

The Feast of St. Michael and All Angels

29 September, Anno Domini 2024

Revelation 12:7-12

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Saints of God,

There is a fierce war raging all around each and every one of us all day, every day. Satan and the evil angels who rebelled against God with Satan are waging a non-stop assault on God's kingdom and God's creation. Scripture doesn't tell us when, but some short time after God rested on the first Sabbath, Satan led an army of angels in rebellion against God. Satan grew full of pride and was not content to be what God had created him to be. He was not happy to stand as a servant of God to serve man. He felt he should be more and do more and have more. He despised the identity given him by his gracious Creator and sought to overthrow God and establish his own order and identity. He hated God and everything having to do with God. War against God was certainly a fool's errand (and still is), but that was and remains the depth of the devil's hatred for God. They would try anyway and they will never stop trying until the day that they are cast into the burning pit that God prepared for them and for all men who join them in their rebellion.

What the Scriptures hold before us today is critical for every one of us to understand because not only does it affect every single one of us, but it is actually about us. From newborns in the womb to aged saints preparing to be carried to Abraham's bosom, none are exempt. It doesn't matter whether you believe that you are in the midst of this war or not. You are. And you will either take that seriously now or on the Last Day. Any and all who choose to ignore it or minimize its importance will suffer the consequences of doing so for all of eternity.

Each of our hearts should be startled awake at the words of the loud voice from heaven which cries out "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!" This war between God and Satan is what we are living in every day of our lives.

The problem is that we have grown blind to the war, and no longer see it for what it is. The violence, the hatred, the anxiousness and despair, the divisions and denominations within the Christian church, the people apostatizing from the Christian faith, women and girls thinking that they have to alter and reveal their bodies to get men's attention and men who encourage and demand it, dead-faced boys who are taught to hate themselves because their very existence is evil, all-consuming sports and work schedules that draw God's people away from church, Christian homes without family devotions, everyone's heads bowed down in worship toward their phones, wars, hurricanes, disease, young mothers laid in graves by their husbands and children, famine, corruption, the millions of aborted children tossed into the trash, the countless families torn apart by pornography and divorce, the mentally warped and ill people who think they are animals and surgically alter their bodies trying to be something they simple aren't, fights and arguments between Christians - we see all these things and act surprised as though we have no idea why these things are happening. We blame carbon footprints. We blame illegal immigration. We blame politicians. We blame bad monetary policy. Who do we not blame? Our own sinful hearts and deeds. The devil and his angels. And because we think the problem runs no deeper, we completely miss the point. We try to stop the Niagra Falls of evil with life hacks, new government programs, and pills. Or even better we try to pretend the problems don't exist and distract ourselves with sports and video games and movies and internet influencers.

Children of God, all of the chaos and horror that you see and feel going on around you, the daily and vicious struggle you have against the evil desires of your own flesh, all of these things are the constant onslaught of Satan seeking in his insane rage to destroy you and every other good thing that God has made. The devil knows well his time is short. He knows without a doubt that Christ Jesus will return on the clouds as He promised to judge the living and the dead. And Satan will stop at nothing to bring down every last human being into apathy and unbelief.

This is the great witness of Scripture. In the Bible God pulls back the curtain so that you aren't walking blindly in this life, ignorant of what is actually going on. The devil is at war with God and though he can't overcome God, he can overcome you if you give him the opportunity. There is absolutely nothing in your life that is not about this war. Every word you speak or fail to speak, every step, every thought, every action or inaction is either done to drive Satan back or help him in his demonic cause. As much as we may want to believe otherwise, nothing is neutral. There is no point in time while you are on this side of eternity when you can step off the battlefield. Your work, your play, and your worship are all done in this reality. And I know that is exhausting and overwhelming to think about. That is part of the reason that we try to ignore it. We are tired.

