

The Festival of St. Michael & All Angels  
Revelation 12:7-12: "The Angels Testify to Your Innocence."  
September 26/27, 2020 | Saude, Jerico, & Redeemer Lutheran Churches

**In Nomine Iesu**

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I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray You to protect me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the wicked foe may have no power over me. Amen. (Luther's Morning Prayer)

*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. (Rom. 1:7, etc.)*

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*The sermon text for today is taken from the twelfth chapter of the Revelation of Jesus Christ given to His apostle John. We read selected verses in Jesus' name:*

Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world – he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. / And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "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, for they loved not their lives even unto death. Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! 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!" <sup>(ESV)</sup>

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*These are Your words, heavenly Father. Sanctify us by Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen. (Joh. 17:17)*

In Christ Jesus, whose death and resurrection secured your righteousness and innocence before God, dear fellow redeemed:

The section just before today's text describes "a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars" (Rev. 12:1). She was in labor, and a huge, red, seven-headed dragon stood before her ready to devour her newborn child. A baby boy was born, but before the dragon could snatch him, he "was caught up to God and to his throne" (v. 5). The woman escaped into the wilderness to a place God prepared for her.

This story, which reads like science fiction, is the central chapter in God's plan of salvation. It is the fulfillment of the promise God delivered to "that ancient serpent" many years earlier in the Garden of Eden: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel" (Gen. 3:15). The LORD told the devil that he would not prevail over all humanity. One would be born of a woman who would crush his head.

As the devil listened in on the angel Gabriel's announcement to the virgin Mary, and then heard a multitude of angels herald the birth of the Christ-Child, he knew who his enemy was. He wasn't about to take Jesus' arrival lying down! He did all that he could to overcome Jesus and ruin His mission. He attempted to have Him destroyed by the hand of wicked King Herod who killed the baby boys of Bethlehem. He poisoned the minds of many against the gracious words Jesus spoke, and he even turned Jesus' own dear disciples against Him.

But the incarnate Son of God was not defeated so easily. Jesus kept on the paths of righteousness. He obeyed His Father's will. He stayed the course. He was willing to suffer the punishment for sinners. He was willing to die for their sins. "[F]or the joy that was set before him [he] endured the cross, despising the shame" (Heb. 12:2). And then He rose again from the dead. All the devil's plots and plans had failed. Jesus had succeeded. His mission complete, the Father welcomed Him back to the courts of heaven to sit at His right hand.

The Father's right hand is a position more than a local place. It is the position of all power and authority over all things. The devil doesn't like the look of that. He thought he had humanity conquered long ago. How could it happen that a flesh and blood descendent of pitiful Adam and Eve would come to reign at God's right hand? How could any Man rise higher than him, a magnificent, terrifying angel of the mighty God?

That's what the devil is: an angel. He was a good angel in the beginning, perfect in every way. But he wanted to have more. He wanted to be like God. And he did not think God should favor man and woman like He did. Who were they compared to him? This bright angel-among-angels was not about to serve those inferior creatures of the earth below. So he rebelled against God and convinced a number of other angels to rebel with him.

From that point on, he established himself in opposition to God and did all he could to thwart God's good plans. This started with his temptation of Adam and Eve, and we find another clear example in the Book of Job. Job was a faithful believer, who had been blessed by God with great riches and honor. The devil came before the LORD and argued that if God touched Job with trouble instead of blessing, Job would surely curse God to His face (Job 1:11, 2:5).

It is clear that at this time, God still allowed the devil to come before His throne in heaven and speak. There is another example of this recorded by Zechariah the prophet. Zechariah was shown "*Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him*" (Zec. 3:1). But this does not happen anymore. The devil no longer plays the role of prosecuting attorney at the throne of God. His arguments against our sinfulness are no longer admitted.

