, but we also have the angels to assist in protecting us from spiritual harm.

What do we really have to fear from Satan? We have the angels defending us and we have the testimony of Jesus Christ contained in the Holy Scriptures. Jesus sent seventy-two men out today and these men came back astonished. "Lord, even the demons are submit to us in your name."⁹ That is a very powerful Word. Christian friends, we have *that same word!* We have the same power to cast Satan away from us, to tell him to go away. That is power! That name of Jesus Christ. We have nothing to fear and yet, for some reason, we continue to fear. Dig into that Word and receive the Holy Sacraments. Thank God daily for His angels that He sends to protect us. I will conclude with something I read recently on the Internet. I wish I could cite the original author, but I was unable to locate who originally posted or wrote this. I want you to consider this when you are thinking about the angels and what they do:

Consider what happens when an infant's father goes off to war. All around that child is raging conflict; yet the child is innocent and happily remains completely unaware of it. And so the same is with us, while we do certainly receive glimpses of the ongoing struggle between good and evil angels, for the most part, we too

⁹ Luke 10:17

are unfamiliar with the war and cosmic struggle that is going on all around us until the final day when Christ returns.

I ask you on this day on St. Michael and All the Angels to praise God! We have no concept, no clue of what is happening all around us. The angels are fighting against the wicked and they are fighting for Jesus Christ. Praise God! Amen.

SERMON OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION:

War – it's going on all around us

Homiletical Point: Do not fear Satan, for you not only have the angels to protect you, but also wield the mighty weapons of Jesus Christ and His Holy Word.

1. The Good news is that God sent His angels to remove Satan and his followers from heaven. (v. 7-9)

Explain: War in heaven; God sent Michael (didn't handle Himself);

Illustrate: Angels – Messenger; not human – spirits that server God

Cherubim; Seraphim; Thrones; Powers; Rulers; Authorities; Archangels;

Intelligent; Possess a will; Mighty Ones; Not almighty; Not all knowing

Apply: Christ has triumphed over the devil through the cross

2. The unfortunately news is that they were hurled to earth and now lives among us. (v. 12)

Explain: Woe to earth; Devil (prince of the devils); Filled with fury;

Illustrate: WWII

D-Day (Allied forces landed in Normandy, France) June 6, 1944 – Hitler's fate was sealed

VE-Day (German forces surrendered in Berlin) May 7, 1945

Bloodiest eleven months of the war – enemy was mortally wounded, but did not succumb

Apply: Satan is wounded and defeated, but he is not gone.

3. However, God has given His angels to protect us from the fury of the devil.

Explain: Michael (protects God's people); Daniel vs. Persian kingdom; Angels of the churches

Illustrate: Going into battle – send in the best!

Apply: PERSONEL: You must thank God for His use of His angels as protectors of His church.

4. In fact, the best news of all is that Satan has no power over the blood of Christ and His Word. (v. 10-11)

Explain: Demons submit to us in Your name; Overcome the power of the enemy; Nothing will harm you

Full armor of God; Sacraments and the Holy Word

Rejoice that your names are written in heaven

Illustrate: Going into battle – be prepared!

Apply: WEAPONS: You must thank God for His weapons to use against the devil.

CONCLUSION:

The best way to think of what is going on all around us is to consider what happens when an infant's father goes off to war. All about there is raging conflict, yet the child innocently and happily remains unaware of it. And so with us, while we certainly do have glimpses of the ongoing struggle between good and evil angels, for the most part, we too are unaware of the cosmic struggle that is ongoing until the end of days, when Christ returns. And so, on this festival day, we praise and thank God, joining with all the angels, in adoring Him and giving Him glory.