

Michaelmas – St. Luke 10:17-20
Jesus, Our Advocate, Now Reigns
Where Satan, Our Accuser, Once Stood

Rev. Samuel Gullixson

Ser. #319-16

We pray: Heavenly Father, it is Your Word given through Jesus to His disciples that gave them authority to cast out demons. Send us your Holy Spirit to help us appreciate the true power of Your Name and Word so that we fear nothing but You, love no one but You, and trust in nothing but you. Amen.

*In the name, that alone keeps you safe from Satan and his minions,
of the Father and the Son ✠ and of the Holy Spirit. Amen*

Dear fellow redeemed,
Today we observe a festival of the Christian Church,
St. Michael's and All Angels.
This is a good opportunity each year for us to consider
the **"ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake
of those who are to inherit salvation."** ^{Hebrews 1:14}
And today, our text also affords us an opportunity to consider
their evil counterparts, **the devil and his angels.** ^{Matthew 25:1}

But as we consider these mysterious beings,
their power & influence and God's omnipotence & dominion
our Savior would not have us become so fascinated that we lose
sight of the more important things: our salvation.

✠✠✠ ✠✠✠ ✠✠✠

We read as follows in Jesus' name.

The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name!" And [Jesus] said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. 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. Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." ^(ESV) *So far the Words of our text.*

These are Your Words, heavenly Father.

Sanctify [us] in the Truth. Your Word is Truth. ^(John 17:17)

✠✠✠ ✠✠✠ ✠✠✠

Jesus had sent out 72 disciples to go ahead of Him into upcoming towns to announce that He was passing their way.
As He sent them out, He told them that in the cities where they were well-received, **Heal the sick ... and say to them,
"The kingdom of God has come near to you."** ^{Luke 10:9}

But the disciples found that had received even more power,
even that of exorcising demons.
And this was what they were really excited about at their return.

And really, who wouldn't be?

They had seen the ravages of demon possessions,
if not before, then certainly during Jesus' ministry.
There were the demons named Legion,
who possessed a man so that he lived naked in the tombs
& could **wrench chains apart & break shackles in pieces.**
No one had the strength to subdue him. ^{Mark 5:4}

Other demons caused illnesses, blindness, muteness,
convulsed their occupants and threw them into seizures.

There was another case later on in Paul's ministry that
a demon-possessed man over-powered and beat up
7 Jewish exorcists who tried to use Christ's name ^{Acts 19:13-16}
to expel him, even though they did not believe in Him.

...To be able to expel these powerful, evil beings... with words!

And not be hurt or possessed yourself! That is power!
And power beyond our normal possession and comprehension.
It is working in a realm, the spiritual realm,
that we might know a little bit of from experience,
but can only truly know from Scripture.

...
Today, in our culture, we do not think much of demon-possession,
either it is not very common among us, or it is under diagnosed.
We think of demons almost in a comical way, like the red-
suited, horned man on your shoulder tempting you to evil.
And if this is all we think of them, then why should they
show themselves through flagrant possession?
They have already deceived and lulled us into indifference.

But this is a very dangerous deception to fall into,
because even though their power and evil influence are limited
by God for the good of His people, His Church,
the devil and his angels are powerful beings.
These evil angels had the same origin as the good ones:
created by God sometime between day 1 and day 6 of Creation.
These, too, received God's stamp of approval, **It is good.**
They knew no sin at their creation.
But sometime after day 7, Satan defied God,
and took with him a host of his fellow fallen angels.

As we hear from Ezekiel 33, his own created beauty and strength
led him to pride.

**"You were the signet of perfection,
full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.**

You were in Eden, the garden of God;...

You were an anointed guardian cherub.

I placed you; you were on the holy mountain of God;...

**You were blameless in your ways
from the day you were created,**

till unrighteousness was found in you....

**Your heart was proud because of your beauty; ^{Ezekiel 33:12-15,17}
you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor.**

Their origin is important for us to understand because we should
realize that they were created with and retain the great powers
God gave to His angels.

We should not be so proud as to think little of them,
but, like with fire, have a healthy respect of their power.

Satan once stood **on the holy mountain of God** in splendor.

