

Week of St. Michael and All Angels

First recite the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the weekly section of the Small Catechism. Then read the Proper and assigned Scripture reading followed by the devotion. Conclude with singing the hymn of the week.



Weekly Catechism section: Fourth Petition
(Luther's Small Catechism)

Hymn of the Week: Lord God, We All to Thee Give Praise (TLH 254)

Monday - Introit (Psalm 103:1, 20-22)

Read Psalm 103.

Angel is the English spelling of the Greek word, which means messenger. The Hebrew word is Malak. Thus, the prophet Malachi means "My messenger," or "My angel." If we speak more broadly we can understand any messenger of the gospel as an angel, although usually we understand them as heavenly spirits sent by God. Sometimes angels are called sons of God, like in Job chapter 1. They present themselves before God. There are also good and bad angels. We hear throughout the New Testament of wicked spirits whom Jesus and his apostles cast out of people. But while the wicked spirits torment people, the good angels comfort and encourage people, like they did with Jesus in the wilderness after he was tempted by the devil (Matt 4:11).

Now, how do you know that God's angels are attending you? Again, an angel is a messenger. So what message are you hearing? Are you hearing the truth, or are you hearing what is false? People love to talk about angels. In fact, it seems that angels get more airtime during Christmas than Christ does. You can talk all you want about angels and your guardian angel. But if you are not hearing the Word of Christ, the eternal Son of God, the Prince of the Angels, who claimed your flesh and blood as his own and bore your sin in his own body, then there is no use talking about the protection of angels. Angels are Christ's ministers, who do his will. They bless him. They praise him. They therefore do not lead you away from his Word. They are ready at God's command to do his will. And what is his will? As the Psalmist says, to forgive all your iniquities and heal all your diseases, to save your life from the pit and crown you with steadfast love and mercy. It is for the sake of this gospel that God's angels work. This is what they long to touch. They strengthen all ministers and Christians so that they may confess this Word with

confidence. So as you take comfort in the care of God's angels, let the source of your comfort be in God's good message. This message doesn't save the angels. But they rejoice in it because it saves you.

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Tuesday - Old Testament Lesson (Daniel 10:10-14; 12:1-3)

Read Daniel 10 & 12.

Michael is a name for an angel. In the same way, Joshua is a name for a man. Michael means, "One who is like God." Joshua means, "The Lord saves." Joshua son of Nun was a man who brought the people Israel across the Jordan River into the promised land of Canaan. Joshua was just a man, even though he bore God's name. But his work was a shadow of the true Joshua, or as the Latin reads, Jesus. The true Joshua not only bore the name of God, but he is himself the fulfillment of that name. He is the Lord who saves.

It works the same way with the name Michael. One of the chief princes, Michael, served the Lord in his battles against Satan when God's people were captives in the land of Babylon and Persia. He served the Son of God in defeating the evil influences of the devil, which were controlling the rulers of Persia. We see how this was accomplished when God sent his angel to close the mouths of the lions after Daniel was condemned by Darius. This caused Darius to repent and throw into the den all the rulers who had convinced him to condemn Daniel. Just as Joshua, God's servant, had prevailed over the kingdoms of Canaan, bringing God's physical people into the physical promised land, so did God's servant, Michael, prevail over the evil spirits of Persia in order to deliver God's people in the land of Babylon. But just as Joshua was only a shadow of the true Joshua, Michael is a shadow of the true Michael. He whose title is "one of the chief princes" must give way to Michael who is "The Great Prince." This is the one who casts the devil down from heaven. This is the same Joshua who saves his people, not simply from Canaanites, Egyptians, Medes, and Persians, but from sin and death forever. This is He Who Is Like God, not that he is not God, but that, as the Son, he is distinct from God the Father. He is begotten of him eternally and therefore one substance with the Father. He is the Lord God, which is why he will judge the earth with righteousness and equity. Joshua of Nun and Michael shared his name because of their duties. We share his name through faith, since in baptism God claimed us as his own in Christ.

