

St. Michael & All the Angels

There was a war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon: and the dragon fought, and his angels ... And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan."

From the 12th chapter of Revelation

Here is a true Holy war. Here is the victory of God over evil, in which we participate through our faith in Jesus Christ.

The victory of Michael and his angels over the devil and his angels is a consequence of Good Friday. At the moment when Jesus, hanging on the cross, said, "It is finished," the fate of the devil was fully and finally sealed. As Jesus said in John's gospel just before he died, "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out." (John 12)

From today's epistle we learn that evil has all ready been defeated, as hard as that may be for us to understand in the light of what we in the world. The devil is no longer able to stand before God and accuse others of sin, as he did Job. Now, when the devil, as prosecuting attorney, accuses us of sin before the eternal judge, Jesus, our only mediator and advocate, intercedes for us. For he made a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.

The devil controls humanity because of sin and death. He lured us into sin, which brought upon us the sentence of death. Jesus became so that, through his death he might destroy him who had power over death, that is of course, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage.

Because of what Jesus did for us on the cross, we do not need to fear death. John 3:16 says it best “ God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, to the end all that believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” St Paul tells the Romans “I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

But we still experience evil in this life. The epistle makes this clear. The devil’s exit from heaven leads him to intensify his activity on earth because he knows his time is short. Here we come to understand the psychology of evil. When we witness an evil act, there is frequently a search for meaning. Why did he, or they, do it? If we understand evil, we will know what a dumb question that is. The devil hurts people because his pride is wounded. He acts out of malice and spite. Evil is not rational. It is purposely destructive and ultimately suicidal. It embraces death because it has rejected life.

We see this pattern in people. People will not admit what they have done is wrong, they will not accept the consequences of their actions and the just judgments of God. Rather than to repent and change, they become angry and bitter. Take the example of Cain, who killed his brother rather than to admit that he did not offer God what he should have, they take their anger and bitterness out on others.

The devil’s victories are all puzzling. He has already lost the war. He knows that the Day of Judgment is coming when he and those who belong to him will be judged and cast into the lake of fire. His sole

purpose is to ruin as many souls as possible in the short time he has left.

The devil can influence those under his sway to lie, cheat steal, and murder. He can move those money and power to take advantage of those who do not. He can instigate petty disputes in families and war between nations. And since we all must face death, he can use the specter of death to make us afraid, to cower us from doing what is right, and to lead us into disobedience.

But there are two things that the devil can not do. He cannot overrule the sovereignty of God. As on Good Friday, God will always turn the devil's evil into God's own good. And the devil cannot take the gift of eternal life away from us. As Jesus said and I use in my sermon on Good Sheppard Sunday, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand." (John 10 :27)

In order to live in Christ's victory over Satan and death, we must understand that the most important issues. For a long season now, Christians in America have focused on the here and now. People haven't wanted to hear about the last things: death, judgment, heaven and hell. (These things I will talk about during Advent) People only wanted hear how faith would make their lives better tomorrow. It's time for the pendulum to swing in the other direction.

Uncertain times should remind us that "this world is passing away... but he who does the will of God abides for ever." Uncertain times

should remind us to hear the words of Christ and be like the wise man who built his house upon the rock- when the rains fall and the floods come and the winds blow, our house will stand because it is built upon the rock of Christ.

It is time for Christians to focus once again on Christ's victory over death and the promise of eternal life. Those who are not afraid to die will also not be afraid to live. Those whose lives are focused on eternity and the ultimate encounter with God in Christ will be able to live through the temporary victories of evil in time.

Here, at the altar of God, we declare victory in the holy war against evil. Here, the cross is raised and Satan falls. And we are given two unshakable promises. Whatever evil the devil may inflict in the short time that he has left, God will in his sovereignty, turn to good. And we will live forever with God in Christ. We conquer by the blood of the lamb and the word of our testimony, with the help of St Michael and all the angels.

Let us pray

St Michael the Archangel defend us in battle, be our defense against the wickedness and the snares of the devil; may God rebuke him, we humbly pray, and do thou O Prince of the heavenly hosts, by the divine power of God, thrust into hell Satan and all the evil spirits who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls.

Amen