Today's account from Revelation tells us when and how Satan was booted from God's heavenly courtroom. It happened when Jesus returned to heaven in victory after His death and resurrection. He ascended into heaven where all the saints and angels received Him with rejoicing (Rev. 5). The conquering King had returned! But one thing more had to be done. The dragon had to go.

Although it sounds like brute force is what got the devil and his angels cast out of heaven, the terrifying dragon was overcome by something else. He was overcome by "*the blood of the Lamb.*"

How could a Lamb stand up to a powerful dragon? Well that gentle Lamb was the Son of God in the flesh. The only way to silence the devil's accusations against sinners was for the Lamb to pay for those sins. Jesus offered Himself as the spotless sacrificial Lamb in each sinner's place and shed His holy blood to blot out all sin.

It hardly had the look of it to those who watched it happen, but there was a battle raging when Jesus went to the cross. It was not a battle among men. It was a battle against mankind's greatest enemies: sin, devil, and death. Everyone who saw Jesus nailed to the cross thought this was His defeat. It looked like sin, devil, and death would be victorious. But oh how the tables turned! Just before His death, Jesus declared His victory, and a few days later, He proved it by rising from the dead. The death of Jesus in the place of sinners was the day the serpent's scaly head was crushed just as God had promised so long ago that it would be.

With Christ's heel constantly bearing down on his head, the devil's mouth doesn't work like it used to. Like a pancaked cartoon character, this smooth-talking liar can only mumble now. And God does not care what he has to say. With the accusation of our sin silenced by the death of Jesus for us, no accusation is allowed against us anymore. The devil can hiss "sinner!" and "failure!" and "law-breaker!" about us all he wants, but God is not listening. We are redeemed, we are reconciled, we are forgiven by the precious blood of Jesus.

His atoning blood is why Satan was forever cast out of heaven. As our text says, he was conquered "*by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony.*" The "*word of their testimony*" is the confession of the faithful who were the target of the devil's accusations. Now whenever the devil's lips start moving, they point to Jesus, and there is nothing more that the lying serpent can say.

The holy angels of God have witnessed all these things. They watched the devil and other fellow angels rebel against God. They saw Adam and Eve fall into sin. They marveled as God promised to send a Savior for sinners and then carried it out by taking on their flesh to live and die in their place. What love their holy God has for mankind!

They watched as the Son of God fasted for forty days in the wilderness and as He prayed that there might be another way to save the world. They knew what was coming. They knew that the Son of God who had called them into existence had to suffer the eternal wrath of His Father for sin. They knew He had to die, but they also knew He would rise again.

The angels saw it all, and they know what it means for you. It means your salvation. Your salvation is why the chief angel Michael and other good angels fought to expel the devil and his wicked angels from heaven. Since Jesus had paid your debt of sin, there was nothing more that the fallen angels could bring against you. "[T]here was no longer any place for them in heaven."

So "*the great dragon was thrown down... and his angels were thrown down with him.*" Having failed to capture the throne of heaven, they now seek to capture the hearts of men. Their focus is especially on believers. The devil will do whatever he can to make you doubt your salvation. He wants to distract you from Jesus through pleasure-seeking, worldly pursuits, and a guilty conscience. He wants to convince you that God doesn't really love you, and that you don't need Him anyway.

God sends His good angels to guard you from these attacks. They defend you in temptation and help to pick you up when you fall. The holy angels see everything you do, good and bad, but they do not grow weary with you. They stay committed to their mission because they are faithful to God, and God is faithful to you. No matter how much you have given way to the devil and sinned in the presence of the holy angels, they still fight for you. *“Are they not all ministering spirits,”* says the Bible, *“sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?”* (Heb. 1:14).

The angels of God know the truth. **They Testify to Your Innocence.** They will not stop serving and protecting you, because they know what the Lord accomplished for you. They know you are God’s own holy child, who stands righteous before Him by faith. Their service toward you will not cease until they bring you to join them in the blessed courts of heaven.

*Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.*

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