

Sermon for September 29, 2024 – Rev. 12:7-12 & Matt. 18:1-11

Festival for St. Michael and All Angels

“And war broke out in Heaven.” War in heaven? “Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought,” That is how it was. The archangel Michael and his angels fought with the **dragon**, that is, the **devil**, and **his angels**. The devil and his angels, also known as demons fought back. These are spiritual creatures. How do spiritual creatures fight with each other? They fight spiritually! With words! Lying about God's Word and what God has said! Changing a dot or a dash in God's Word in order to deceive! Fussing at God! Cussing at God! Convincing people to lie about God. Convincing people to fuss and cuss and sin and not be sorry about their sin. That is what the demons and devil would do in a heavenly spiritual war – just like they do now on earth with people instead of angels. In heaven, it was a war of words. But - the good guys so to speak - Michael and all angels used God's Word and promises and all of the true things that God has given us to use We know that the devil and his angels, demons, did not prevail in the war in heaven. Michael and all his angels won. God's Word prevailed! It was a war where the devil and his angels attempted to replace the Christ Child with the lie that Satan would replace the Christ. But the Christ Child won the war by dying on the cross - won by giving up His Holy precious body and blood into innocent suffering and death, won by rising from the dead, and won by ascending into heaven where He reigns at the right hand of God. Christ did all that to win the heavenly war.

And the devil and his angels were cast out of heaven. We are told in Scripture in Revelation 12:4 – “*His(the dragon's) tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. . .*” The devil and his third of all the angels – known as demons - were cast down to the earth. They were banned from heaven. Michael had the remaining two thirds with him.

After his banishment, no longer could the devil, also known as Satan the Accuser, attend staff meetings or court sessions in heaven. No longer could Satan, the Accuser, accuse God's people before God the Father. Satan, was banned to the earth. On the earth he would continue his craft of lying and accusing to God's people, along with the aid of his demons. But never again would he appear in God's presence. God had had it with him. But, the spiritual

war had moved to the earth along with Satan.

“When did this war, the expulsion of the dragon, the devil, and his evil host of demons take place? According to Rev. 12:5, it happened when the “*Child, was snatched up to God and his throne,*” that is, at the ascension of the Christ. (pages 334-5 Revelation- Con. Comm.- Brighton) Before this expulsion, we have two well known instances in the Old Testament of Satan standing before God accusing saints. In both cases, one in Job and one in Zechariah, Satan stood before God accusing his saints. But after Christ's ascension, no more is this allowed. Satan is not allowed in heaven. Christ now sits at the right hand of God – not to accuse or condemn as Satan did – but to save sinners who are at the same time saints by faith in Christ. Satan has been banned to earth - the spiritual war continues on the earth - but the time is short until Christ's coming again.

Jesus talks to us this morning from Scripture again as we hear him in Matthew 18. The first few verses deal with the subject of humility. Proud people are not Jesus' people. He tells us that it would be better for us to be maimed or blind than to be proud. And as an example to the people he is teaching, he calls a little child to him. He uses this little child - in his dependence on others for his existence - as an example of those who will be the greatest in heaven.

We should strive for humility like little children do in this world. By being humble, we will seemingly be last in this world where most people, proud people, are trying to be first. But being last here is a good indication that we will be first in heaven. “*The first will be last and the last will be first.*” Being humble is how God's saints fight and win the spiritual war. Pride is a fruit produced by the devil, the world, and our flesh. Humility is one of the fruits produced in his spiritual warriors by God.

Jesus continues by warning those who would cause little ones like the one standing before him to sin. He points out little ones as the greatest in heaven and greatest in humility on earth. For those who would mistreat these little ones and cause them to sin, a millstone hung around their neck as they are cast into the sea to drown would deliver to them to a nicer death than what they will receive as judgment. So, are these little ones totally unprotected and vulnerable?

Don't think there are guardian angels? Listen to this! From verse ten - ¹⁰ “*Take heed*

that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven.¹¹ For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.”

