

Sermon

St. Michael and All Angels September 29, 2024

Today is the Feast of Saint Michael and All Angels. If you don't know, Michael is one of four Archangels named in scripture, the other three being Gabriel, Raphael, and Uriel. I don't know much about Raphael and Uriel, but Gabriel seems to be the chief messenger or spokesperson for God. It was Gabriel who announced the births of John and Jesus. Scripture doesn't say, but I'm betting it was also Gabriel who told Joseph and the wise men to get out of town before Herod found them.

Michael is God's general. He is the one who leads the heavenly host into battle against Satan and the other fallen angels. He is often depicted with a sword doing battle, as you see on your bulletin. And there's a great movie about him starring John Travolta called, "Michael."

Besides being the feast of Saint Michael and All Angels, today is also the day we welcome a new person into the household of God as we baptize Hope Anne Lawrence. These two events, the Feast of Saint Michael and the baptism of Hope, go hand in hand.

As I said, in Christian tradition Michael is the leader of the army of God and does battle with Satan and his minions. This battle of spiritual forces is twofold. First, we must recognize that this battle has already been won. On Easter Day Christ destroyed death, opening for us the way to life and salvation. And while a lot of people see Revelation as a glimpse of a coming battle filled with death, destruction, and terror, it is really a history book of what has already taken place - namely that Satan has already been defeated, cast into the Pit, and God wins. According to Revelation, it was Michael who threw Satan out of heaven.

Secondly, we must also recognize that this spiritual battle is ongoing. This is why we promise to fight against spiritual forces that rebel against God. It's why we promise to fight against evil powers in this world that corrupt and destroy the creatures of God. It's why we promise to fight against sinful desires that draw us away from God. The game may be fixed. The war may already be over. God may have won, but Satan will do everything in his power to keep it close and/or convince us that it's not over.

In this both/and scenario where the battle is both over and yet continues, it is good to have Michael standing with us doing battle against those evil spiritual forces.

But it is not only good to have Michael with us, it is also good to have all of us with us.

Christianity is a faith based in community. We believe in a Trinitarian God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. One in three and three in one, separate but unified. That image of God is itself based in a community of the godhead. When Jesus began his ministry, he didn't do it alone. He called twelve people to be with him – to travel with him, teach with him, heal with him. When he sent them out on their first mission, he didn't send them alone, he sent them out in pairs. And in the Catechism, we are told that the duty of all Christians is to come *TOGETHER* for corporate worship.

We are all in this together. Together we create a community of God. Together we minister to the needs of both our small community of Saint Luke's and the larger community of Buffalo. Together we support each other. Together we share in both our sorrows and joys, our trials and our triumphs.

There is also something vitally important to know about this community of believers, and that is that we are not a closed system. There are certain expectations and values to which we hold, but anyone is welcome to join us in this particular branch of the Jesus movement.

Today we welcome new people into our midst. Today we welcome Bill, Lenore, Joshua, and Hope. We invite them to join us in this community of believers as we work, pray, and give for the spread of the kingdom of God. And while we welcome them all, today we are focused on Hope.

Today Hope will be baptized into the family of God. Today she will be sealed by the power of the Holy Spirit and marked as Christ's own for ever. Today we will welcome her into the household of God and we will promise to lead her, guide her, care for her, teach her, and protect her. Hope and her family will know that this is her spiritual home.

Today the Feast of Saint Michael and All Angels, and the baptism of Hope Lawrence, go hand in hand. Today we remember Michael and the angels who fought in a battle already won and who continue to fight for us today in our ongoing spiritual battles. We also baptize Hope into the household of God – a household with a room already prepared for her, as well as a household that is constantly being worked on.

May this day remind us all, whether we are longtime members of this church or people who are brand new, that we are in this together and that we are never alone.

Amen.