

Grace, mercy, and peace be yours in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen. The title for today’s sermon is “*War in Heaven*” and is from the Epistle reading, Revelation chapter 12. Let us pray...Amen.

The first verse of today’s Epistle reading is shocking. “**Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back**”(Revelation 12:7). The idea of war in heaven is more than just a little baffling or confusing; it defies the imagination. That there could be war in heaven is unthinkable: it is completely out of place. The angels sang at Jesus’ birth, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace”(Luke 2:14). On Palm Sunday, as Jesus entered Jerusalem the people sang out, “Peace in heaven and glory in the highest”(Luke 19:38). They sang about peace and glory in heaven. Christ was born to bring peace to the earth, and through His death and resurrection He was about to bring peace in heaven.(Brighton, *Revelation*, p.333)

Now, the thought of warfare in heaven just does not seem right. Yet, God’s Word here is as clear as a bell. Often this ‘war’ gets overlooked because of everything else going on in this chapter of Revelation. With all the talk of the dragon, and the woman, and the Child, the war in heaven is overlooked. Still, God’s Word doesn’t lie: there was war in heaven.

But what would this heavenly warfare look like? Well, it is not a physical struggle for supremacy. Instead, “The warfare in heaven must be interpreted as a spiritual struggle in which the dragon attempts to displace the Christ Child, the victorious Lamb who was slain, in order to establish himself again in the presence of God as the prince of angels and as the one who has dominion over humanity on earth, and specifically as the one who has authority to stand before God and accuse people for their sins.”(Brighton, 333) Since Satan had God’s ear to accuse people of their sins, he did not want to let this power go.

And so, at the center of this war in heaven is Satan’s ability to stand before God and accuse the saints of God of their sins. This is a war of words. Satan had enjoyed the opportunity to accuse the saints of their sins. We read about a few of these accusations in Job, chapters one and two, and in Zechariah, chapter 3. The devil could stand before God and say; ‘*Look at those wretched sinful people. You created them and You love them, but they despise You. They reject Your laws. They break Your commandments. They completely ignore You. There is nothing good in them. They rebel against You. They fornicate with other gods and loathe You. God Almighty, You proclaimed the wages of sin is death – eternal condemnation – so stay true to Your Word God and unleash Your full wrath on these no good for anything sinners. Give them what they deserve and damn them all to the eternal fires of hell!*’ . . . and really, are Satan’s accusations all that wrong. It is not just those other sinners he talks about, but we sinners gathered here today.

The truth of the matter is Satan wants you personally dead, along with all mankind, and for everyone to be forever separated from the love of God in Christ. Satan does not want you or anyone else to be saved. He wants everyone share in share in his eternal torment in the fires of hell.

Also, this warfare of words is deadly serious. If Satan’s accusations were validated in the heavenly court, then God’s justice would require God to even deny His own people, including you and me.

So God took upon Himself and fulfilled what was required to save His creation because none of us could save ourselves. This work of redemption was not easy and the price was not cheap. God had to give up His only Son, to take on our sinful flesh, to carry our sins and be our sacrificial Lamb, for Him to pour out His blood to cover all our sins, and for Christ to be slaughtered for our sins by God’s righteous wrath. And Jesus did just that; He died for you. In His dying breath He proclaimed “It Is Finished!” and His work to satisfy God’s justice for our sins was satisfied. Your sins paid for. The accuser’s words silenced.

Then, after Jesus died, He did the unimaginable; on the third day Christ Jesus rose from the dead and proclaimed His victory and the salvation in His name alone. He went to His disciples and other believers and they saw Him. Then, after 40 days Jesus ascended into heaven, and war arose in heaven; Satan and his demons on one side; Michael and God’s angels on the other. John records, “**Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back,** ⁸ **but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven.** ⁹ **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.**”(Revelation 12:7-9) God’s holy angels forever removed Satan from heaven.

Chapters 12-14 of the Book of Revelation visually explain to John why the events on the earth are happening. What is played out before John’s eyes is nothing less than a cosmic battle between God and Satan. The battle begins in heaven after Christ’s ascension but then drops down to earth. The battle between God and Satan is the source and cause of warfare between God’s people on earth and the forces of evil. John saw the expulsion of Satan and his demons from heaven when Christ ascended. Jesus foretold this event to His disciples in today’s Gospel when He said, “**I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.**”(Luke 10:18) Now, in the ‘little time’ Satan and the demons have left before Christ’s return, they are set to raise hell on earth and to do anything within their power to draw as many as possible away from Christ and His salvation and directly into hell.

But, Christ already won this cosmic battle through His blood and death on the cross of Calvary. Christ is victorious, and all who believe in Jesus share in His victory. There is no victory apart from Christ; there is no salvation apart from the Lamb; there is no forgiveness apart from Jesus blood shed on the cross. There is no eternal life apart from the resurrection of Christ. Apart from Christ there is only accusation and condemnation. To paraphrase C.S. Lewis’s book “*The Screwtape Letters*”, ‘*those who do not believe in Christ ARE dinner in hell for the devil and the demons to tear apart and devour.*’ There is no middle ground.

So this is why Jesus says He came: “**For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.** ¹⁷ **For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.** ¹⁸ **Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.**”(John 3:16-18) Jesus words are clear, those who do not have condemned themselves.

But in Christ, and because of Christ, there is salvation! The reason Satan was kicked out of heaven is because there was no room for both the accuser and the Saviour. Satan’s accusations are made null and void because of Christ and His victory. Jesus earned the right to

represent the fallen humanity; He is the one **“who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood.”**(Revelation 1:5) Therefore the accusations of Satan are all thrown out of the heavenly court, and Satan himself is thrown out of heaven. Because of the rightful claim of Christ to represent you and all God’s people with His own sinlessness and righteousness, the very presence of Satan in heaven was now an offense to God and the rest of the heavenly host.(Brighton 333)

So, on this St. Michael and All Angels Day, we remember the victory of the archangel Michael and the good angels over Satan and his evil angels. The good angels hurled Satan and his demons out of heaven to earth. On this day we also remember the angel Gabriel who proclaimed the good news to Mary that she would give birth to the Savior of the world. We also celebrate the work of the other angels, God’s messengers, who are often sent to guard and protect God’s people (Psalm 91:11–12) and to serve them (Hebrews 1:14). Jesus Himself knew the ministry of angels in times of temptation in the desert and Gethsemane (Matthew 4:11; Luke 22:43).

But most of all, on this day we remember the One to whom Michael, Gabriel and the rest of the angels bow in humble adoration; to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Angels are the messengers and faithful servants of God. They are the ones who continue to do His work and to sing His praises. They point directly to the Lamb, Jesus Christ, the One who shed His blood to save you from the accuser and to redeem you life.

So, when Satan fires his flaming accusations at you, you can boldly reply; ‘I am God’s own child because I am baptized into Christ! Christ’s victorious over sin, death, and even the devil was given to me in Holy Baptism. There God made me His own and covered me with Christ’s righteousness. God continues to come to me to strengthen my faith in Him by the Holy Spirit working through His Word. Jesus also invites me to His Supper to receive and dine on His own body and blood, broken and poured out for me, for the forgiveness of all my sins. All this He freely gives me, without any merit or worthiness in me.’

So, in the words of Paul, **“What then shall we say to these *accusations*? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? . . . No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**(Romans 8:31-35, 37-39) Thanks be to God! Amen!

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