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Feast of St. Michael and All Angels
3 October 2010

Grace and Trinity Lutheran Churches, Wichita
Dan 10:10-14; 12:1-3; Rev 12:7-12; Lk 10.17-20

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

The altar's covered with white paraments.

The cross led our procession into Divine Service.

And our hymns, prayers, and readings speak of angels, demons, and war!

What the heck's going on today?

Today the Church celebrates the Feast of St. Michael and All Angels;

A day the Church has been celebrating since about the 5th century—

And the Lutherans never quite gave it up!

In fact, the hymn we just sang (522), written specifically for today,

Was written by the same man who penned the Augsburg Confession—

What makes us Lutherans.

Today's a day to commemorate a battle, or better, a war—

A war between good and evil,

Life and death,

Heaven and hell.

It's not your typical Sunday!

This is what we call a "Feast Day," a celebration, a day set apart from the normal "seasons."

You're already familiar with other "Feast Days,"

like Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, and so forth.

But there are other Feasts that the Church celebrates and has celebrated for a long, long time.

Feasts like the Circumcision and Naming of Jesus (Jan 1st), or

The Annunciation (Mar 25th) when the angel Gabriel first told Mary about Jesus.

Or, probably more familiar, All Saints' Day (Nov 1st).

(If you're interested in other Feasts and Festivals the Church celebrates, have a look at the introduction to your hymnals, pages x-xi.)

And just as the colors change with each season of the Church year (green, blue, white, purple, and red), so also on the Feast days—that's why today is white.

Today is the day of St. Michael and All Angels—

a good question to ask is "why celebrate the angels?"

St. Michael is an angel; though not one of those fat, cute, cherubs you'll see on Hallmark cards!

He's an angel of great might and strength—head of all the other angels.

You might say he's second in command to our Lord.

He serves the Lord day and night, defending His Church from the evil one,

“the great dragon, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world...the accuser of [the saints].” (Rev 12:9-10)

Yes, Satan is real.

The serpent in the garden who deceived Adam and Eve, leading them astray from God’s Word,
 who tested faithful Job, taking his family, possessions, and health away from him,
 and who accuses us still of our sin, is real.

We often wonder how Satan got in the garden in the first place—
 The Lord certainly didn’t create Him as the deceiver and accuser.
 So how’d he get there?

Satan was one of the Lord’s angels, one of His messengers and servants (*Angel* in Greek and Hebrew simply means messenger).

He would gather in the company of the Lord just like all the others and do what the Lord sent him to do.

But when Satan caught wind of the Lord’s plan—
 the plan of exalting *man*, the one intended to receive all the gifts of God—
 His anger and jealousy poured out into fierce rage;
 He hated this *man*!

He wanted all the gifts.

He wanted to be exalted, praised, worshiped, and *like the Most High* (Isa 14:13-14).

He wanted the glory that our Lord now planned to give man.

And so he waged war on heaven, taking by force what *he* thought was rightly *his own*.

But then he met Michael, St. Michael, the arch-angel—
 prince of Heaven, defender of our Lord, the chief of angels—Michael.

Oh, and how he fell!

Today’s readings give us glimpses into this war, and no more.
 We don’t know how many angels were lost in the fight.
 We don’t know how many men were at stake either.
 We don’t even know when this war actually happened!

What we do know is the result:

Satan, that ancient and wicked dragon was cast down from heaven (Rev 12:9).
 And it was Michael and his angels who triumphed.

But now, for those of you filling out the “Sermon Notes,”
 what good is a sermon on St. Michael and the defeat of Satan, if Jesus isn’t mentioned?

In fact, what good is a “Feast Day” or a “Festival” that doesn’t let *Jesus* do the verbs?

And what sort of Church service can carry on without our hearing the Gospel of sins forgiven for the sake of Christ crucified?

And now we get to the heart of why the Church remembers St. Michael and All his Angels—
They're here for Christ.

They're *His* servants, His messengers—doing *His* will as *He* pleases.

Yes, St. Michael is *all about Jesus*.

Hear again the reading from Revelation:

And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "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" (Rev 12:10-11)

Did you catch that?

Did you notice *how* Michael, the great Prince (Dan 10:13), conquered Satan?

It was *by the blood of the Lamb!* By the *preaching* of the Lamb!
That's Jesus!

Remember the call of St. John the Baptist,

"Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (Jn 1:29)
(we call that the *Agnus Dei*).

Jesus is the Lamb, the slain lamb, the lamb who takes away the sin of the world—
and it's His *blood* that conquers Satan.

However, in our Gospel today Jesus said,

"I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven..." (Lk 10:18).

That's past tense, it happened already.

This is what makes today such a unique day—

it speaks and delivers something entirely otherworldly!

"All our thinking is in terms of place and time,"¹ past, present, and future.

But angels aren't bound by such strict rules;
And neither is our Lord!

The blood of Jesus Christ and the preaching of His crucifixion is what defeats Satan.

A war between angels and demons waged outside of time is decided by an event within time.

¹ Norman Nagel, *Selected Sermons of Norman Nagel*, 294.

That's why the cross is such a big deal—it has cosmic consequences!
 That's why St. Paul knew nothing but *Christ and Him crucified* (1 Cor. 1:23).

The death of Jesus on the cross was the death of *God* upon the cross!
 The infinite God brought Himself to a finite end and died.

This is what Satan thought he wanted all along—the death of *man*.
 He started with Adam and worked his way through all of creation—
 until finally, he got the One he wanted all along.

But what Satan didn't realize 'til it was too late, was that the death of *this Man*,
 is precisely what God wanted for His people all along.

The death of this *man* means the end of Satan, death, and sin.
 It means that man can now receive all that God intended from the beginning—
 Forgiveness, life, and salvation.

And it's the blood shed from this man's death that Michael and his angels used to defeat Satan;
 And the same goes for the Lord's messengers today.

St. Michael and his angels are all about *Jesus*—
 The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

And while we can't understand angels entirely,
 or what life is like outside the limits of time,
 We're closest to the angels when we do what they do:
 Gather around the preaching and handing out of the blood of the lamb.

And the angels are happiest in their Divine Service, their worship.
 And so, as we celebrate the victory of our God—
 the Lamb who was slain for the sins the world,
 defeating Satan and his army,
 We join *with angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven,*
ever more praising You and saying: Holy, Holy, Holy Lord...

As we celebrate the Lord's Supper, we celebrate *His* victory—
 The victory that St. Michael and his angels gained by the blood of the lamb and the
 preaching of the same—
 Knowing that all of this was done for you.

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