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Wednesday - Gradual (*Psalm 103:1; 91:1*)

Read Psalm 91.

Our *Gradual* comes from Psalm 91:11 and Psalm 103:1. First there is God's promise to send his angels to protect his children. Then there is the prayer of the soul to bless the Lord with the whole heart. Here we have the last petition of the Lord's Prayer, deliver us from evil, joined with the First and Second Commandments, which tell us to love, trust, and praise God with our whole hearts and minds. These two passages of the Psalter are some of the most beautiful portions of Scripture. They describe God's gracious protection as well as the joy flowing from a believing heart trusting in this promise of forgiveness, salvation, and protection from all evil. These are passages every Christian child should memorize. Every Christian child should be taught to bless the Lord with everything within himself with the confidence and joy that God sends his holy angels to protect his children.

And yet, as sweet as these two passages are, they also reveal the fiercest battle ever. It is the battle between God and the devil, the forces of light and the forces of darkness, of Christ versus sin and death, the Holy Spirit versus the corrupt flesh. This battle against the devil, the world, and the sinful flesh is the one that takes place in the spiritual realm. We can't see it. The world mocks it, treating it as nothing but myth. But through faith in Christ we know it is true. In fact, we experience it in our own conscience when we must do battle against temptation, sin, and guilt. Only through faith in the great work of Christ can we overcome such trials. Trusting that God will send his angels to protect you is to believe that he will fulfill his promise to deliver you from all evils of body and soul, possessions and reputation, that he will grant you a blessed end, graciously delivering you from this vale of tears to himself in heaven. Blessing the Lord with all your being is to confess with the angels that God has fulfilled his promises. Psalm 91 goes on to talk about treading the serpent under foot, and Psalm 103 describes all God's gracious works toward unworthy sinners, works which are administered by his own angels who continually praise him. So recount all his works toward you. This is what it means to bless him.

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Thursday - Epistle (Revelation 12:7-12)

Read Revelation 12.

War broke out in heaven. Michael, the prince of the angels, cast Satan, the great dragon to the earth. Satan is the Hebrew word for "accuse" or "accuser." Satan accuses us for the sins he has led us into. Job describes Satan doing this when he tells God that Job only serves him because he has been blessed so much on earth. Satan was accuses Job before God, claiming his faith was not genuine. The prophet Zechariah records of vision he saw of Joshua, the high priest, being accused by Satan before the throne of God. The Lord said to Satan, "The Lord rebuke you!"

By such obedience to the Lord, the Lord rebuked and silenced the devil. In other words, by his obedience to the Father, the Son has destroyed the power of the devil. Now the devil is on earth, but he is chained up. Those who love their lives here on earth, losing sight of the life Christ earned for them in heaven, are in the grips of the devil. But blessed are those who did not love their lives to the death. They have overcome the devil, not by their own wims and merits, but by the blood of Christ and his gospel.

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Friday - Alleluia Verse (Revelation 12:11)

Read Revelation 12 again.

The Word and work of Christ cannot be separated. If Jesus bled for us but did not deliver the fruits of his death to us in his Word then we would be left relying on our own pious thoughts and attempts to remember or portray what Christ did. He would at best be a moral example for us to follow, but without his Word delivering salvation to us, his blood would only be a symbol of our own religiousness. Nothing more. If Jesus gave us his Word but did not make atonement for our sins, satisfying God's wrath and thereby taking away the devil's ability to accuse us, then his Word would be no more than religious ceremonies and churchy rituals. Our faith would be in our own going through the motions, following the rubrics, and nothing more.