Heavenly resources and spiritual resources on earth have been dedicated to the protection of God's saints. There are guardian angels for little ones in heaven. These guardian angels see the very Face of God. They converse with God. Angels overseeing God's saints? Yes, Yes, it is so. The world we live in is corrupt and dangerous and godless and lawless. Babies are killed by the millions. We should acknowledge this warning from Jesus as being as valid, maybe even more valid, than the warning Jesus gave to Jerusalem and the Temple that they would be destroyed.

Dear ones, this is the kind of world we live in. It is a world where babies are literally destroyed limb by limb by the millions. A world where Jesus' warnings are totally ignored. We, who have been given the Spirit of God by the power of the Holy Spirit need all the help available to keep us in the faith as the world, the devil, and our flesh war against us in a spiritual war. This spiritual war is no less a spiritual war than Michael and his angels fought in heaven against the devil and his demons before they were cast down to earth.

Dear one, you , too, are God's humble child. On this Festival of St. Michael and All Angels, may **your** guardian angel watch over **you**. May your humility grow as your pride is assaulted by the Word of God with its law and its commandments. May your humble conscience be soothed so that you are made more like Jesus' by God's gospel with its forgiveness. May the Holy Supper of our Lord assure you that your sins are forgiven and strengthen your faith with the assurances of the Christ Child, who banished and expelled Satan and his demons from the heavenly places. The time is short for Jesus' return to earth. Then, the Devil and His demons will be banished to Hell forever – no more lies, no more deception! Come, Lord Jesus! In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Revelation 12:7-12 And there came about war in heaven, for Michael and his angels had to make war with the dragon; And the dragon went to war and also his angels,

12:7 *Now*. Indicates a new aspect of the vision: what happened after the “child was caught up to God and to His throne” (v 5). *Michael and his angels fighting*. Michael is similarly depicted as fighting for God’s people in Dn 10:13. *the dragon and his angels*. Satan and his demonic cohorts (see notes, Rv 12:4; Mt 25:41).

⁸ but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer.

⁹ So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

12:9 *that ancient serpent ... the devil*. Reminds the reader that Satan first deceived Eve while disguised as a serpent (cf 2Co 11:3). “He led them away from God’s outward Word to spiritualizing and self-pride [Genesis 3:2–5]” (SA III VIII 5). Because of that primeval deception, he is rightly called “the deceiver of the whole world.” *deceiver*. “If you try to help yourself by your own thoughts and counsel, you will only make the matter worse and give the devil more space he will follow without stopping. But prayer can prevent him and drive him back” (LC III 111). *he was thrown*. Though Michael and the angels help God’s cause by waging war against Satan, the real cause of this enemy’s defeat is “the blood of the Lamb,” as v 11 makes clear. The decisive victory of Christ over Satan was won at the cross (Jn 12:3–33).

¹⁰ Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, “Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.

12:10 *the accuser*. Jb 1–2 provides the crucial background here. There, Satan is depicted as a prosecuting attorney in the heavenly court (cf Jb 1:6–11; 2:1–8). “Satan” means “adversary” in Hbr (as in a courtroom accuser). Similarly, the Gk term for “devil” comes from a verb meaning “bring charges with hostile intent.” *thrown down*. Now that Jesus has secured mankind’s acquittal through His death and resurrection (Col 2:14), Satan is no longer allowed to bring charges against us. Luth: “When, I say, [Satan] comes to you and accuses you not only of failing to do anything good but of transgressing against the Law of God, then you must say: ‘You are troubling me with the memory of past sins; in addition, you are telling me that I have not done anything good. This does not concern me. For if I either trusted in my performance of good works or lost my trust because I failed to perform them, in either case Christ would be of no avail to me. Therefore whether you base your objections to me on my sins or on my good works, I do not care; for I put both of them out of sight and depend only on the freedom for which Christ has set me free’ ” (AE 27:11).

¹¹ And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.

