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The Festival of St. Michael and All Angels

Revelation 12:7-12 – Servants of the Saved

9/23-27/20 – Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Beaver Dam, WI

Living in a democratic country is a wonderful thing. It means we have many freedoms and many rights that many other people in the history of the world haven't had. But it also means there are some things we don't understand quite as well. For example, we have a president, whose office is held in high honor. But a king he is not. He lives in a house, not a palace. He sits in an oval office, not on a golden throne. He wears a finely-tailored suit, not a jewel-encrusted crown. He may be saluted, but not bowed to. And though people may roll out the red carpet wherever he goes, he is not attended by the kind of pomp and circumstance that a king is. Yes, it really is hard for us to imagine just what kind of power and grandeur and glory one man could wield when he was the one wearing the crown and holding the scepter, and his people hung on his every word with absolute reverence and obedience.

But one thing we do know is that every great king has loyal servants who do his bidding, and the great King that we're talking about today is no different. When a king wanted to go somewhere, there was no stopping him, because his servants cleared the path. "Make way, the King is coming!" they would say, and no one would dare stand against them, or could even hope to. And that's how it was here for our heavenly King, too. When Christ returned to his heavenly Kingdom after his resurrection as the triumphant conqueror of sin, death, and all the forces of evil, he too told his servants to clear the path and make way – clear the path of Satan and his demons who opposed him, and make way not just for Christ's entrance into heaven, but for ours as well. Those servants are what we know as God's angels – spirit beings whom God created specially to preserve, protect, and minister to his people. And my brothers and sisters, those servants of the saved have only one job: to make sure you make it home to heaven safe and sound, and rest assured, when God speaks, these angels do not fail.

Now our text from Revelation drops us into a heavenly battle scene between the good angels with their mighty general Michael, and the evil angels with their leader, the devil. This battle was thousands of years in coming, and in fact the seeds of this battle came already in the garden of Eden, when Adam and Eve first fell into sin. See, that ancient serpent, Satan, who leads the whole world astray, was doing what he does best. God always intended for all of his creation – mankind, angels, and everything else – to live together with him in perfection and harmony forever, but the devil destroyed all that. He who was once a good and high-ranking angel decided that service to God was no kind of life for him, so he rebelled and lost. The devil lost his place of honor in heaven and was condemned to an eternity in hell, but not yet. Even right then, the war was over for Satan and his evil angels, but he was planning Heaven

War II. If he couldn't take God's throne for himself, then he would take God's people down with him.

And his plan was going along perfectly when Adam and Eve decided to take a second look at that forbidden fruit in the garden, and even have a taste. All of the sudden God's perfect creation was broken and those whom he created to be his children became his enemies. And how Satan must have cackled when Adam and Eve had a son in their own image, sinful and selfish and condemned to die just like them. Like shootin' fish in a barrel, he must have thought. If I couldn't take God's throne for myself, at least I can take away from God everything he ever wanted, and all I have to do now is let the evidence speak for itself.

So once the devil, that great Enemy of God and man, had finished his tempting, he stepped into his next role – that of Satan, Accuser. His job was very easy, wasn't it? "Look God, the rules you set up were very simple. The soul that sins is the one who will die. Every new person born into this world drips with sin and corruption from the moment they're conceived, and we both know it. The whole human race, every single one of them, belongs to me, and there's nothing you can do about it."

Every day Satan came into God's throne room to remind him of that fact. Every human being who ever lived fell under Satan's power and couldn't hope to stand against Satan's accusations. But then one man came – one man who was different from all the rest, and who promised to reverse the tide of sin and death and make God's creation the way it was supposed to be again. God looked at Satan and said, "You may be right that all of these people are sinners who deserve nothing but death and hell. But know this: I am their Creator; I am their Father, and I love them. These people belong with me, and I will never give them up. I'm going to do something to take away their sins and make them holy again, so they will live here with me forever in the perfection that was always meant for them, and they will never suffer under your power again."

And when Jesus Christ came to this earth to be your Savior, God our heavenly Father made good on that promise. Christ overcame the devil and all the forces of evil by his own blood that he shed on the cross to take away your sins and crush the devil's head and strip him of any accusations he might ever bring against us. When Jesus Christ died and rose from the dead, God declared this human race not guilty of their sins, case closed, never to be re-opened. Christ forever destroyed the devil's work of sin and death, and opened heaven to his people again. And when Christ returned at his ascension, that's when God gave that solemn command to his armies of angels: "Throw them out. Throw out the devil and his demons, with all their lies, their accusations, and anything they might ever say or do to harm my children, because he *will not* speak that way against those whom I have made my own."