But the Word and work of Christ cannot be separated. The Word is the testimony of Christ's blood. Jesus calls the wine in the Lord's Supper the new testament in his blood. It isn't simply his blood for the sake of being his blood. It is the testament, the testimony, the declaration of the forgiveness of sins and peace with God. The blood of Jesus testifies to our salvation. So in the Lord's Supper we have the most vivid unity of the work of Christ and the Word of Christ. His own body and blood,

given and shed on Calvary, is delivered to us through the testimony of his Word. And this is the foundation of our faith. We don't benefit from the Lord's Supper simply by showing up or having it performed on our behalf like a prayer would be. No, we benefit from the Lord's Supper by eating the body and blood of Jesus while relying on the Word of his testimony. It is in this way that we conquer the devil and all his angels. We don't conquer the devil by thinking pious thoughts as best we can or by going through the motions of rites and ceremonies. Then it would be by our own merits. This would be loving our own works and lives rather than the work and Word of Christ. No, we overcome sin, death, and the devil by the blood of the Lamb of God who took the sin of the world away, and by the testimony of this blood through his Word. This is our *Alleluia* we sing with all the saints and company of heaven.

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Saturday - Gospel (Matthew 18:1-11)

Read Matthew 18.

Christian children have guardian angels. This isn't some superstitious fantasy of wide-eyed cartoons and cupids, which do no more than satisfy the sentimental and make someone else a lot of money. No, these angels behold the very face of the Father. When we think of angels seeing the face of God we should think of the King's closest servants, the highest ranked officers in the kingdom (Esth 1:14). St. Paul calls them rulers and authorities in the heavenly places (Eph 3:10). So not only do Christian children have angels, they have the top angels who behold God's face. If you recall, even the Seraphim who appeared to Isaiah were covering their faces in the presence of the Triune God (Is 6:1-3). But the little children of the Father who are baptized into Christ -- their angels behold his face.

Jesus points to a child as an example of faith, not because children have no sin. A childlike innocence rather describes their simplicity and dependency. Children still need saving from their sins. And this is the whole point of Jesus setting them up as models for all Christians. They are dependent upon the care and instruction of their parents, and they believe what they tell them. He who depends on God in this way is an heir of his kingdom. He who finds his salvation not in what his eyes can see, but in the crucified Son of God who took away his sins, is a child of God. Now, the devil and his angels would have us take refuge in anything else but this. They have us depend on what our eyes perceive rather than what is hidden under God's promises. They deceive us into trusting in the works of our hands that take what is not ours, or our feet that walk where we should not go. And the sinful flesh is so foolish as to

boast of all this before God. But the Lord who sits in the high and holy place also dwells with the contrite in heart (Is 57:15), who have become as helpless little babies that need cleaning from sin and feeding with righteousness -- these are the ones whose hearts have been purified by faith in the saving death of Christ (Acts 15:9). They will therefore also see the face of their Father (Matt 5:8).

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Lord God, We All to Thee Give Praise

254

Heb. 1: 14

Dicimus grates tibi, summe rerum

Philipp Melancthon, 1543, cento

Tr., Paul Eber, 1554

English tr., Emanuel Cronewett, 1880, alt.

L. M.

Old Hundredth
"Genevan Psalter," 1551

1 Lord God, we all to Thee give praise, Thanks-giv - ings
 2 They shine with light and heav'n - ly grace And con - stant -
 3 They nev - er rest nor sleep as we; Their whole de -
 4 The an - cient Drag - on is their foe; His en - vy

meet to Thee we raise, That an - gel hosts Thou didst cre -
 ly be - hold Thy face; They heed Thy voice, they know it
 light is but to be With Thee, Lord Je - sus, and to
 and his wrath they know. It al - ways is his aim and

ate A - round Thy glo - rious throne to wait.
 well, In god - ly wis - dom they ex - cel.
 keep Thy lit - tle flock, Thy lambs and sheep.
 pride Thy Chris - tian peo - ple to di - vide. A - men.

5 As he of old deceived the world
 And into sin and death has hurled,
 So now he subtly lies in wait
 To ruin school and Church and State.

7 But watchful is the angel band
 That follows Christ on every hand
 To guard His people where they go
 And break the counsel of the Foe.

6 A roaring lion, round he goes,
 No halt nor rest he ever knows;
 He seeks the Christians to devour
 And slay them by his dreadful power.

8 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.