12:11 *blood of the Lamb*. The Church’s victory over Satan was achieved through the blood shed by Jesus on the cross (1Jn 1:7). *and by the word of their testimony*. Though Jesus’ death is the effective

cause of salvation, the Gospel testimony is the means by which this deliverance is received and spread.

¹²Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time.”

12:12 *But woe to you ... his time is short!* Until his final banishment in hell (20:10), the devil will spare no effort in attacking the faithful (cf 12:17). As he nears the end of his run, the devil’s attacks will become increasingly furious (cf 20:7–10).

St. Matthew 18:1-11 (humility)

1. At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”

Ch 18 Extensive teaching on sin, forgiveness, and the community of faith.

18:1 The disciples seem to have had a recurring dispute about who was the greatest (20:21; Lk 22:24). Jesus used their question as the occasion for His fourth major discourse, in which He taught how Christians should act toward one another.

² Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them,

³ and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

18:3 *turn.* See p 1080. To change one’s thinking as to what makes for greatness in God’s kingdom. *become like children.* The child served Jesus as an object lesson in humility.

⁴ Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

18:4 A child’s humility is evident esp in dependence on and trust in a superior. Greatness in the kingdom is characterized by humble trust in the Lord. “Just as a child neither takes nor seeks sovereignty for himself, so this shows that there is not to be sovereignty among ministers” (Tr 8).

⁵ Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me.

18:5 *one such child.* One who humbly trusts in the Lord (v 4). Jesus identified Himself with such children (11:25; 25:40, 45).

Punishment of Offenders

⁶ “Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

18:6 *causes ... to sin.* Prompting a fellow believer to sin through tempting words or bad examples. *who believe.* Faith and the kingdom of God are not limited by age or mental abilities. They are gracious gifts of God. See notes, 19:14; Lk 18:16. *better.* Better to die by drowning than to suffer eternal punishment (cf v 9) for causing a little one to sin. *millstone.* Cf Dt 24:6; see notes, Jgs 9:53; Jb 41:24.

18:1–6 Jesus demonstrates that humility is the hallmark of greatness in the Kingdom of heaven. Humility means confessing our inability to do anything at all to become worthy before God and earn salvation. Humility depends entirely on God’s mercy for forgiveness. It looks to Jesus Christ as the Savior who became one with sinners to redeem them. • Daily teach me, dear Jesus, to turn and become

like a child. Amen.

⁷ Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!

18:7 *temptations to sin!* Gk word is also translated “take offense” (11:6; 15:12; 17:27) and “cause to sin” (vv 6, 8–9). See note, 13:57. The world sets up numerous stumbling blocks over which people trip and fall into sin. *necessary*. Because sin has corrupted this world, temptations will persist until Judgment Day (1Jn 2:16). Jesus pronounced doom on anyone who causes another person to sin.

⁸ “If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast *it* from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire.

⁹ And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast *it* from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire.

18:8–9 Cf 5:29–30, where Jesus spoke similar words to warn against sexual sins. He used such strong and hyperbolic language to emphasize the seriousness of sin.

18:7–9 One need look no further than these words of Jesus to see how much the holy God hates sin. Here, the Law strikes us with all its fury. Who of us can say that our hand or foot or eye has not caused us to sin? We all deserve to be thrown into the hell of fire. Thank God that Jesus’ hands and feet were pierced for our iniquities and that His eyes beheld our sin in order to turn the Father’s face from it. By His wounds and precious death, we enter life. • Holy Father, I confess my sins of thought and word and deed. Forgive me for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

¹⁰ “Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven.

18:10 *despise*. E.g., cause a fellow believer to sin (v 6). *their angels*. Believers can be certain that angels keep watch over them (Ps 91:10–11). This text is the basis for the depictions of “guardian angels” common in art. *see the face*. Angels have direct access to our Father in heaven, who cares greatly for each of His little ones.¹

¹¹ For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.²

1 Edward A. Engelbrecht, [*The Lutheran Study Bible*](#) (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2009), 1620–1621.

2 [*The New King James Version*](#) (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), Mt 18:1–11.