

Vicar Kinney – Risen Savior Lutheran Church
Sermon for the Feast of Saint Michael and All Angels, Anno Domini 2019



Angels and demons: one of the most commonly discussed but misunderstood doctrines of the Scriptures. *What is an angel? How many are there? How do I become one? Where did they come from? What about guardian angels? What about demons? Is any of this even real?*

So many questions arise when the topic of angels and demons comes up. So, on this feast of St Michael and All Angels, it is appropriate for us to think about some of these things.

First, the name *angel* just means messenger. They are the countless, heavenly servants of God. Angels are transcendent, celestial, sinless, very powerful beings who do God's will without second thought. Angels are part of creation and are not to be worshipped (Rev 19:10, 22:8-9; Synod of Laodicea, Canon 35). We know they were created sometime in the 6 days of creation – we are just unsure about which day.

An important note is that Christians do not become angels when we die. We do not become an immaterial spirit –that would actually be a downgrade from our human condition – but we receive a resurrected human body.

Jesus did not become an angel, He did not die for angels, and He does not give angels His Body and Blood to eat and drink.

He became like you, He died for you, and He gives you His Body and Blood.

They behold him, but they do not share flesh and blood with Him. They know Him, but He does not dwell in them, or impart to them His own divine nature. They live forever before Him, but the source of their life is not His holy body and precious blood that redeems, forgives, and sanctifies us, poor sinners.

Humans are the highest of God's creation and it is the angels who serve us.

Then there are demons – fallen angels. Demons, and even Satan himself, were also at one time angels of God. Isaiah (14), speaks of the time when Satan sought to **raise his own throne above God and make himself like the Most High**. And as Revelation says today, a

war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon (Satan). And the dragon and his angels (demons) fought back, but Satan 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.

This is the rebellion of heaven and this is what Jesus references when He says that **I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven (Luke 10:18)**. We are not exactly sure when this rebellion took place but we know that it happened sometime after the creation of man and before the fall into sin. After this rebellion, the angels of God were confirmed in the good and the demons were confirmed in evil. This means that they are already eternally judged. (Matt 25:41).

The Scriptures also teach that there are even Ranks of the Angels of God – you even just sang it in the hymn in the procession.

Seraphim, *the flaming ones*, are those who dwell closest to the throne. We see them in Isaiah (6) singing the *Sanctus*. And throughout the Scriptures, we see elsewhere that they surround the throne of God with fire (Ex 24:17; Dan 7:9; Heb 12:29).

Cherubim, are those who guarded the garden of Eden (Genesis 3:24) and dwelt above the ark of the covenant (ex 25:17-22). No, Cherubim are not cute naked angel babies with wings and harps – those do not exist.

Thrones serve as the actual and angelic thrones, or wheels, upon which the Godhead resides. We meet these angels in Ezekiel (1 and 10) and Daniel (7), and Paul also speak of them in Colossians (1).

Then in our hymn we see **Dominions, Princedoms, Powers, and Virtues**. St Paul speaks of all of these in his letter to the Ephesians, but only briefly so we know very little about them.

Then we come to **Angels** – those with whom we are most familiar and who God has given the most interaction with humanity. The prophet Zechariah teaches that they serve as God’s celestial ambassadors who patrol the earth (Zechariah 1:10–11), do the will of God and even carry out some of His judgements (Ex 12:23 Acts 12). They heralded the birth and resurrection of Christ, they attend to Him after His temptation in the wilderness (Matt 4:11) and during His agony in the garden (Luke 22:43), and Revelation teaches that they constantly offer prayers, hymns, and incense in the heavenly Liturgy (Rev 4,5, 8). Then of course our Gospel today teaches that each and every baptized soul has a guardian angel who sees the face of the Father (Matt 18:10). Each one of you has a personal guardian angel. He prays for you, he watches over you, and he fights for you.

Finally, **Archangels**. **Gabriel** who is given the high task of heralding the birth of John the Baptist, the final prophet and addressing the Mother of God in the Annunciation (Luke 1). **Michael**, whom our readings especially address today, is of great

importance. It is he in Revelation who leads God's armies against Satan and casts them out of heaven and it is he in Daniel who is called one of the chief princes who has been entrusted with the protection of the Church. He is the commander of God's armies and therefore, serving Christ, and conquering **by the blood of the Lamb**, he is your protector and the defender of the Church against Satan and his demons.

