

## Jesu Juva

### “Jesus Does What Angels Cannot”

Text: Matthew 18:1-11; Revelation 12:7-12; Daniel 10:10-14; 12:1-3

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

Angels, like so much else in this life, we tend to take for granted. Our God gives us life and breath, the sun and rain, parents, spouse, and family, friends and neighbors, job and leisure, health and intellect, pastor and church, freedom and liberty, and so very much more. Everyday. But we really don't think so much about these things. They're just there. Until they're not. And then we miss them. Then we realize what gifts these things are, each day, each moment.

And it is the same with angels, I think. We don't realize how important they are, what a gift they are to us, protecting us. They're just there. But if they weren't, we would surely know it, and miss them very much. For if satan had free reign, if God's servants were not protecting us, how horrible things would surely be. Luther once said that if God were to withdraw His hand, even for just a moment from this world and life, satan would have it all quickly destroyed. For if satan can instigate a *war in heaven*, as we heard today, just imagine what he would be able to do here.

Actually, we don't have to imagine it; we see glimpses of it. For as we also heard today: *But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!* Not short enough, we would say! For we see the damage satan is doing, even as the angels do indeed protect us from evil. The Scriptures are filled with accounts of the angels providing such protection, from protecting Lot in Sodom and Gomorrah, to Elijah seeing angels on the mountains, surrounding the Assyrian army with chariots and horses of fire, to the angels coming to minister to Jesus after His temptation in the wilderness. The angels are active and serving, fierce warriors, sent by God on our behalf. And we need them.

So why still the evil in the world? Why still so many wars, the breakdown of family and morals, the anger and hatred dividing people, and even families, if the angels are protecting us? Well, I would simply put it this way: **That while the angels can keep evil from us, they cannot keep us from evil.** How it must grieve them to fight for us and protect us, and then see us expose ourselves to danger as we follow the enticements and temptations to sin and evil. To hate instead of love. To fight instead of forgive. To divide instead of make peace. To hurt instead of help. To tear down instead of build up. To be proud instead of humble. To lust instead of exercising self control. To doubt instead of believe. Sinful thoughts and desires bursting out of us in evil words and deeds. Or

keeping us silent and inactive when we should be confessing and acting in love toward others. And while the angels grieve such things, satan rejoices.

But again we ask why? Why do we do such things? Why do we so easily ally ourselves with the *great dragon* and *ancient serpent*, as Revelation calls him, who is seeking only to destroy and devour us? Well because also as Revelation calls him, he is a *deceiver*. We do not see him as he is, as God sees him. He makes sin look sweet and evil look good. You know the story of Adam and Eve and the forbidden fruit and how he did that then, but you know it from your own life as well, and the lives of those around you. How we chase after pleasures but get only regrets. When we do or say something one moment and then wish we could take it back the next. How we doubt and disbelieve, and then later realize it was the truth all along. And sometimes it happens quickly, impulsively, and sometimes we do those things after long periods of temptation and deliberation. But the results are the same.

And lest you think your sin doesn't really matter, the words of Jesus we heard from Matthew today should sober us up pretty quickly. Instead of falling into sin, it would be better to slice and dice your body. And then this too: *whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea*. And think there not only of children in the physical sense, but the children of God sitting in the chairs next to you now, the desk next to you at school, the cubicle next to you at work, or living in the house next door. Satan and his angels were thrown down, out of heaven, for their sin, and we deserve to be thrown down too, with a cement necklace, into the depth of the sea.

Yet here we are. Neither in the depth of the sea, nor with cement necklaces, and last I checked, you all have two hands, two feet, and two eyes. And this because satan was not the only one who came down from heaven - He was followed by the very Son of God Himself. The Son of God who came not unwillingly but willingly; who came not in rage but in love; who came not to fight against us but to fight for us; who came not to deceive but in truth; who came not to take your life but to lay down His life for you. Who came to do what the angels cannot do - to save us from ourselves; to save us from our sin; to deliver us from evil.

And so He came, the Son of God, and took the name Jesus - in Hebrew that's Yeshua, which means: *God saves*. And that's what He did. Giving His hands and feet and eyes and everything else He had, in your place. Taking your cement necklace and hanging it around His neck. And then being plunged not into the sea, but something far worse - into the depth of God's righteous wrath against the sin of the world. That everything you deserve be given to Him, and you receive the gift that is far above and beyond any other: the forgiveness of your sins. And with that forgiveness, the promise of eternal life, for Jesus also then rose from the dead, that you live too.

And so we heard in those verses from Revelation: our accuser has been ***conquered by the blood of the Lamb and by the Word***. The blood of the Lamb that washes away our sin, and the Word of truth that gives that washing to us. The Word of His victory preached; the Word in baptism, the water in which the sinful you is drowned and yet you are saved; the Word of Absolution, and the Word in the Supper, making bread and wine much more than that, but the very Body and Blood that hung on the cross for you. These are the words that speak the truth, that here is your Lord, your Saviour, come to you with His gifts. Here are the weapons more powerful than the dragon, and the truth not spoken with the forked-tongue of the serpent. For with the Word comes the Spirit of God, to work and live in your heart, bringing you the gifts, leading you into the truth, and strengthening you against the assaults and deceptions of the evil one.

Yet do we, perhaps, take these for granted, too? Not appreciating what we have been given, neglecting these gifts, absenting ourselves from them, and so exposing ourselves to danger? Maybe of this we need to repent, too.

And when we do, when we repent, there is a great reversal - it is no longer satan rejoicing, there is ***rejoicing in heaven***. Rejoicing not only over the victory of Jesus in His death and resurrection, conquering our sin and death and so winning the victory over the evil one, *there is rejoicing over every sinner who repents* (Luke 15). There is rejoicing every time the Word of God reaches a sinner's heart - your heart and mine - and turns it from evil to God; from sin to repentance; from self-destruction to life. So when you stood and confessed your sin at the beginning of the service, or when you confess and repent to one another, satan is now the one grieved, and the angels - here and in heaven - are rejoicing. When they hear this Word of forgiveness preached, or when you forgive one another, millstones are being cut free, satan is grieved, and the angels - here and in heaven - are rejoicing. And when you come forward to receive the Body and Blood of Jesus, satan is grieved, and the angels - here and in heaven - are rejoicing. For the victory is being given to you, and the accuser, the deceiver, the evil one, is once again being thrown down from his throne and thrown out of your life.

And then on the Last Day, God is going to send His angels one last time, for the final victory, the final harvest. When finally the wheat will be separated from the weeds, and what was done in heaven will also be done on earth, just as we so often pray. And the kingdom will come. What now is promised will then be fulfilled. What now is our hope will then be our reality. The reality of no more war and strife; only peace and rest.

That, of course, is not our reality now. There is trouble today, perhaps even as Daniel said: ***as has never been before***. Satan never rests and his time is short. And so we remember today and thank God for his angels, for sending them to guard and protect us. But even more, we thank Him for Jesus, for sending Him to save and forgive us. Our God has done all things well. And in the end, we'll see; we'll see as never before. We'll see what was hidden to us here, finally revealed. We'll see this: that ***those who are wise shall***

*shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness,  
like the stars forever and ever.*

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