Text: St. Michael and All Angels

**Introduction**

Today on the church calendar is one of those feast or festival days that comes around rarely. Not rarely in reality because St. Michael and All Angel is always September 29th. Every year. Rarely for a couple reasons. For most of us the church year calendar doesn’t sink that deep. Christmas Day – always Dec 25th – we get. St. Michael or the vast majority of what can be called saints days we do not. And rarely because unlike say the Feast of All Saints – November 1st – most of these feast days do not get observed on the closest Sunday. So they only come around every 5 to 14 years depending upon leap year. The last St. Michaels was in 2019. The next is 2030.

So, you might ask, why bother at all?

And some of the honest answer, for a bunch of days, is that we don’t. Those directly associated with the life of Christ – say The Annunciation – March 25 – 9 months prior to Dec 25th – will get their time once every 5 to 14 years. Sadly, St. Mark, my namesake – always April 25th – wont. Those are left mostly for clergy, laity whose prayer life is guided by a prayer book, and historical novelists attempting to romantically reflect how people used to date letters. “On the Eve of St. Mary Magdalene, Greetings…” Instead of July 21st.

But we bother to keep the feast of those we do because they help us remember some necessary things, even if that remembrance doesn’t have to be a yearly thing.

**“All Things Invisible”**

In the case of St. Michael and All angels, what I think we should remember is two fold. First, St. Michael’s is a day to remember what the Nicene Creed says in the first article, that God The Father is the make of “all things visible and invisible.”

Believing that God created all things visible isn’t hard. That passes the Missouri “show me” rule. But invisible is tougher. And in our materialist age we are tempted to dismiss the invisible as so much woo. But what that word “invisible” means in the Nicene Creed would probably best be taken as Spiritual. And there are lots of thing that are Spiritual that we cannot see directly, we see their effects, we see what they do, and they are the greatest forces in the universe. For example love. We all believe in love. But no materialist has ever isolated love under a microscope. There is no Star Wars midichlorian count to measure the force of love. Likewise the other two theological virtues – faith and hope. And any other virtue – say the foundation of all of them – courage. You know courage when you see it in action. You recognize it. In those who might wear a purple heart, or in those who confess a truth that society would rather they didn’t. These are all things of the invisible creation.

And the philosophers of all stripes and I don’t think it is going to far to say the general biblical witness have typically held that the invisible creation is the most influential. The purely visible is moved and manipulated because of the spiritual. Colossians 1:16 is the source verse. “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: (Col. 1:16 KJV).” That thrones, dominion, principalities or powers has typically been taken as ranks of angels. Every aspect of God’s creation has it’s Spiritual guardian, its angel. Revelation has one passage referencing the Angels holding back the four winds. Say to the power of the North wind. Our reading from Daniel talks about “The Prince of the kingdom of Persia” and describes Michael as the Great Prince of your people. The Principality of the People of God. The book of Job has Satan wandering to and fro upon the earth and then entering the heavenly court to stir up all the suffering of Job.

There author of our opening hymn is confident enough to stich together the entire invisible creation hierarchy:.Watchers and Holy Ones, seraphs, cherubim and thrones, dominions, princedoms, powers, virtues, archangels, angels. That seems a little far to me. It seems to me that we have been told a couple of things. There is an order to creation. And large portions of that order are fallen. Satan remains the prince of this world. Satan has his angels and who knows exactly what parts of this world they were tasked with watching. And while Michael has thrown Satan out of heaven. “I saw Satan fall like lightning.” He can no longer wander to and fro and then show up in the heavenly court accusing another Job. Accusing you and me. Because Christ has won. His accusations no longer have any authority in the heavenly court. “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 (Rev 12:10).” But he has been thrown down to this earth. “Woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows his time is short.”

The war in heaven is over. Christ has won. But we live in the remains of the battlefield. A place still often governed by The Spiritual forces of this present darkness. And we should not easily dismiss their power and authority. The prince of Persia, according to our reading from Daniel, withstood the Son – THE Heavenly prince – for 21 days. Paul tells us to put on the full armor for a reason. We are in a fight. We live our days – observed or not - on a battlefield. And not a fight against flesh and blood. But against powers and principalities.

**“One Greatly Loved”**

And that might be enough to put us into the posture of most mere humans who meet an invisible angel. That posture is typically on the floor. The prophet Daniel was set “trembling on my hands and knees.” The first words recorded of almost all angels are “fear not” often followed by stand up. And this gets us to the second thing St. Michael helps us remember. There is a message and a work of all angels. And that message has a few parts.

The greatest part? “O Daniel, man greatly loved.” And it is not just Daniel. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only son. You, greatly loved. Christ has come for you. And Christ has commanded his angels concerning you…to guard you in all of your ways(Psalm 91:11). You are loved by God. Loved enough that the powers and principalities of the invisible realms have orders concerning you. Do not lose this one. And every little one – and we are all little ones – has their guardian angel that is always before the face of God (Matt 18:10).

Yes, Satan and his fallen angels can cause us woe here, but they are defeated and bound in all eternal ways by the one who loves you.

**Understand the Word**

Which leads to the last part of what St. Michael and all angels helps us to remember. God does not send his messengers that we might be confused. Satan hopes to confuse us, but the Angels are clear. “Understand the words that I speak to you.” “From the first day that you set your heart to understand…you words have been heard, and I have come because of your words.” We may not all be grace with a visible appearance of an angel, but they deliver the same message.

While we might live on a battlefield, and it may seem like such trouble as has never been, “your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name is written in the book.” God does not lose a single one who is his. Know that in your baptism your name has been written in that book. You are secure in the blood of Christ.

And this trouble – this time of Satan – is short. Paul calls is a light momentary affliction, not worthy to be considered in the face of the weight of glory that is ours. Yes, today is a trudge through a battlefield. There are landmines and all the dangers. But Satan is out of ammo. He can’t make anymore. His industrial base has been smashed. Because sin has found its cure in the blood of Christ. And those loved have been redeemed.

“Those who are wise – and the angels are here to make you wise, that you might understand this word – shall shine like the brightness of the sky above.”

**Conclusion**

St. Michael’s Day is a report from the battlefield so that you might understand the terrain as you traverse it.

We live in a Spiritual reality – an invisible creation – some of which has been corrupted and remains at war with the true authority.

That true authority – Christ – has triumphed. That true authority loves you and has tasked his faithful officers, great and small to guard you.

And know that the time is short. Understand the Word. This battlefield world is passing away. And the peace of the world to come is coming into being. Rejoice that your names are written there.