

St Paul's Lutheran Church (Latimer, IA)
Saint Michael and All Angels – October 1, 2023
Revelation 12:7-12 – Overcome by the Blood of the Lamb
Rev. Peter Wagner

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

We are engaged in a war. The great battle of the church militant. The final war of the end of the age. “We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”

And in this war, the victory belongs to life. “The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not overcome it.” By the blood of the Lamb and his atoning death, the decisive blow has already been struck. On the cross, the Son of the woman has crushed the serpent’s head. He has thrown Satan down like lightning from heaven.

So rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! 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 strikes the nations. He tramples our enemy with the wrath of God Almighty. 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, he is in the convulsions of death. And his time is very short.

Rejoice, for the victory belongs to Christ the Lord of Hosts. It belongs to the angels and archangels and all the company of heaven. Now only the last skirmishes are playing out on earth. “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!” The dragon is defeated, but now he rages among us. He seeks revenge. He seeks to drag us down with him, for misery loves company.

Satan could not to kill the Son of God, so now he seeks to kill us. He wants us and our children. He wants to snatch us from the faith. He wants to see families divided, father against son and mother-in-law against daughter in law. He wants to make us embrace the doctrines of men, to silence the church, to bring dishonor to God’s name. He wants children who grow up despising their parents and the truth they have been taught.

And Satan will use any strategy he can. He will distract us with money, sports, the news, relationships, anything but the God’s word. He will use political arguments to cause division, leading many to mock the true faith, pitting one generation against the next. He will drag us down by enticement, luring us into sin by what our eyes view, our ears hear, and our senses enjoy. And he will sow selfishness, the constant desire to get a moment to ourselves to do what we want. For when we pursue our own desires, we begrudge our neighbor. We get filled with resentment toward those we should love, filled with bitterness toward God for our lot in life.

But Satan’s greatest and most effective weapon is the waiting game. He loves to bring the fight into the battlefield of the ordinary. Into the daily grind of life. There he disarms us by the silent sword of time, letting emotions and depression set in, the discouragement of monotony. We get bored with the present. We lose sight of the struggle. We doubt the heavenly goal. And we grow tired of what we’ve heard before. The same Scripture, the same preaching, the same church week after week. We wish for something new. So we drift away into the cares and pleasures of the world, and the battle is given up quietly, without firing a shot.

This must not happen. Satan must not prevail. “Be faithful unto death,” Jesus said, “and I will give you the crown of life.” Be faithful and do not give in to the monotony of the present. Do not become numb to the power of our God and his great victory over sin and death.

Oh what danger we live in! We do not have the spiritual strength to hang on and keep up the fight. We are called to contend for the faith, but we cannot even focus on the words the Lord’s Prayer long enough to pray it! How badly we need help!

“With might of ours can naught be done, soon were our loss effected. But for us fights the valiant One, whom God himself elected. Ask ye, who is this? Jesus Christ it is! Of Sabaoth Lord, and there’s none other God; He holds the field forever.”

Thanks be to Jesus, who hears our weak prayers. Who’s by our side upon the plain, with his good gifts and spirit. With his word and sacrament.

For he is our captain who hears the prayers of his soldiers. He knows the distress of his saints. When we pray in simple faith, he sends help. The words of Luther’s morning and evening prayers are powerful. “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.” These are no empty words! When God hears such prayers, he answers! He sends his angels to guard us from all evil, to defend us in our weakness.

For unlike Satan, who was cast out of heaven, the angels of those who turn to God in childlike faith always stand before God’s presence. The angels watching over us always see the face of our Father in heaven.

So take heart. We are not alone in this war. We are surrounded by the armies of the living God. We have the example of all the saints and martyrs of the church triumphant who fought before us and gave their lives for the sake of the testimony. And we have the help of the angels, all the company of heaven, to defend us in our weakness.

May God open our eyes like he opened the eyes of Elisha’s servant, to see all around him the flaming horses and chariots of the heavenly host. “Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.”

And do not be afraid, for we have the help of him who has conquered. Satan may be a strong man, fully armed. He may claim the world as his house and he may guard us as his possessions. But we belong to the stronger man, who has attacked Satan and overpowered him. Jesus has stripped off the devil’s armor and divided the plunder to seize the church as his own bride.

Now our stronger man sits at the right hand of the Father in power, until all his enemies become a footstool for his feet. And he commands his angels concerning us, to guard us and bear us up in their hands, so that we do not fall or strike our foot against a stone. He commands the archangel Michael and all his army to fight on our behalf.

But even the angels do not fight on their own. Michael and the angels and the saints and martyrs, they all conquer by one thing: “They have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb.”

For the birth of Jesus on earth, his holy precious blood and his innocent suffering and death, his resurrection and ascension, these were the decisive moments of the battle. These are what gave Michael and his angels power to cast Satan down. Michael merely enforces the victory of Jesus in the heavenly realm. Michael conquers in the same way as everyone else. He overcomes by the blood of the Lamb and the victory of Jesus.

The same is true for you. You can withstand Satan only by the blood of Jesus. All temptation, all discouragement, all spiritual numbness – all of it is overcome by the blood of the Lamb. His blood purifies us and covers it all. His blood drives out Satan, and all his works, and all his ways. For Jesus shed from his veins the lifeblood of God. And the life of God dispels death forever.

So rejoice, saints of God. Rejoice when you come to the altar of the Lord’s Supper. For here is where you find the holy, precious blood of the Lamb, that overcomes all evil. You receive his blood here to strengthen you for the fight. You partake of his victory in the church. And you proclaim his triumphant death until he comes again. “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... Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” Blessed are those who overcome by his blood. Amen.

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