

25 September 2022  
Saint Michael and All Angels

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church  
Vienna, VA

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“Victory!”

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.

What’s worse? The war you can see or the war you can’t? The war you know about or the war you don’t? There are wars, and then there are wars.

We’ve all seen pictures from the war in Ukraine, the devastation, loss, and hardship. But what of other wars and civil wars in other parts of the world that go unreported and unseen, yet are no less horrific?

There are *culture* wars that have been taking place in our country and world, which have also inflicted harm on many. Some of this war we knew, but some was waged under the radar until exposed during the pandemic and the shut downs.

That there is war in our world should not surprise us. We are reaping the wages of sin and the Scriptures are clear this is how it will be. And that it will not get better as the Last Day draws ever closer, we are not progressing into a ever-better world and society - it will, in fact, only get worse. Nation against nation, people against people, culture against culture, faith against faith.

Underneath it all, behind it all, is the evil one. Using and deceiving to get his way. All this that we see in our world is not just selfishness, not just greed, not just abuse of power, not just the failures and foibles of men and women, but evil. The evil one working in different ways, using different means, to wreak havoc. For he wants only evil. Evil that rages against the good, that will not tolerate Scriptural truth, that divides and alienates, and that wants only to annihilate Jesus and His Church.

Which sounds very depressing and bleak, does it not?

But do not despair! Because of this, too, the Scriptures are very, very clear: who has won and who will win. And it is not evil or the evil one! No matter what it looks like or seems like in our day and age. It is Jesus. Satan has been on the attack from the very beginning, but the victory will not be his. He attempted to deceive Jesus in the wilderness and through the so-called religious leaders of the day - he tried to overthrow Him with his

superior intellect and cunning, *but could not*. He tried to overcome Him with worldly power - the threats of Kings Herod and Governor Pilate, and then crucifixion, *but could not*. Even his most powerful and fearsome weapon of all - death - *could not win*. Jesus did. And when the Last Day comes, that will be a victory seen and known by all.

But what we see and know until that Day is what we heard in the reading from Revelation: the great dragon, the devil, who has been thrown down to the earth, is not happy about that, is not happy about his defeat, and is filled with great wrath against all good, all truth, all who belong to Jesus. His time is short, we are told. But not short enough. Short according to God's time, not ours.

And a great dragon is fearsome! The Russian army amassed on the border of Ukraine is fearsome. The threat of nuclear weapons is fearsome. And an enormously and completely evil one, unseen by us but described as a great dragon wanting to consume you is fearsome. As it should be. You should not take him lightly. You should think no sin just a little sin, no lies just little lies, no deceptions or distortions of the truth of no consequence. They matter. They are his weapons to wear you down, lure you away, and plant in you an evil, spiritual cancer to take over in you.

But though we should not take him lightly, neither should we cower before him. Remember and remind him constantly of his defeat! When he was cast down and out of heaven. He thought he could have it all and wound up with nothing. The good angels, the faithful angels, winning that war. And protecting us still. *He will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways* we sang in the Gradual from the Psalm. And they do. Guarding and protecting us in unknown numbers of ways and times in a war we know but cannot see. But God knows. Thank God for His angels who are faithful to Him and serve us.

And yet it is not only angels who cast down satan and overcome all his works and all his ways. We heard in the Holy Gospel today of the disciples Jesus sent out. He sent them out *as lambs in the midst of wolves*, it says. He sent them out with nothing - *no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals*, it says (Luke 10:3-4). Now, we're not told what they thought about their prospects as they went out like this, but today we heard their shock and amazement when they returned. *It worked! The Word worked! **The demons are subject to us in your name!*** To us puny humans. *Who'd a-thunk it?* The Word of God more powerful than anything on this earth.