And so “*there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down to the earth, and his angels with him.*” See, God wasn’t about to let Satan keep accusing his people after his Son had provided salvation for them. God would no longer hear any charges brought against them; he held Satan in contempt of court and had him thrown out, because there was a new advocate in heaven now, and there wasn’t room for two. God’s angels cleared the way for Jesus Christ, their returning King, who was coming to take up his glory and his heavenly throne once more, now as the victorious Savior of mankind, and they did away with anyone who would oppose him or his people for whom he died. That, my friends, means that total victory is won and our salvation is secured, because not only is Jesus now at the Father’s side defending us and pleading for us, but our Accuser is cast down, silenced forever, with no chance to bring charges against us ever again.

So my brothers and sisters, rejoice with the angels and believers everywhere over this double-assurance of your eternal life. Because of what Jesus did for you, no one can ever bring charges against you, no one can condemn you, and no one can ever separate you from the love of Christ. God has forgotten your sins, blotted them out, cast them into the depths of the sea, and tread them underfoot. Know that Jesus’ blood has cleansed you of every wrong and washed them away forever, and there is no one to accuse you before God anymore, so your not-guilty verdict is assured and your salvation in heaven forever is certain.

The battle was lost that day for Satan and his demons. Michael and his angels hurled them down to the earth in a decisive defeat, and they could never regain their place. But the problem is, they didn’t stop fighting. As our text says, “*Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short.*” Satan and his evil angels may have lost their place in heaven and their rights to accusation in God’s heavenly courtroom. But they haven’t stopped trying to destroy our relationship with God and steal our souls away from him. No, Satan can’t convince God not to love us anymore, so now he’s turned his full attention to convincing us not to love God anymore. There is peace between us and God now by faith in Jesus Christ, but Satan wants to rob us of that, so he tries to make us neglect our faith and trap us in sin. Satan wants us to throw away every good thing our God has done for us and for our salvation, so he’s working furiously to sever our relationship with our Savior. He knows that his time is short, so he’s doing everything he can while he can to drag us down with him, because that’s the only way he can still ruin God’s plan and keep us out of heaven.

But does he really think our God is just going to hang us out to dry? Does he think that Michael was just going to toss him out of heaven, dust off his hands, say good riddance, and forget about *us*? No, my friends, when God’s angels threw Satan and his demons out of

heaven, they came down right along with him, because they knew the job wasn’t done yet. The war in heaven is won, because mankind has salvation and Jesus sits on his throne victorious. But these servants of the saved know that their job isn’t finished until they deliver us safely through our earthly lives to our heavenly home.

So now there’s war on earth, but be assured that the angels are going to win this one, too. There is nothing the forces of evil can do to overcome us because those who are with us are greater than those who are with them, and they’ve been stripped of every bit of power they once had. God is holding us in his hands, the angels are guarding and protecting us, and we have God’s Word, the Sword of the Spirit, at our side, so they can’t touch us. Anything they do to try to harm God’s people or damage our relationship with our Savior will fail miserably. Just as the angels led the way for Jesus to return to heaven, so we too can have total confidence in our own angel escort all the way up to those eternal gates, because nothing can keep us from being with Jesus and all the rest of God’s people forever.

So my friends, even though the devil may fight and writhe and roar like a lion trying to devour us, his intimidation has nothing to back it. He’s just like a dog on a chain now, with all bark and no bite. So keep your faith focused on your Savior, keep his Word in your hearts and minds, and know that his guardian angels are watching out for you day and night on your journey toward your heavenly home, and they will finish the job until that day when they finally carry you to your Savior’s side.

You know, I’ve always thought that the scariest, most effective horror films are the ones that deal with demon possession and the devil’s power, because they’re actually real. That’s the kind of thing that we should actually be afraid of and worry about, because evil is all around us. But really that’s just my weak faith not trusting God’s promises and listening to the devil’s lies. The devil hasn’t stopped trying to deceive the whole world, because that’s the only way he can still keep fighting against God and his plan. The only way he can get to us now is by lying to us, terrifying us, and accusing our consciences – “God doesn’t really love you, God wouldn’t save someone like *you*, God can’t help you; you belong to me.”

But people of God, don’t believe him. Satan has no power over us, because God himself protects us with his mighty arm and with his Word, and God’s angels are constantly at work to beat back and defeat any evil attack the devil may try to throw at us. You are never alone and you are never helpless, because you have allies who never for a moment stop watching out for you. God’s angels, the servants of the saved, have been given the charge of protecting you from all evil, and they do not fail. Your God went to the greatest of lengths to win salvation for you and he has every intention of seeing that through to its eternal fulfillment, so friends, that’s why God even sent heaven to war *for you*. Amen.