But his unrighteousness was swiftly punished. God continues,
**... I cast you as a profane thing from the mountain of God,
and I destroyed you, O guardian cherub...** ^{Ezekiel 33:16}

But while he could no longer stand guard on the mountain,
as we read from Job^{1&2} & Zechariah³ he still had occasions
to stand before the Lord & accuse men of unrighteousness.
It is this activity that gives Satan his name, meaning Accuser.

This, perhaps, is his most dangerous power: his ability to accuse.
How many Christians have suffered torment night and day
because of a guilty conscience?

How often has the devil, that deceiver, or his minions stood
upon your shoulder and helped you justify that first look,
the first theft, that first abuse of a legal substance,
the first toke, the first lie, that first doubt of God's Word...
so that your conscience didn't object too loudly the 2nd time?
But then when you got caught, or now that you are so deep
into your moral failings, indiscretions, or vices,
he stands there on your shoulder accusing you to no end.
"You're not good enough for God to forgive you."
"Who can love such a deviant hypocrite?"

"You're life is ruined. What more is there to live for?"
So he would tempt you to hopelessness.

How many souls have been lost in despair?
Have given up hope and looked to death for relief?
Have given up the Church because they didn't think
there could be any forgiveness for them anymore.
How many souls, even here, seem to be hanging on by a thread?

Do not be deceived, Satan is a strong accuser and adversary.
He is relentless and ruthless. But he is also defeated.
Not defeat-able, but defeated. And he knows it.

He no longer has a place before the Father's judgment throne
from which to accuse you. Remember? God has
cast him down like a profane thing from the mountain of God.
And in our NT lesson, we heard how **St. Michael & his angels**
fought against the dragon... the serpent of old.
And how **the dragon and his angels fought back,**
but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place
for them in heaven.

Room had to be made for Jesus, the man who was God enough
to take upon His shoulders not only the accusations of Satan,
but even the sins and unrighteousness of every soul.
Jesus stood falsely accused before God's High Priest Caiaphas
yet He opened not His mouth in personal defense.
Jesus stood before Pilate, truly accused of being the Christ,
the King of the Jews, and all other nations for that matter.
And He stood there.
He took those accusations and claimed them as His own.
And for it, those shoulders bore the weight of the cross.
And hung from that cross, weighed down by the great
mass and weight of your sin.
Your name was inscribed in His nail pierced hands,
written in divine blood.

But at His word, the accusations of Satan had to stop.
When He pronounced, "**It is finished**,"
the devil could say no more. The lion's mouth was shut.
Your debt of sin was paid in full.

Jesus' subsequent resurrection on the 3rd day announces
the Father's declaration of your innocence in His court.
The place of the Accuser has been taken over by Your Advocate,
Jesus Christ.
Your name is written in heaven, still inscribed in His hands.
Rejoice in this! Not that you have power over the devil,
but that Satan and his accusations have no power over you.

He lost His power over you when he was exorcised in Baptism.
There, in the water, he was expelled from you as room was made
for the Father, the Judge, the Son, your Advocate,
and the Holy Spirit, your Comforter.
There, God not only recognized your name on Jesus' hands,
but you were given His name and marked as His child.

But you can sing boldly and confidently,
Satan, hear this proclamation, 'I am baptized into Christ.'
Drop your ugly accusation, I am not so soon enticed.
Now that to the font I've traveled,
All your might has come unraveled. (ELH #246:3)
And against your tyranny, God, my Lord, unites with me.

Respect his power, but do not be afraid of him.
For God will command his angels concerning you

to guard you in all your ways. ^{Psalms 91:11}

"**Do not be afraid**," not of his accusations, nor of his power.

"**For**," as Elisha once told his fearful servant,
"**those who are with us are more than those who are with them.**"

And take comfort, these ministering spirits are not like us,
they do not fail to serve their Master faithfully and perfectly.
They will serve and protect you, even when Satan assails you.

But because you are imperfect and your faith constantly needs
to be strengthened and sustained, rejoice that Jesus
has given His Church and her ministers His Name and Word,
to which Satan must yield and submit.
It is the same **authority to tread on serpents and scorpions,**
and over all the power of the enemy, He gave His disciples.
And with it a promise: **nothing shall hurt you.**
Rejoice, that the **kingdom of heaven** is not only **near to you**,
but regularly comes to you and dwells in you.

*Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
as it was in the beginning, is now, and shall be forevermore. Amen.
Soli Deo Gloria*