

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Being accused of something is a terrible thing. We all have a reputation, whether we may want to have it or not, and when we are accused publicly, a good reputation is called into question. There's a reason why God protects reputations in the eighth commandment. We are put before judgment seat of the authorities who rightly possess and office to judge according to the laws of the land. The way our judicial system is set up is that one who accused is "innocent until proven guilty" that's, at least, how it's supposed to be. Yet we all know too well how this has changed when someone is accused of something it doesn't seem to matter whether the accusation is true that person by virtue of being accused has already been convicted regardless of if he is innocent or not. That's why we pray for our judges and, if we must stand before them, pray they do not exercise prejudice.

In the reading from Revelation today, we hear of an accuser and something that's quite frightening to think about and goes simply beyond an earthly courtroom. "Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, 'Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.'"

Something that isn't mentioned very often in the Scriptures but still is seen is the devil talking to the Lord. Perhaps the most well-known occurrences of this are in the Book of Job. Here, though, in the reading from Revelation the devil is accusing God's people. He stands before God and accuses the people of their sin. Another place this is taught explicitly is in Zechariah. In Zechariah 3 we hear, "Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him." A third related place where the devil is mentioned and this time again in connection with Michael is Jude 9, "But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, 'The Lord rebuke you.'"

Let that sink in for a second. This image God reveals before you today in quite vivid. Satan, which means accuser, would stand before God and accuse God's people. Their sin would be laid out for God to hear, and a case made by the devil that they have no right and claim to be in the presence of God. The devil who brought about the sin and evil and perhaps even brought these things about them takes those and goes before God and says, "look at him God. Look at how he hasn't loved you completely and how he has broken your commandments. Look at that sinner." And you know what? The devil is right in what he says in this regard. The thing about being accused before God is that in our sin, we do stand guilty. We are in league with devil in so far as we are conceived and born into sin. The devil is the father of lies but he's correct in that we do deserve eternal death in hell.

But you see there's something in all of this. It's what we hear in this reading. The devil no longer stands before the throne of God to accuse people. Why is that? The reason is seen in the verses just prior to our reading. "And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it. She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days."

There's a lot of symbolic language in that to vividly express the earthly events which have happened and proclaim them to the persecuted church. You already summarized and confessed this a few minutes ago in another more direct way, though, in the Nicene Creed. "And in one Lord Jesus Christ . . . was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin

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Mary and was made man, and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried. And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures and ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father.”

So, what does this mean? No longer can the devil accuse you because Jesus has taken your guilt upon himself. “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! 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!”

The devil and his minions have been thrown out of heaven because Jesus has accomplished your salvation. Their pride, which was their downfall, has been humiliated and trampled by the one who humbled himself. Victory is found in the Lamb who was sacrificed. God has won the day and his great power and might are known as you behold the Lamb who has been slain for you. This is what the Lord has done. There is no longer any accusation against you. In your sin you rightly are condemned but, Jesus, the sinless one has taken your sin and suffered for it and in turn gives you his righteousness which is received by grace through faith. His blood intercedes for you at the right hand of the Father.

Instead of accusing you in your sin, Jesus says, “Look Father, here are the wounds and the blood which I have shed to pay for what he has owed. Give him, your dear child all that I have accomplished.” The Father, in turn, speaks the word of reconciliation and peace. His verdict of judgment is “your sin is forgiven for Christ’s sake, and you are righteous in my sight.” That’s the amazing thing in all of this and what you see on this day in what appears to be very confusing readings. It’s all about what Jesus has done for you. The Lord has won the day and God’s angels have enforced the victory won in Christ. The verdict which stands before the throne of God now for you is one of “you are forgiven.” The devil is sent fleeing with all of his minions, and they have no place before God but that’s not the case for you. You have a place before your heavenly Father.

There was a war that God waged against the devil and the victory was never in question. Salvation has been won and now the devil must be thrown out and all his demons with him. There’s nothing weak in any of this. Often images of the angel Michael show him clad in armor holding a dragon under his foot and killing it with a sword or spear. Really this is a great image of angels in general to see that they serve God beat down the Lord’s enemies under their feet. The word, Sabaoth, that we sing in the Divine Service means this, it means a host or army of angels that the Lord commands. They serve his holy will and run headlong into battle to guard, protect, and defend the Lord’s church.

