

Luke 10:17–20  
St. Michael & All Angels  
Kaiserslautern Ev. Luth. Ch.  
September 29, 2023

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

Dearly bought hearers by the blood of Jesus Christ,

St. Michael the Archangel is the great prince who has charge over God's people. He is the commander of the Lord's army, as we see from the Revelation of St. John. When war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. The warfare described here is the constant battle between the offspring of the woman and the offspring of the serpent, between Jesus and the powers of darkness. There was no longer any place in heaven for the great dragon, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world. The dragon was defeated by the blood of the Lamb and the Word of God. He was cast out of his place in Heaven, no longer able to bring any accusation against God's people. The war officially ended when the seed of the woman crushed the serpent's head at the cross, but shots continue to be fired until the end of the world. The defeated Devil and his hordes are trying to bring as many people as possible down with them to Hell. The strife is over and the battle is won, but you still must remain vigilant until you reach the shores of your true homeland. Then the Devil and his angels will be completely and utterly destroyed and you will find the eternal peace you long for now.

In our Gospel Lesson for St. Michael's Day, we see what that continued warfare with the Devil looks like. The seventy-two disciples were sent out into all the region to prepare the people for the coming Kingdom of God, for the arrival of King Jesus into each town. Two by two the laborers went out into the harvest, as lambs in the midst of wolves, but bearing with them the

Word of God. They healed the sick and called the people to repentance, proclaiming: “The Kingdom of God has come near to you.” These seventy-two disciples were the official ambassadors of God’s Kingdom, speaking on behalf of their ruler. Jesus told them: “The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects Him who sent me.” This wasn’t their own power to heal or their own message of repentance; it was the power of God at work in and through them.

The seventy-two disciples returned to Jesus ecstatic about their success: “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!” Jesus says: “I was watching Satan fall like lightning from Heaven.” Satan’s fall continues anytime the sick are healed, the dead are raised, demons are cast out, and repentance and forgiveness of sins is proclaimed. Wherever the Word of God comes, the Light of the world overpowers the deepest darkness. Satan, the Accuser, is kicked out of the courtroom by the preaching of the disciples. The Devil is no longer welcome in your conscience. Try as he might, he has no grounds to accuse you because Jesus Christ has paid for all your sins by His death on the cross. Satan, the Accuser, was cast out of God’s throne room. You now have an Advocate with God the Father— Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He ascended into Heaven to be your defense against whatever the Devil throws your way.

Jesus continues: “Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you.” As Jesus, the seed of the woman, crushed the head of the serpent, so too, does Jesus give power to His disciples to crush the serpent’s head and to trample every demonic power. Satan and the demons, the fallen angels, are often portrayed in terms of creeping things. Like venomous snakes or scorpions, the evil spirits can sneak into your life through the smallest openings. If they can just get their head in the door, the whole body will follow. And if the demons are chased away but not replaced with the

Holy Spirit, seven or more will return, lurking in some dark corner to attack when you least expect it. That's when the Devil, the world, or your sinful nature deceive you and lead you into false belief, despair, or other great shame and vice. Although we are attacked by these things, with the help of our LORD we will finally overcome them and win the victory. Jesus gives authority to His disciples, to tread upon all the power of the enemy. Nothing the devil throws your way will be able to hurt you.

“Nevertheless,” Jesus continues, “do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in Heaven.” There's great joy when we see the strongholds of the Devil crumbling, when we see those who were in bondage to the Devil and the world released from their yoke of slavery and come into the fold of the Christian church. There is great joy when we see firsthand that our prayers are answered, that health is restored, and the Kingdom of God seems to be making slow but steady progress.

But sometimes our prayers for health end in death, or we see our loved ones fall away from the faith, or it seems like the Devil's Kingdom is making more progress than the Kingdom of God. Much of our Christian life is a life lived under the cross. We desperately want the glory that comes with victory, but being a Christian means learning to endure patiently until the end. Don't rejoice prematurely that the spirits are subject to you. Many times, they will not be subject to you. Many times, you'll feel helpless when you recognize the powers of darkness at work in the world and in people who are close to you.

Rejoice, instead, that your names are written in Heaven. Rejoice that you are a child of God and that your name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life. What is this Book of Life in Heaven? The Book of Life is the roll call of all people at all times and places who will attain eternal life. The names of the Elect were written in this book in eternity, before the foundations

of the earth were ever laid. And then in the fullness of time, your name was written in that Book in Holy Baptism, just as it is written in the church record after a service of Baptism. The baptismal certificate is signed and sealed as a constant reminder that this child of God's name is inscribed and sealed in the Book of Life in Heaven. This evening we welcomed James Swenson into the Body of Christ. Satan and his minions fell like lightning when we heard those words: "Depart, thou unclean spirit, and make room for the Holy Spirit." The name of James Swenson is now written in the Book of Life for time and eternity. The angels of God rejoice over this one sinner brought to repentance, and we rejoice as we are reminded that our names, too, are written in the Book of Life.

At the Resurrection of the dead, all people will stand before the throne of God and books will be opened, the books containing a record of everything ever done by each person (Rev 20:11–15). Of course, there are shameful things written in those books, things we would blush at were they revealed before all people, or revealed before anyone. Those sins you are most ashamed of are the sins you can confess before a pastor to receive explicit forgiveness in Jesus Christ. In Him, all the records of your wrongdoing become nothing because of another book that is opened, the Book of Life. This is the record of those who are in Christ Jesus, baptized into His body, the Church. Their sins are covered by the blood of the Lamb, and so they are judged not by what they have done, but by what Jesus has done for them in His perfect life and death. Anyone whose name is not written in the Book of Life will be cast into the lake of fire with the Devil and his angels. But anyone whose name is written in that Book will live forever in the new heavens and the new earth.

Daniel prophesies: "At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation

till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Dan 12:1–2). Satan and his minions have already been cast out of Heaven. They can no longer bring any accusation against God’s people. Christ paid the debt incurred by sin and ascended into Heaven to stand as our advocate and defense.

Yet the battle continues to rage in the world and in the hearts and minds of God’s people. The Devil can’t accuse you before God, but he certainly tries to make you accuse yourself. Satan’s goal is to lure you into sin so He can make you question your standing before God. Don’t listen to him! Resist the Devil and he will flee from you (James 4:7). And when you fall into sin, confess your sin and receive forgiveness. Return to your Baptism. Drown the Old Adam daily that a new man might arise daily, to live before God in righteousness and purity forever. Remember that your name is written in the Lamb’s Book of Life, here in time and there in eternity. The war is already won. Michael and His angels have defeated the old serpent with his angels, even if they continue to fight back. Stay vigilant and resist the Devil firm in the faith that’s been given to you (1 Pet 5:8–12). In the name of Jesus, Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. We stand for the Offertory.