But it is important that we are always in the business of calling things exactly what they are. Because only in seeing everything around us for what it is, clearly illuminated by Christ's word, can we find actual peace and rest in the midst of it. It would have done no one in Florida any good to pretend that Hurricane Helene wasn't actually a hurricane. In fact, anyone who did paid a price - some more, some less. But here again, we are foolish if we see nothing more in this hurricane than an unfortunate happenstance of nature. The first thing that should have come to your mind was the remembrance of God's wrath against man's sin which destroyed the earth by the Flood. God's wrath and judgment against sin is real. Helene was just one more small-scale reminder of that given by God to wake us all up out of our slumber. There won't be another world-wide flood, but the whole creation will be consumed with fire on the Last Day. God's wrath will be poured out in full force against the devil and his angels, and anyone who did not seek refuge in the Blood of the Lamb of God who has taken away the sin of the world.

The world will call you a fool for believing such things and for despising all of its pleasures and priorities. It will heap mountains of persecution upon you for calling all of its works and all of its ways evil and of the devil. It is not above martyring the saints of God who dared to resist it and refused to worship its idols.

But you do not stand alone. Today we are reminded that there aren't only evil

angels. There are holy and good angels who serve the will of God day and night and whom God sends to surround and protect you. I always encourage you to think of angels as mighty warriors but in doing so, remember that they don't fight with tanks and guns and drones. The war we are in the midst of is a war fought with the sword of God's Word because the weapon of Satan is his lies and accusations. The angels of God, some of whom are spirits, others who stand before you in pulpits and by your hospital bed, some you call father and mother, are messengers who drive back hell's legions with the humble but all-powerful, creative and redemptive Word of God. They heal your wounds with Christ's word of forgiveness. They strengthen your weary hearts and weak knees with the promises Christ made to you when He instituted and gave you the food of His Body and His Blood. They show you the enemy's battle plans and the traps by which Satan would have you fall into sin as they teach you the Bible, the pure light that enlightens the darkness of this sinful world.

It is by this Word that you conquer Satan and his angels. They have no power to stand against it. When you make the good confession of faith, when you call upon God your Father for help and deliverance, Satan falls like a lightning bolt and goes slithering back to the darkness from which he came.

People of God, the patriarch Noah was surrounded on every side by people who scoffed at him because he actually believed that God hated what they were doing and would wipe them out. You can imagine the tremendous pressure Noah was under as board by board he assembled the ark according to God's specific instructions. You can imagine that as year after year passed by with no flood, even Noah went through times of doubt, wondering if maybe he was wrong. You can imagine that he was tired and wondered if his own faithfulness and trust in God's Word was misplaced. But Noah returned time and again to the Word of the Lord. That alone was what he was sure of. He believed the Lord. He believed that not only would the world be destroyed by the Flood, but also that God would save him and his believing family and that God would yet send the promised Messiah to redeem man according God's own promise.

Take heart. You do not need to cower in fear. You are surrounded by the holy

angels of God. Though you are not to call upon them or worship them, they are sent by God to help and defend you against your demonic enemies. Daily take up the fight with them - as you pray, as you meditate upon God's Word and learn it, as you cling to Christ who was crucified for you. You are surrounded by a great cloud of witness like Noah who now rest from their labors and have been delivered from the battlefield into God's perfect presence. Besides all of this, your champion already holds the battlefield as victor. The Lord Jesus Christ has allowed Satan to crush His heel on the cross and by that cross crushed Satan's head forever. Jesus has already held His victory procession through the devil's kingdom and now sits at the right hand of the Father, ruling over heave and earth and even the devil himself with his evil angels. Do not give up. Do not put down the weapons and armor God has given to you - His Word, His Body and Blood, His Baptism. By these you will conquer. Remain vigilant so that you may not fall to the devil's snares but stay awake. Take up the battle stations of your vocations. They may seem insignificant. But the greatest damage is inflicted on the devil's armies by humble and pious father and mothers, children, workers, pastor, rulers, widows, and citizens as they pray and as they bear witness to Christ.

The fighting is fierce. The warfare is long. The scars are deep. The tears are bitter. But they will not last forever and victory is guaranteed to God's people. On that glorious day, when our Redeemer returns and we stand triumphant over our fallen enemies, we together with the whole church on earth, the saints who have already been granted their eternal rest, the angels, and the archangels will lift our voices in the eternal shouts of triumph and praise to the blessed and Holy Trinity.

In the Name of +Jesus.

Pastor Ulmer

(We stand.) The peace of God which passes all understanding keep you hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.