

“NOW THE SALVATION AND THE POWER AND THE KINGDOM OF OUR GOD AND THE AUTHORITY OF HIS CHRIST HAVE COME, FOR THE ASSUSER OF OUR BROTHERS HAS BEEN THROWN DOWN, WHO ACCUSES THEM DAY AND NIGHT BEFORE GOD. AND THEY HAVE CONQUERED HIM BY THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB AND BY THE WORD OF THEIR TESTIMONY”

In the year 1523, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther wrote a tract to parents who are bringing their child to be baptized. In it, he wrote these words,

“Remember, therefore, that it is no joke to take sides against the devil and not only to drive him away from the little child, but to burden the child with such a mighty and lifelong enemy.”

Satan is our mighty, lifelong enemy. But, we have Jesus. And, St. John comforts and cheers us that Satan has been conquered by the blood of the Lamb, Jesus. And, this Sunday, we are encouraged that one of the ways God cares for us in our strife with the devil, the world, and the doubts of our own flesh is with the ministry of the angels.

The theme of the Pentecost season is living a Christian life. I mentioned last week that as we near the end of the church year, our focus becomes more narrowly living a Christian life **in conflict with Satan**. And, it is no joke to take sides against the devil. The Apostle Paul reminds us,

We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places (Ep 6:12).

In our Epistle, St. John tells us how this strife with the devil began. Sometime after God had ceased from creating the heavens and the earth – the Bible does not tell us exactly when -- Satan, in his pride, began to believe that he should be greater than God and rule even over the

Creator, so he rebelled against God. The devil's pride led him to believe that he was the most important thing in heaven and on earth, and so he fought against the Lord, and against His anointed, Christ. War broke out in heaven between the evil angels led by their captain Satan and the armies of God, led by the angel Michael.

St. John tells us that Michael & his angels were victorious and that Satan *has been thrown down*. And, the Evangelist admonishes us to remember, *the devil has come down to you in great **wrath**, because he knows that his time is short (v. 12)!*

Satan has one chief weapon -- the lie. Jesus said that he is *“a liar and the father of lies” (Jn 8:44)*. God’s Word is truth. Satan has only the lie and so he comes to deceive us and try to make us doubt the truth of God’s Word.

This is what he did in the Eden. The very first words the father of all lies speaks is, *“Did God really say” (Ge 3:1)?* The evil one wanted Eve to doubt what God has said.

This should not surprise you, Dear Child of God, for you all too familiar with that lie of Satan. He still comes and whispers in your ear, “Did God really say...” He wants to deceive you, to make you doubt God’s Word, to lead you into false belief, despair, and other great shame and vice. “Did God really say that He loved you?” “Did God really say that He forgives you all your sins?” “Did God really say the grave is defeated in the resurrection of Jesus?” “Did Jesus really say that He has prepared a place in heaven for you?” “Did God really say that all things work to good?”

The devil’s weapon is the lie. And, we by our fallen, sinful natures are too weak to stand against his lies.

But, we learn the Good News of the Christian faith in our Epistle,

“Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony” (vv. 10-11).

The blood of the Lamb Jesus Christ has defeated the devil. We sing that beautiful Good News in the battle hymn of the Reformation,

The world’s prince may still
Scowl fierce as he will,
He can harm us none.
He’s judged; the deed is done;
One little word can fell him (*LSB* 656:3).

One little word can fell him – JESUS! Notice what happens in our Gospel reading. Jesus sends the 72 out to preach. They came back to Jesus with joy and were absolutely amazed at the power of the Gospel, *“Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name!”* And Jesus responds, *“I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven (Lk 10:17-18).* Jesus was teaching them that He and His Gospel are more powerful than Satan and that, on Calvary, He would forever win the victory over the father of all lies.

The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil, the Bible teaches us (1 Jn 3:8). “Satan,” means “accuser,” which is appropriate because he continually accuses us of the guilt of our sin. So, Jesus came and became the Lamb of God to have all our sin placed upon Him and carry those sins to the slaughter of the cross. The blood of our Lamb Christ blood flowed from His sacred wounds to cleanse us from our sin. All of our sins of believing the lies of the devil; doubting God’s Word; all of our sins are gone in the cleansing blood of that Lamb.

Now, the Accuser no longer has anything to accuse us of. One little word – Jesus – silences all the lies and ugly accusations of Satan.

But, we dare not forget that that the devil was hurled from heaven to this earth – and he is consumed by wrath. He knows that his time is short. He knows that when Jesus comes again, he will be cast into hell forever and ever. And, he doesn't want to be alone in hell, so the evil foe makes his short reign on earth as miserable and painful as possible, especially for the children of God.

“It is no joke to take sides against the devil.” The Bible warns us: *Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour (1 Pe 5:8).* So, how do we resist the evil foe? How do we stand firm in the Lord Jesus?

Abide in the Word of God! God's Word is truth and the promises He makes in His Word are true for you – He has forgiven you all your sins and remembers them no more; you are never alone, Jesus is with you always and He is working all things together for your good; He will take you to be with Him in heaven and, there, He will wipe all the tears from your eyes; His rod and staff with comfort and cheer you, even in the darkness of this valley of the shadow of death.

I remind you of that, My Friends in Christ, because no one needs to tell you that Satan is your mighty, lifelong enemy. With his lies, he will try to lead you to despair; that the trials and tribulations of earthly life are more than you can bear, and all is lost.

Today, My Friends, we celebrate St. Michael and all Angels. Our bulletin cover this morning reminds us that St. Michael and all of God's great army of angels are on our side. God sends the angels to help us in our Christian faith and life. Our Old Testament reading teaches us that

Michael is the protector of God's people who will come to our aid in times of temptation and suffering.

Right now, it can be easy in the battle in the church militant, to feel alone and downtrodden. It's so easy to be discouraged and not see the armies of the Lord that are fighting for you. But they are there, **for you**. *God will command His angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways*, the Psalmist promises us (Ps 91:10). Satan has been overcome by the blood of the Lamb. When you have Jesus Christ and his holy angels on your side, you have nothing to fear.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.