

Sermon for the Feast of St Michael and All Angels Trinity and Trinity September 29, 2024

Text: Luke 10:17-20

In the holy Name of Jesus, *Amen*.

The disciples' joy was misplaced. Like the twelve apostles, Jesus sent the seventy-two into the towns and villages He would soon enter. They were to prepare His way. They proclaimed to people that the kingdom of God was upon them. They healed the sick. And when they return to their Lord they joyfully report that **"Even the demons are subject to us in your name!"**

In the Name of Jesus they preached, and at that Name the demons fled. The disciples marvel that God would give such authority to men. They are overjoyed that when the Gospel, the good news that Christ is near and God's kingdom upon us, is preached, the demons retreat and the kingdom of Satan overrun.

Jesus doesn't say their joy is bad. Satan and his demons really were overpowered by their message. He says, **"I saw Satan fall like lighting from heaven."** An even better translation would be, "I saw Satan falling like lighting from heaven." Jesus isn't talking about when Satan was cast from God's presence when he rebelled. Jesus is talking about when the seventy-two preached. When the Gospel was proclaimed and when the seventy-two cast demons out of the afflicted in the Name of Jesus, Satan fell like lighting. Satan exalts himself as ruler of this world. He desires to rule over the hearts of men. But where Christ is preached Satan is toppled. His power is revealed to be a sham. He's no match for the true Almighty, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus entrusts the Church with authority, that means the right to use power. He gives the Church the Gospel, His mighty word of power, and charges the Church to wield its power—to preach! His word is powerful and drives away the devil. Thus Jesus says to the disciples, **"Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you."** Where the Gospel is preached in its truth, Satan will fall and his kingdom crumble. Jesus tells the disciples that by entrusting the Gospel to them, He has given them authority, He has authorized them, to trample over Satan's kingdom and sweep away all his tricks and powers. Serpents and scorpions, venomous creatures, are symbolic of every evil thing Satan would use to hurt the saints of God, whether he use the beasts of the field, or men, or his demons, or plagues, or any other threat or peril. Jesus says that His disciples will conquer every power of the enemy and they shall not be hurt. They'll win every time. He's not saying that they will be spared physical suffering or pain. But He promises that Satan will be powerless to hurt them eternally and rob them off their faith and salvation.

These words of Jesus apply most directly to all pastors who preach the Gospel today. They are given the authority by Jesus to preach the Gospel. The Gospel drives away

Sermon for the Feast of St Michael and All Angels Trinity and Trinity September 29, 2024

Satan, tramples his every plan underfoot, and renders him powerless. They also apply to every Christian who speaks the word in his vocation. Where the Gospel prevails, Satan is cast down.

The Gospel is powerful! The disciples saw that and rejoiced. But Jesus doesn't want them to simply to rejoice that the Gospel they preach conquers Satan. It does. He doesn't want us to focus on how with Christ we are fellow conquerors of Satan. We are. We can be thankful and joyful for these things. But remember what's most important! Jesus redirects the disciples' joy. He says, **"Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."** Rejoice not in the Gospel's power over Satan. But rejoice in the Gospel's power over you.

Today we keep the feast of St Michael and All Angels. On St Michael's day, the Church reminds herself that God uses the angels with Michael their captain to conquer Satan. The Church is part of that battle and shares in the victory. Our reading from Revelation depicts the invisible spiritual battle we cannot see. Our Gospel teaches us about our part in this victory we can see—the preaching of the Gospel here on earth. Satan is defeated and God triumphant. At this the angels rejoice.

But the angels have a greater joy. They do not simply rejoice that they share in share in God's glorious victory over Satan. Their joy is not simply that God has given them authority to destroy the demons and made them more powerful than Satan's hosts. Their joy is greater. They share in the joy of God in this—that sinners enter into heaven through the blood of the lamb.

God in His love has written our names in heaven. To bring us to heaven He sends His Son to pay for our sins. His Son pours out His Spirit on the Apostles to preach to the ends of the earth this glorious proclamation, that though you are a poor, miserable sinner in the eyes of God, though the desires of your heart, the words of lips, the works of your hands are offense before heaven, a Lamb has been slain. His innocent heart, His silent lips, His holy work and crimson blood cover your transgressions and cleanse your evil heart.

St Peter tells us that this is the mystery the angels desire to peer into. Their great delight is to comprehend the depths of love within the Lord God's heart revealed in the work of Jesus Christ. They are present to rejoice when these glad tidings are proclaimed to men.

The angels rejoice when a sinner repents. When you, sinner, feel the weight of God's wrath over your sin, when you put aside all your excuses and acknowledge what you've done, when you think of your filthy words, your abominable deeds, your gross failures, from childhood to present, when you fall to your knees under the great guilt weighing upon your conscience and say, "Yes, Lord! I am guilty before heaven and men. Against you, you only I have sinned and done this evil in your sight. You are just Lord,

Sermon for the Feast of St Michael and All Angels Trinity and Trinity September 29, 2024

in your judgement damning me for my sins. But a Lamb, O Lord was slain, and His blood, O Lord God, pleads, and to that Lamb, O Lord, I flee—then and there the angels rejoice, for you, though a sinner, are declared forgiven and just in the eyes of God because you believe the Gospel, the glad tiding that Jesus is the propitiation for your sins. He offers forgiveness and assures you that your name is written in heaven. This Gospel is the power of God unto salvation, the sinner's salvation, your salvation.

So rejoice in the Gospel's power over you. The Gospel's power over Satan is wonderful—it banishes Satan from heaven. But it's power over your heart is more glorious still—it brings you into heaven. The Gospel declares you free from sin and fit for heaven. Through the Gospel, the Spirit is powerful to create faith in your heart where there was no faith.

Rejoice with the angels that this is so. When glad tidings of great joy for all people are spoken the angels cry out, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, goodwill toward men." That's what you sing when the Gospel is preached to you. You join in angelic song when you sing with the angels, the archangels and all the company of heaven, "Holy, holy, holy," as you approach the Lamb slain come to this altar. The forgiveness, the salvation, the life, given here is your joy.

The angels rejoice that it's given to you. They watch over you throughout your life. They shield you from harm, for their joy is to guard and keep what the Lamb, their Lord, purchased with His lifeblood. And at the last when comes your end, they gather round to bear you up and in to Abraham's bosom where your eyes too will finally behold what they see always—the Lord God and the Lamb slain.

In the holy Name of Jesus, *Amen.*