Take all of that in this morning and rejoice. Know what means about angels as well. Days like today have been appointed and handed down in the church year for God’s people about various doctrines in the church. A study of angels in the Bible is quite interesting and yields many results dealing with battle and protection. Angels protected and surrounded God’s people, and they also defeated his enemies as in 2 Kings 19 where the angel of the Lord killed 185,000 in a single night. The word, angel, though, means messenger and they often would serve as the messengers sent to proclaim something to people. Gabriel, the other named angel in the Bible, spoke to Mary and the angels proclaimed to the shepherds and sang at the birth of Jesus. Still, there is a fear of men in all of this because angels are not people but another created being in the order of God’s creation. Often the first words out of an angel’s mouth to people are, “do not be afraid.” Yet even with their other worldly appearance and state they still serve men. You, man, have a higher position in God’s creation as man is the pinnacle of God’s creation and Adam was created in the image of God. When a Christian dies he doesn’t become an angel for that would be a lesser thing for him. No angels and men are different and that is good. The devil, a fallen angel knows this and sought to overturn God’s order. The Lord, himself, took on human flesh to redeem you and in Christ there is true human flesh and blood sitting at the right hand of God and even here on this altar this very day when you eat and drink of his body and blood under the bread and wine in the Lord’s Supper.

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The angels of God, then, rejoice in your salvation for they serve the Lord and you, his people. In that Collect of the Day, we prayed a few minutes ago, “Everlasting God, You have ordained and constituted the service of angels and men in a wonderful order. Mercifully grant that, as Your holy angels always serve and worship You in heaven, so by Your appointment they may also help and defend us here on earth” and that’s quite something to pray and think about. There’s a lot God hasn’t revealed to us about angels but there are things we do know as the Collect of the Day summarized. In Luther’s morning and evening prayers in the Small Catechism we also pray daily every morning and evening, “let your holy angel be with me that the wicked foe may have no power over me.”

Part of God’s care and concern for you is sending his angels to guard you in all your ways. You live in this fallen world where sin, death, and the devil surround and attack you. From the ascension of Jesus until he comes on the Last Day on the clouds with a host of angels, the devil is the prince of this world as he has been cast down from heaven and he knows his time is short. He prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. The devil knows he has lost yet he will stop at nothing to lead you into sin and the eternal fires of hell. You, as a Christian, are to be aware and on guard against him and not indulge in his lies, the works of your sinful nature, or the trappings of the fallen world. The devil is on a leash so don’t go into where he can bite you or you will get bitten and burned.

St. Michael and All Angels proclaims to you the confidence and security you have though as you go through this life is the confidence of Christ and the victory he has won. His angels are appointed by God for your help and protection as you go through this world and then as you will see them when you see the Lord face to face on the day of future glory. One little word can fell the devil as you sing in “A Mighty Fortress” or as we hear in the reading today, “And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.” You, yes you have conquered the dragon by the death of Christ and by the confession of him the devil is sent fleeing with his tail between his legs. Repent of your sin and cling to the Lamb through his means of grace. Fix your eyes on Christ crucified and see the accusations of the devil silenced and see the holy image of your victory. The devil has been thrown down like lightning and the day will come when he and all his fallen angels with him will be thrown down and sealed in their fiery grave forever.

Thanks be to God for all this today as you celebrate this feast. Gathered in this place you sit as the victors at the banquet. You come here as those who no longer stand as one accused but as one who is justified on account of Christ before God. You gather here and rejoice in that word and judgment you have and know what God thinks of you. The devil has been silenced and defeated. Your salvation and word of forgiveness is loud and clear. So, with God’s people and with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven you laud and magnify the glorious name of the Lord as you hear his word and partake of his sacrament. The angels of God serve you and join in your worship of the Lamb and his victory. This is your victory even on this side of the grave as you live in this church militant but as one whose inheritance is the eternal church triumphant with all of God’s saints and angels.

“For this, now and in days to be,  
Our praise shall rise, O Lord, to Thee,  
Whom all the angel hosts adore  
With grateful songs forevermore.”

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.