So, then there is the question of these demons. We certainly see these fallen angels in the Scriptures and we see that their only purpose is to wage spiritual war against the Church, cause the Christian to sin and live an isolated and joyless life, and destroy the Gospel. Make no mistake, demons are very much alive and demonic possession is as real as ever.

In fact, the 1973 movie, *the Exorcist*, is actually based on an exorcism that happened at our own St Louis Seminary in 1949.

But certainly, it looks different in different places. In Africa where rocks and trees and rivers are worshipped, outright demonic possession is very common and normal. You have the foaming at the mouth, speaking in tongues, supernatural strength and knowledge, etc etc. It happens in the US *sometimes*, like at the seminary in 49, but we don't often see that here because the demons are not stupid. They know that if they do that in the US then the person will just be medicated and put into an asylum. Rather they use different means to possess

and oppress. They use pornography, abortion, technology, abusive homes, addiction, isolation, and through these they act like a quiet cancer that cannot be detected until it is too late. While it looks different in different places, make no mistake that demon possession and oppression happen even today. And when you allow pornography in your home, or you pretend that abortion isn't a satanic evil, or when you insist on living a bitter and isolated life without joy, you open up the door and invite the demons right in.

"So that is all well and good, but why does the feast of St Michael and all angels matter?"

First it matters because if your name is Michael, Michelle, or Michaela, today is your name day.

Next, it matters because from now on, every single day of the year will be shorter and every night will be longer. This is like a cosmological reminder to us of the growing darkness in this world and how much we need St. Michael's protection.

It matters because God has given you the gift of angels to fight for you, pray for you, strengthen your faith, and point you to Christ.

It matters because there is an entire transcendent reality that you cannot see but it exists nonetheless.

You confess it every time in the Nicene creed “I believe in one God who has made all things visible and invisible. This invisible is the transcendent reality of angels, demons, and spiritual warfare...it’s not talking about the Wi-Fi

It matters because Satan is unceasingly and tirelessly waging war against the Church, he knows about all of your secret sins, **accuses you day and night before our God** and tells you that you deserve death and hell. So, when Satan throws your sins in your face and declares that you deserve death and hell, through your sins back in his face and tell him: "I admit that I deserve death and hell, what of it? For I know One who suffered and made satisfaction on my behalf. His name is Jesus Christ, Son of God, and where He is there I shall be also!"

When he comes to you with temptations and vices because he knows you so well, you can confidently look him in the face and tell him “The Holy Cross is my Light and you, dragon, are not my guide. So get behind me Satan! You only speak of vanities and evil are the things of which you speak. Drink your own poison!"

It matters because... As we participate in this Divine Liturgy on earth, we worship with the angels and add our voices to theirs as we take part in their heavenly Liturgy (Hebrews 12:22). They are the true worship leaders. They taught the Church the *Gloria* and *This is the feast*, they wrote the *Sanctus*, and they eternally sing the *Agnus Dei*. They

rejoice when you repent (Luke 15:10) and they bow their head in reverence as you receive the Body and Blood of Him whom they serve.

It matters because spiritual warfare still wages among us and St Michael still fights for you. It matters because your guardian angel still protects you and demons still seek to devour you. It matters because when you were baptized, the cross was tattooed on your forehead and your heart, marking you as one redeemed by Christ. And that sign of the cross reminds the demons that you are their target and it reminds the angels to protect you.

It matters because if you want to be a Christian then it means constant spiritual warfare, where you fight alongside the angels. So when you leave this place, keep fighting. **Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.**

Fight vice with virtue;

 fight doubt with faith;

 fight temptation and sin with prayer and fasting;

 fight apathy with love;

 fight weakness with fortitude;

 fight foolishness with wisdom;

and fight this sinful world with the sanctified life that God has called you to live.

 As true as God's own word is true

 Not death nor hell's satanic crew against us shall prevail.

 Their might a joke, a mere façade,

 God is with us, and we with God

 Our victory cannot fail (*LSB 666*)

As you enter into the fray to **fight the good fight**, know that the **blood of the Lamb** covers you and has already conquered for you, that your guardian angel prays for you, and that Michael and his angels fight for you and you fight alongside them. So, suit up and join the fight.

To God be all Glory forever and ever. Amen.