*We should know that.* Shame on us when we don't, when we doubt, when we forget, when we leave this most powerful weapon in the drawer, on the shelf, on the sideline of the battle, and try to fight with our own strength. And we're shocked and amazed when we lose? Look at the mess we've made of marriage, of sexuality, of gender, of religion, of churches, of families, of so many things in this world because we've left God's Word in the drawer, on the shelf, on the sideline of the battle. Because we've been told: *You*

*can't use that weapon here. You have to use some other weapon.* Well of course they'll say that! If there's a battle between a tank and a handgun, of course the one with the handgun will try to level the field, even the odds, and get his opponent to fight with a lesser weapon - who wouldn't!? Yet how foolish for the one with the tank to agree. Or, how prideful and arrogant.

But we've done that. Out of foolishness? Pride and arrogance? That we don't need the Word? That we can do it ourselves? And we're shocked and amazed when we lose? Really? And if you think satan not behind that, the great dragon not behind that, that God and satan are off fighting somewhere else and just watching us fight this one . . . well, you haven't been paying attention.

As we heard today, it is *by the blood of the Lamb* and *the power of His Word* that we conquer. We have no weapons that can do anything in this fight except those. And if you leave them thinking you don't need them, you're going to have satanic tank tracks all over you! And we all have those scars, don't we? From our own sin and rebellion and stupidity. And from the sin so others.

But when we are wounded and scarred in the battle, the powerful healing of God's Word is applied. It is powerful in this way, too. This is the Word of God given us to wield today. The balm of absolution - not only spoken here, but as you forgive one another. The promises of baptism - that God hasn't left you at the mercy of the dragon, but adopted you as His child and sends His angels to watch over you and protect you. And the nourishment of the Body and Blood of Jesus which restores our strength in this battle that goes on and never seems to end. The blood of the Lamb and the Word of God give us the life we need to go on.

So the disciples Jesus sent out were angels - not in the sense of a supernatural being, but in the other meaning of that word, as a messenger. One armed with the Word of God. And the Word they spoke no less powerful than the Word the supernatural angels are armed with. For notice: **the result was the same**. In Revelation, God's angels casting down the evil angels, and in Luke the demons are subject to them in Jesus' name. Jesus and His Word win, satan loses. That's the way it was then, is now, and will be also on the Last Day. The Scriptures are clear: **we know who won and who will win**.

But this is no mere earthly victory. That would be pretty sad if we had victory and hope only for this world and life. And, in fact, Jesus tells us what really to rejoice in: ***do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven***. That there is an *eternal* victory and life waiting for you. That there is forgiveness for your sin means also that there is life for your death. That is what no angel could have ever done for you - only Jesus. And He did, taking your sin upon Himself on the cross for your forgiveness, and then rising to life from death for your life. That you, too, rise to live a new and eternal and victorious life. A new and victorious life you are

already beginning to live now by virtue of your baptism into Jesus' death and resurrection (what we know now), but which will be fully and finally yours on the Last Day (when we will see it). But as we know with wars that are real but not seen, so it is with our new and eternal and victorious life - it is real, even if we cannot yet see it. And it is yours, for Jesus promised. He died for you, He baptized you, He absolves you, He feeds you, and He will not lose any His Father has given to Him. No one will snatch you out of His hand (John 10).

So we have much reason for joy, even as the battle rages on. We should not be shocked and amazed, but confident. Satan wants to blind us to the truth, but we know the truth and will proclaim it. Satan wants to deceive us into thinking he's much more powerful than he is, but we know the truth - that while we are no match for him, he is no match for our Saviour. And Satan wants to bargain with us as to what weapons we should use, but we have only one and it is enough. More than enough. For by the Word the world was created. By the Word life is given. By the Word Satan is cast down. By the Word we are given new life. By the Word we are lifted up. By the Word mere water becomes a flood that swallows up the dragon, and mere bread and wine the food of immortality.

So today we thank God for the angels who protect us in this battle, but even more for the Word that saves us. The Word made flesh, the Word proclaimed, and the Word that will raise us up on the Last Day *when we will be* shocked and amazed, and rightly so! At the life and joy and perfection and glory of a new heavens and a new earth and a new and eternal life. The Scriptures are very clear on this. Even in the midst of this battle, that is the victory Jesus won, and the life He has provided, and the future that is waiting, **for you.**

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

Now the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.