

28 September 2008  
St. Michael and All Angels

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church  
Vienna, VA

Jesu Juva

“Great Angels, A Greater Saviour”

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

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

***Do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.***

Today, Logan’s name was written in heaven. Our Lord Jesus once again kept His promise to come through the water and Word of Holy Baptism, and made another child His own; another sinner into a saint. The unholy spirit with which Logan was born has been expelled, and the Holy Spirit has entered in. Logan is now a child of God, a brother in Christ, a man of faith. And so we rejoice. And the angels of God are rejoicing with us.

Yes, the angels. They’re here. They’re always here, for our Lord is here. And, the Scriptures tell us, they are *always* rejoicing in our Lord and when His forgiveness is given. For what pleases God, pleases them. . . . But they are not the only angels that are here. There are others here who are not rejoicing. Those angels whose delight is not in God and His forgiveness, but in themselves, and in their work to destroy all that our good and gracious Lord has created. Yes, they are here too, Satan and his minions, and today they have a new enemy, a new foe to attack: little Logan. For while Jesus ***saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven***, that just means what the apostle John told us in the book of Revelation - that the war in heaven has now come down to earth.

**If only we could see the danger that surrounds us everyday.** Satan has us convinced these days that the world we see is the true reality, and that the world that is unseen is the stuff of fantasy and wishful thinking - but as usual with satan, isn’t in fact the very opposite true? The current financial crisis has burst the balloon of those who have built for themselves a visible fantasy of wealth and success here, which has proved to be no reality at all! And similar fantasies of good health, long life, houses with white picket fences and 2.5 children, have proven equally elusive reality for many. Yet still we cling to these things. . . . **But it is the unseen that is the true reality.** For what we now see will not last forever; what is unseen will - our God and Father, our Saviour Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and His kingdom which will have no end. Satan has deceived us in our perception of reality, that we cling

to what will not last, so that he can take away from us what will.

**If only we could see the danger that surrounds us everyday.** For if satan is so brash and bold as to make war in heaven, how much more here. Against us who are so weak, and easy to tempt, and easy to seduce into *false belief, despair, and other great shame and vice*. (Small Catechism, Explanation to the Sixth Petition)

Just consider how easily we have been seduced into wrong thinking about angels. A look in any store or internet search will reveal chubby-cheeked cherubs and charming, delicate-looking feminine forms - friendly, harmless angels that don't really do much except cause people to fall in love with each other or whisper into our ears secrets that a mean God didn't want us to know. . . . But the Scriptures paint quite a different portrait of angels. Far from child-like or feminine, they are more like the fearsome warrior on the cover of the bulletin today. They are armies of combat veterans, protectors sent by our loving Father, to interfere with the plans and assaults of the enemy. Since we cannot see the danger, perhaps we think it not real, and that we don't need the angels of God to defend us. Thankfully our heavenly Father sees and knows, and sends His angels to serve.

**So given the danger that surrounds us everyday,** how could we put little Logan into such a difficult and precarious situation? How could we give him such a mighty and lifelong enemy, and *rejoice* in doing so? Well, we do, and we can, because although the battle rages on, the war has been won. Because the gifts of God are greater than the schemes of the enemy. Because the great dragon that was thrown down to the earth, was defeated by a baby boy who at one time was the same age as Logan and nursed at His mother's breast. A baby boy wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. A baby boy the news of whose birth the angels announced and celebrated. A baby boy who was not only a baby boy, like Logan, born in the natural way, but the Son of God, conceived by the Holy Spirit, and born without sin. A baby boy who is the King of angels, come to do what no angel could do. For while Michael and his angels tossed the old, evil foe down from heaven, it was a baby boy named Jesus who defeated him once and for all. Only Jesus could save us from our sins and rescue us from the clutches of satan.

And so while Jesus **saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven**, it was here on earth where Jesus looked him in the eye and defeated him once and for all. For it was here on earth where *the greater victory* took place, through the death and resurrection of Jesus. For by the cross, the sins which satan uses to accuse us were taken away and atoned for by Jesus. By the cross, Jesus entered death in order to defeat death. And then rising from the dead, and descending into hell and crashing its gates, Jesus stripped satan of all his power. Sin, death, and hell have all been defeated by Him, and so there is nothing left for us to fear. Satan is a dragon whose teeth have been removed and whose fire-breathing breath has been silenced - by

(as St. John told us) the blood of the Lamb of God. By the blood of Jesus.

**That is the blood** that washed little Logan clean of his sin today in Holy Baptism. Not just water, but the blood of Jesus and the Word of His promise did that, and gave Logan the new life of faith.

**That is the blood** we will receive again today in Holy Communion to forgive our sins and strengthen our faith. Not just bread and wine, but the body and blood of Jesus and the Word of His promise do that, and give each of us the life and resurrection we continually need.

**That is the blood** which still overthrows the dragon and looses his grip on us when we are given the words of absolution. Not just wishful words, but the blood of Jesus and the Word of His promise give those words power, and give us the forgiveness we so desperately need.

And that is the blood with which our names are written in the book of life in heaven. So that even though we live in the midst of a war - some of which perhaps we see, but most of which we cannot see - we are safe. No matter how old you are or young you are. Whether you are a Christian of great faith, or of weak faith. For the power is not yours, but Christ's. And so we rejoice - not as those who continue to play happy music on a sinking ship - but as those who are safe in the ark of the church. That though the waters rage around us, they cannot sink us. Or to use a slightly different analogy, one that was brought up in our Psalms study a week or so ago - satan is the big, bad wolf who can huff and puff, but cannot blow this house down.

And so today we welcome little Logan into this house, and into this family of our Saviour Jesus Christ. And while we have given him a mighty and lifelong enemy, he has also received an even mightier and lifelong Saviour. A Saviour who came down to live in a little boy's body, so that little boy - and all of us - could rise to live in His house. And while I do not know what the future holds for Logan, or for any of us - I do know that neither he nor any of us will ever be alone. For the Son of God who came to be with us is with us still, and sends His angels to guard and protect us. And so now we join with the *unseen* **angels and archangels and all the company of heaven**, and rejoice in the gifts of Jesus given us here. But it will not always be so. For the day is coming when we will finally see what we now believe. When we whose names are written in heaven, Jesus takes to be with Him there.

And so today we remember and celebrate angels, but even more we celebrate with them a greater Saviour, who has given us what no angel could - the gift of forgiveness, the gift of everlasting life, the gift of Himself. So rejoice, children of God. Rejoice! For your names are written in heaven.

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.