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Feast of St. Michael and All Angels
25 September 2011

Grace-Trinity Lutheran Churches, Wichita
Dan 10:10-14; 12:1-3; Rev 12:7-12; Mt 18.1-10

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit

I. The World Above

There is a world that we cannot see; it's hidden from us.

Let's call it, "the World Above."

It isn't actually located any higher than us, or up in the clouds, but it is *heavenly*.

It's a world that's full of action, full of war, drama, joy, and laughter.

It's a world populated by angels.

In this angelic world things work a bit differently—
they have to, since angels don't have bodies!

They're spirits, without limits of space and time,

that's why one angel "can occupy a whole house or city;

and on the other hand, can be contained in a room, a drawer or box, yes, in a nutshell!"¹

And thousands of angels can all dance on the head of the same pin!

Now we don't know how many angels actually exist, the Scriptures at times say "myriads"—

which is simply the largest number the ancients knew to say: thousands upon thousands!

We're not told when they were created, but we do know that much—they're created!

They have intellect and will and great strength—

nothing like the angels on Hallmark cards; they're certainly not cute!

In this world above there is a hierarchy of angels.

There's *Cherubim* (Gen 3:24), *Seraphim* (Isa 6:2), and the *archangels* (1 Thess 4:16),
each with its own task and duties and powers.

Christian tradition tells us that there were six angels in particular who together made up an inner circle, the chief angels, the council of God.

The head angel, superior to all the others, the 'most venerable,' 'holy,' and 'glorious,'
is *Michael*.

Michael, or St. Michael, is the prince, the mighty warrior, the guardian and protector of man.

But who does he protect us from?

Well evil angels of course!

(Angels come both good and bad, ya know.)

While all angels were created good, some fell into sin by the lusts of their will for power.

We don't know exactly *when* this fall happened, but we hear and see glimpses of it all around.

This is the world above, a world of angels, a world of war between good and evil,

and all for our sake.

¹ Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics* II:178.

II. The World Below

And while all that goes on above, we're completely oblivious!

We're so stuck in "the world below" that we're blind to the angelic world all around us.

We're so limited by the here and now, by what we see, what we desire, what we crave,
that we cannot begin to comprehend the reality that exists in the World Above.

And with how busy things get, especially in September,
with school starting, Confirmation classes, football, hockey, soccer, you name it—
with all that demands our focus here in the world below,
thank God the Church remembers St. Michael and All Angels!

Because today, we're asked to stop and consider the World Above,
to take a breath, and hear of a reality that our day-to-day activities often forbid!

And today the World Above and the World Below collide!

III. Where They Meet

In our OT reading from Daniel we have a very unique picture of these two worlds.

A mysterious man says to Daniel,

"The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me 21 days, but Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I was left there with the kings of Persia" (10:13).

"The Prince of the kingdom of Persia..."

now that's not the title for Cyrus, the King of Persia,

it's the title of the demon, the evil angel who lives, moves, and acts within the King!

Here we see the two worlds colliding!

What the earthly king does, the king of the World Below,

is under the compulsion and guidance of the *prince*, the angel of the World Above.

When this happens,

when the angels take the flesh of men, possess them, teach them, rule them, guide them,

then their angelic war becomes war in the World Below,

then evil becomes palpable—you can see it and feel it.

When the princes of the heavenly world fight,

so also do we see its effects here on earth, in the world below.

But what does this battle mean?

And what does it mean for Michael to come to the rescue?

Well first, the battle is a battle not against “**flesh and blood,**” as St. Paul says,
“but against the rulers, authorities, the cosmic powers, and the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Eph 6:12)—
 that is, the battle is against the evil angels, against Satan and all his minions.

The reading from Revelation gives us a better picture here:

“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 they conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death” (Rev 12:7-9,11).

This is the real battle waged in the world above.

St. Michael has charge of the army,
 he’s the prince of the good angels,
 but the victory he wins isn’t by *his* power or might, *his* skill or intellect—
 the enemy is defeated
“by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony” (Rev 12:11).

Blood and Word – that sounds a lot like Christ!

IV. And How Christ Fits in!

In fact, Jesus is Himself the bridge between these two worlds.
 In Christ, the heavenly and the earthly meet—
 God and Man are One!

We see this Christ already in our text from Daniel today.
 The most important figure in this battle, isn’t Michael, who comes to help;
 it’s this mysterious man speaking with Daniel!

Starting with Dan 10:4, it says,
“On the 24th day of the 1st month, as I was standing on the bank of the great river (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. And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision” (Dan 10:4-7).

Who did Daniel see?

It was none other than the Son of God Himself!

The eternal Word, the everlasting Son, the Angel of the Lord—the pre-incarnate Christ!

And it was this 2nd Person of the Holy Trinity, before taking flesh born of Mary,
who was detained 21 days by the prince of Persia, Satan himself!

This vision that Daniel saw, the vision of the Son of God withstood by Satan,
is the vision of the crucifixion.

On the cross, the Christ was withstood,
even defeated, crucified, dead, and buried—
on the cross Satan thought his victory was won.

But the blood that was shed on that cross,
that poured from the hands and the feet and the wound in His side,
was the same blood St. Michael used to defeat Satan once and for all!

This blood, and this Word of forgiveness, is where the World Above and the World Below meet.

It's in this blood, in this Word, that the angelic war is finished, and our sins are forgiven.

And so it's in this blood we find our own life, our own victory over Satan and his fallen angels!

Today the World Above comes to the World Below,
heaven stoops down to earth,
and the Truth and reality of God's victory in Christ come to you—
sins are forgiven by the blood of the Lamb and the testimony of the Word.

And it all comes to you!

It comes even to baby Micah, washed now in the blood of the Lamb and the testimony of sins forgiven!

It comes to you, at this altar,
where the body that hung on the cross, and the blood that poured from His wounds,
is given to you for your life, your peace, your victory.

In the world above,
Satan is defeated by Michael and his angels, proclaiming the victory of cross;
in the world below,
Satan is defeated by the water of Holy Baptism, the Bread and Wine of Holy
Communion, and the words of forgiveness proclaimed from this pulpit.

In Christ, the world above and the world below meet—
salvation is won, Satan defeated, and you are free!

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit