

**St Paul's Lutheran Church (Latimer, IA)**  
**Saint Michael and All Angels – September 29, 2024**  
**Luke 10:17-20 – The Man Clothed in Linen**  
**Rev Peter Wagner**

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

Today we praise God for his angels, the ministers he sends to help us in our weakness. Angels are God's warriors. They fight against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places, with power that we cannot fathom, defending us in our blissful ignorance against all the attacks of Satan and his demons. Without their protection, we would surely fall into terrible sin, temptation, despair, and suffering that we cannot even imagine. So Martin Luther prayed every day, "Into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen."

But today, on this feast of all the angels, why does the Old Testament reading from Daniel fail to identify the angel – whoever he is – who appears on the banks of the Tigris? The book of Daniel often names the angels. In Daniel 8 and 9, Gabriel comes to Daniel twice to explain his visions. And now this new messenger mentions another angel, Michael, who fights by his side. But the messenger himself is not named. He is simply called, "the man clothed in linen."

Yet this man clothed in linen is no ordinary man. Listen to how he is described: "On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was standing on the bank of the great river (that is, the Tigris) I lifted up my eyes and looked, and behold, a man clothed in linen, with a belt of fine gold from Uphaz around his waist. His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a multitude."

Now compare that to the description of Jesus in Revelation 1: "In the midst of the lampstands stood one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength."

It's the same man. Both are dazzling and terrifying, with eyes like fire, arms and legs like burnished bronze, and a belt of gold around their waist.

Yes, Daniel's man clothed in linen is the God-man, Christ himself. The Son is the true Angel of the LORD, sent from the Father to speak God's Word to us, to bring us comfort, to fight all our battles, to accomplish our salvation. He bears the name of God himself. Daniel sees the one who spoke to Abraham, who wrestled with Jacob, and who appeared to Moses in the burning bush. He sees the one who led Israel out of Egypt in a pillar of cloud and fire, who led the armies of Joshua and overthrew Israel's enemies. This is the one of whom the LORD said in Exodus 33, "Pay careful attention to him and obey his voice, for my name is in him."

And today this Angel of the LORD, who is God himself, this man clothed in linen, Jesus comes to Daniel to comfort him. Though Daniel is terrified, though he falls to the ground like a dead man, Jesus touches him and sets him trembling on his hands and knees. And he says to him, "O Daniel, man greatly loved, understand the words that I speak to you, and stand upright, for now I have been sent to you."

Then, in chapter 11, Jesus tells Daniel what will happen to his people in the latter days. He explains in detail the coming wars in the glorious land between the kings of the north and the south. And he comforts Daniel that in all the time of terror and disaster to come, God will be in control. God has predicted it, God has appointed it, God will preserve his people, and God will bring all the proud and haughty who oppose him to utter destruction.

God is with his church. So the man in linen concludes in chapter 12, "At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book."

So even today, on this feast of Saint Michael and All Angels, our focus is not on the angels, but on their captain. Jesus, the man clothed in linen, who defends and comforts his people, who holds the future in his power, who knows what is to come and comforts us. He is in control.

But why is Jesus clothed in linen? There are two reasons. First, the linen he wears is a priestly garment, symbolizing purity and holiness. In Exodus, God commanded Moses to make linen garments for the priests, and

to weave the tabernacle curtains of finely twisted linen, red, blue and purple. Linen was also used in the curtains of Solomon's temple. And in Ezekiel 44, all the priests in the vision of the heavenly temple are wearing linen garments and linen turbans. So linen reveals Jesus as our great high priest, who makes an offering for our sins, who intercedes for us before the Father, who helps us and prays for us in all our troubles.

Second, the linen Jesus wears is his burial garment. All four gospels specifically mention that Jesus was wrapped in linen at his burial. And the linen is also proof of his resurrection. John 20 says, "And stooping to look in, the disciple saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself."

So today, Daniel beholds Christ our great high priest in all his awesome glory, yet clothed in linen, as a symbol of the death he is going to die. For just as the powers of darkness withstood this God-man twenty-one days before his coming to Daniel, so will the powers of darkness withstand Jesus all the days he will walk on the earth, until the day they put him to death.

Yet though he was aided in the time of Daniel by Michael the archangel, and though angels later ministered to him on the earth, and though Jesus could summon at any moment more than twelve legions of angels to help him, yet on his great and glorious day, he will fight alone. The angels will stand back and as he carries his own cross to Golgotha. "While weeping angels hid their eyes, this priest became a sacrifice."

Jesus only. None of the angels or saints are able to conquer Satan on their own. None can die for the sins of the world. They only conquer by the blood of the Lamb, by the man clothed in linen. By this man, Jesus alone, and by his blood, Satan is cast down like lightning from heaven. As we heard in Revelation 12, "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."

The saints conquer because they follow the glorious Rider on the white horse, who leads out the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure. And in him, their captain and their God, the saints will also be clothed like him, in linen like his. As Revelation 19 promises, the bride of Christ will be clothed like him. "Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, 'Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure' – for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints."

Dear saints, you are the bride of Christ. He has prepared righteous deeds for you. You are his church. You have been clothed in his linen, through baptism into his death and resurrection. Your high priest who was buried in linen, who rose and laid aside his linen grave cloths, he has taken away your polluted garments of sin and clothed you in his righteousness, white and pure. Now he sits in glory on his throne, and he leads out the armies of the host of heaven. He overcomes all the power of darkness, he tramples them under his feet, and he clothes you in his righteousness, washed in his cleansing blood.

So rejoice! The Rider on the white horse, the King of kings and Lord of lords, whose name is Faithful and True, whose eyes are flames of fire and from whose mouth comes a sharp sword, Christ the Word of God fights for you. Rejoice, for he has cast Satan down. Never again can the accuser of our brothers enter the heavenly courts to condemn us. The devil's wound is mortal, his doom is sure. The victory belongs to Jesus alone, and all who follow him. You have nothing to fear, whatever may come, for the Lord of Hosts is with us. Amen.

Now may the peace of God which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.