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“Satan’s Name Out; Yours In”

Text: Daniel 10:10-14; 12:1-3; Revelation 12:7-12; Luke 10:17-20

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

It is strange to think of *war in heaven*. For heaven is the place of God, the place of perfection and goodness and peace. But war there was, when satan and those with him rebelled against God. But this was not a war fought by God - *not yet*, at least. This war, we heard today, was fought by Michael and his angels at the command of God. They defeated *the great dragon, the ancient serpent, called the devil and satan*, cast him and his angels out of heaven and down to the earth. There was *no longer any place for them in heaven*. For no evil can be in the place of all goodness. No rebellion in the place of all peace.

We would like to know more about this strange war, what exactly happened, what it was all about. Many have speculated about it, some saying that satan’s rebellion was his pride in wanting to be God and dethrone Him. The creature rebelling against his Creator. We rebellious creatures know something about that. Others think that satan was appalled at the thought of the incarnation, at the thought of God becoming man to save men, and so loathed and despised God and His love. We know something about that too, when we get angry at God or even hate God for the goodness and blessings He gives to others and not to us; when He seems quick to help others and slow to help us; others maybe we consider unworthy of such grace. From our perspective, anyhow, these seem like possibilities for what started this rebellion and war.

But we are not told exactly what happened. Like with the question: *If God knows everything and therefore knew this rebellion would take place, why did He create these angels in the first place?* these are not things given us to know; these are answers not provided. It is simply for us to know that these things - however strange they may be - took place.

And to know this too: that these evil, rebellious angels who lost the war in heaven, **are now here**, and they are full of wrath. They have not love, for love is of God. They are full of wrath - still against God, but now also against you. You who belong to God, his enemy. You, whose names are *written in the book*; whose *names are written in heaven*. Satan’s name has been removed from that heavenly guest book. He no longer has a place there nor can get in. But not so you. Your name is written there, by the hand of God himself. By the hand of your Saviour, once attached to the cross. His hand that baptized you into His Name, into His family, and gave you of His Spirit. *You have* a place in heaven, a mansion prepared for you (John 14:2-3). You will receive a royal welcome. And

for that, satan hates you. More than you know or could imagine. And so he is still fighting - fighting the war against God by fighting against you. Trying to take you captive. Trying to remove you too from that heavenly guest book.

Do not underestimate him. Like any good commander, he fights against you on multiple fronts - some you can see and some you cannot; some you know and some you know not. Not only with force but also with deception will he strike, and you might even find yourself agreeing with him from time to time. Though if you knew it was him, you surely wouldn't, right? But when you think God illogical, when you think God's not really doing things right, when you think this sin or that won't hurt you and really doesn't matter, when you rebel against your parents and other authorities, when you find yourself disagreeing with God's Word, when those feelings of pride over and against others rise up in you, when God or belief in God seems unreasonable compared to the words and wisdom you hear all around you at work or in school or on the television - *is that not to agree with the enemy?* You're on the battlefield, my friends. On the front lines.

But you are not alone. The angels that fought against satan and his army in heaven are fighting against him still, at God's command. Now here and fighting for you. Though you may not see them or know how, they are here. The Scriptures give us many glimpses of them and their wonderful activity. For example, rescuing Lot and his family from Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19). Filling the hills around Elisha and Israel, a larger force than the Syrians who had come to attack them (2 Kings 6). They ministered to Jesus after His temptation in the wilderness (Matt 4:11), and in His agony in Gethsemane (Luke 22:43). They also announced Jesus' birth to the shepherds (Luke 2) and His resurrection to the women (Matthew 28; John 20:12), just to name a few. They are never at rest and always at the ready (Matt 18:10), for satan will not rest, and your Father in heaven knows you need them.

We would like to know more about this too, though, this ongoing war raging unseen all around us. And so many become fascinated with the angels, wanting to see them and speak to them and find out things that are beyond our realm of knowledge and sight. *But will the angels appear to us today and speak to us today?* We are not told that they will and satan is more than happy to step in here and deceive us in this way, too. Like a double agent, pretending to be good and for us, while working all the while against us, luring us and earning our trust. It is dangerous to dabble in the unknown while you're on the battlefield. Things are known to blow up in your face.

Perhaps this is why Jesus tempers the enthusiasm of His disciples when they return from their mission as we heard in the Holy Gospel today. You can't blame them for being excited! They had been sent out on the battlefield *as lambs in the midst of wolves* (Luke 10:3). A very frightening thing indeed! But the wolf did not win, for they had a weapon that caused *even the demons to be subject to them in [Jesus'] name* - the Word of God.

But it is not good to be overconfident on the battlefield. And so Jesus says to them, Yes, ***I was watching satan fall like lightning from heaven.*** The victory of God over satan and his army, begun by Michael and his angels in heaven, is continuing on earth. And Jesus had given them a great authority. But then, He says, ***do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.***

Like the disciples, maybe we too rejoice in the wrong things. Earthly possessions and popularity and power, and rejoicing in these perhaps fall into their sinful clutches. But here is the joy that is ours now and will be forever: ***that your name is written in heaven.***

I mentioned that earlier, that satan's name is no longer written where yours now is, and that by your baptism. To rejoice in this is to rejoice in the fact that while God did not fight in that initial fray when satan was tossed from heaven - that was Michael and his angels - God *did* come and enter the fight, at just the right time, in that manger in Bethlehem. And from the wood of the manger to the wood of the cross, to do *more* than conquer satan - for just throwing satan out of heaven does not get us in. That would take the blood of God, poured out for us for the forgiveness of our sins. For as always, no evil can be in the place of all goodness; no rebellion in the place of all peace. And so Jesus came to take all of our evil and rebellion and uncleanness upon Himself, to wash us clean, and give us His place in heaven.

Rejoice in that, Jesus says. And we do everytime we repent, knowing the promise of His forgiveness and life. It's never pleasant to repent and acknowledge our sin, but it is joyful, knowing that by this satan is being cast down and out by the Word of forgiveness. Here, the Lamb is conquering the dragon.

And we do so as we come to eat and drink the Body and Blood of Jesus in His Supper. Here is our battlefield MRE - Meal Ready to Eat - as Jesus provides the food that will feed and sustain us with His forgiveness and life. The Lamb of God that we eat; the Lamb that conquered the dragon, and still does.

And in these ways we are fighting - not in our strength, but in His. For our strength is as nothing against the dragon, but His strength overcomes sin, death, grave, satan, and hell. His strength overcomes the enemies visible and invisible, within and without, both now and forever. And so we join with that crowd in heaven, who as we heard, ***conquered by the blood of the Lamb and His Word.*** For these are the weapons the dragon cannot withstand. His kryptonite, if you will.

And is that not a reason to rejoice? Which is another one of those things satan does not do, for just as love, joy too is of God. Satan is too full of hate and rage to rejoice, ever.

But you rejoice! For you are of God. And what joy is ours. For the angels are fighting for us and our Lord has fought for us and we have His gifts that forgive our sins and He

Himself has written our names in heaven. Which means that no matter what comes upon us in this world and life, no matter how the dragon rages and attacks, no matter how weak and unable we may seem, even when death and the grave appear on your doorstep - you and your future are safe in Christ. *The fiery grave* (LSB #521 v. 6) is not your destination, but the halls of heaven; the goodness, peace, and perfection created for you, and you redeemed for them.

In the Name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.