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SERMON ON ST. MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS

SEPT. 24, 2015

by Albert B. Collver III

“Rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

(LUKE 10:20)

THE READINGS APPOINTED FOR THIS EVENING, for St. Michael and All Angels, are written to give us certainty in an uncertain world. The readings appointed for today, especially the Gospel reading, give us certainty about our future. In the readings, we are told that Satan and his evil angels will be defeated. The Lord, through His servant Michael and his angels, will defeat Satan and his cohorts. Victory is certain. The Lord’s enemies will be defeated. When we look around the world today and see war, poverty, suffering, disease and death, sometimes it doesn’t seem as if the Lord has obtained victory. If the Lord has won the war, why are there so many hardships and problems in our world? Yet even though there are times when our security in this life seems uncertain, rest assured that your Lord has obtained victory over His enemies. Satan is defeated. Your future is certain with the Lord.

Today many people deny that Satan and evil spirits exist. In Africa it is a little different. Once on a trip to Africa, a group of us were driving to church on Sunday morning with the bishop. Suddenly, the tire on the vehicle went flat. The bishop got out of the van and said, “The devil is trying to thwart our celebration of the holy day.” I got out of the car and looked and thought to myself, “No, a nail in the tire is trying to ruin the holy day.” Yet you see, the bishop was exactly correct. The devil desires nothing more than for us to curse or swear falsely in God’s name. He desires nothing more than to cause us to forget to thank and praise God in worship. In Africa, the Christians can more readily see the working of the evil one, while in the West we would tend to regard the

perspective of the bishop who saw the devil’s activity in the flat tire as superstitious.

On the other hand, angels and all things about them tend to be pretty popular. Most Westerners do not need to be convinced that angels exist. Unfortunately, many ideas about angels do not agree with the Scriptures. The

readings for today speak clearly on the existence of Satan and his evil hosts. They also speak about the role of angels. Angels are the Lord’s messengers who proclaim His Word. No angel would ever speak anything contrary to Holy Scripture. The angels, in fact, fight Satan with the Lord’s Word. When Satan was cast down out of heaven, the text from Revelation says, “They have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their

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Baptism; live daily in the
forgiveness of sins. Do
not live as if you were not
baptized, for your Lord
bought you with a price.
In your Baptism, your Lord
Jesus gave you a certain
thing. He wrote your name
in heaven.

testimony” (Rev. 12:11). Satan and his evil angels are defeated not with the sword or battle tactics as we understand war strategy, but they are defeated by the blood of Jesus and His Word. The angels of God didn’t defeat Satan because of their own might, their power or their greater numbers. They didn’t defeat Satan because of their better war tactics. You see, the angels of God are merely the instruments He used to defeat Satan; the angels proclaimed Christ’s Word and Satan was defeated.

Satan is still defeated today by the Word of God just as St. Michael and his angels defeated him with the Lord’s Word. Every time the Lord’s Word is preached in truth and purity Satan is defeated. Satan is the accuser who speaks against us. The Lord’s Word silences his mouth and casts him from heaven so he can no longer accuse you before the Lord’s throne. In the Gospel lesson, Jesus said, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven” (Luke 10:18). Jesus said this in response to the preaching of the

72 disciples. These 72 disciples were sent out by Jesus to proclaim the arrival of the kingdom of God in His name. Demons were cast out in Christ's name. Satan's kingdom was literally being torn apart by the preaching of Christ.

Jesus also told His disciples that they would have authority over all the power of the enemy. This power Jesus speaks of is His Word that conquerors Satan. His disciples would tread over snakes and scorpions. Yet we do not hear in the Gospels that the disciples trampled over snakes and scorpions. In the Book of Acts, we do hear how St. Paul was bitten by a poisonous viper and lived. Jesus wasn't only talking about the snakes and scorpions that wander the earth. His word to trample over snakes and scorpions isn't a license to tempt God. We shouldn't bring a bunch of poisonous snakes into church to test whether or not the members have enough faith not to get bitten or enough faith to survive a deadly bite. When Jesus told His disciples they had authority over snakes and scorpions, He was telling them that they had authority over Satan and his demons because of His name. Just as our Lord Jesus had authority over the snake, Satan, the Great Dragon, Jesus, protects us from the snake. He can no longer hurt us. When the serpent led our parents Adam and Eve into sin, the Lord God promised a deliverer. He promised that one would come who would crush the head of the serpent (Gen. 3:15). When Jesus suffered and died on the cross, Satan was defeated. Jesus' death crushed the head of the serpent; Satan's power over us was destroyed. Jesus' blood shed on the cross defeated Satan.

The most comforting words Jesus speaks to us are recorded in the Gospel lesson for today: "Rejoice that your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20). This is a sure thing; it is something you can count on no matter what life throws your way. Your Lord Jesus guarantees and secures that your name is written in heaven. Your future is certain, for your Lord has told you that your name is written in heaven. This word from your Lord silences Satan's lying accusations. When Satan harasses you, introducing doubt into your mind, remember the promise your Lord made to you: "Your name is written in heaven." Your Lord's Word will drive Satan away. Believe and trust in your Lord's promise that your name is written in heaven; this gives you the hope to endure whatever insecurities

and troubles you face in this life. While your temporal life on earth may be uncertain at times, your eternal life in heaven has been secured for you. It is a sure thing.

How can you be certain that your name is written in heaven? Quite simply, because Jesus has told you so. Jesus told you that your name was written in heaven when you were baptized. Everyone who believes and is baptized shall be saved, and Baptism now saves you. In your Baptism, Christ Himself baptized you through the instrumentality of His called servant. There Christ washed away your sins. There He put His name upon you; there the sign of the cross was placed upon your head and upon your heart, for you were baptized into His cross. At your Baptism, Christ became your brother. He shares in your sufferings and you share in His glory. The suffering, insecurities and troubles we face in this life pale in comparison to the glory Christ will share with us. At your Baptism, Christ Himself wrote your name in heaven.

Each and every day remember your Baptism; remember what Christ has done for you. When you witness a Baptism into the name of the Holy Trinity, rejoice that another name has been added to the kingdom of heaven. Rejoice that your Lord has done this for you out of his great mercy. Cling to your Lord's promises, "But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book" (Daniel 12:1). Because your name is written in heaven, your Lord will deliver you from this vale of tears to "shine like the brightness of the sky above... like the stars forever and ever" (Daniel 12:3).

Live daily in your Baptism; live daily in the forgiveness of sins. Do not live as if you were not baptized, for your Lord bought you with a price. In your Baptism, your Lord Jesus gave you a certain thing. He wrote your name in heaven. May your Lord's promise to you give you hope and comfort in the midst of life's uncertainties. In your Lord's name your future is certain; the enemy has been defeated.

Go in peace. Amen.

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