**Ministering Spirits**

Based on [Matthew 18:1-11](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Mt18.1-10)

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St. Michael and All Angels

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There’s a war going on all around us right now. It is happening in this very room, within our very selves. The soldiers fighting in this war are invisible to the unaided eye, but the effects of their battles can sometimes be perceived. But other times great battles are waged and won without your knowledge. Time and time again you were saved from imminent danger and you didn’t even know it. While you went about your day, little did you realize how often you were seriously attacked and valiantly defended and delivered from harm. On an average day, while you fret over thoughts of deadlines and the opinions of others, all the while there are multiple, incessant attacks on your life.

I am of course talking about viruses, bacteria, germs, tiny living things that attack your health. Thank God your body has been equipped with an army to oppose them. **You have been endowed by your creator with an immune system without which you would have died long ago**. Now you have some choice, some willpower in this war. You can help the war effort. You can keep clean...wash your hands, avoid others who are sick, adopt healthy habits. But sooner or later something will get through your defenses. You will “catch a bug”. And even the smallest bacteria or virus or germ would kill you if you if God hadn’t created antibodies to fight for you.

There is an endless war of microbes that threaten our lives daily. It wasn’t long ago in the history of the world that nobody knew they existed. Now we all have faith that it is happening, but this germ warfare takes place below our radar.

Similarly, there is another warfare that goes on above your radar. There is spiritual warfare taking place, the battles and the blows of which we do not see first hand. **It wasn’t long ago that everyone had faith that this war was going on. It is only recently, in the history of the world, that civilized mankind has become ignorant of it.** Angels and devils exist. They are everywhere around us fighting over our *spiritual* health. It is not a battle of *microbes* though...rather a battle of ***macrobes***, being that can’t be seen not because they are too small, but because they are too great for us. They exist on a plane of reality above us, and that we can neither see nor touch unless they will it.

The analogy of spiritual warfare to germ warfare is fitting. There are other similarities. (1) Good hygiene practices help to prevent the spread of illness. So too, baptism and daily repentance and remembrance of it are hygiene against evil and sin. (2) Keeping your house clean and in order can keep you healthy. So too, exercising spiritual disciplines of self control and denial help keep sin at bay. And (3) just as you can conscientiously avoid unsanitary environments, likewise you can consciously avoid the places where temptations are high. Just as there is worldly wisdom, there is spiritual wisdom. In all these things, you can reduce your chances of your eternal life catching a temporary bug or even a terminal disease.

All this talk of warfare is germane to our readings and to the theme of this festival day. It is the feast of St Michael and All Angels, also called *Michaelmass*. Jesus says, “See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that ***in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven***.”

Resentment is particularly toxic to your spiritual health. It is easy for us to despise others. It’s easy to be annoyed with those who continue to make foolish mistakes, who make life for those around them so hard. Why am I expected to bear all their burdens, many of which are their own fault? But remember this perspective. Jesus sasy that God has assigned a troop of angels just for them. Each *little person* who knows Christ has such bodyguards devoted to them. They are that important to God. A***nd these greater beings, angelic beings, their whole and sole God-given purpose in life is to attentively guard and defend that person whom you despise.*** See that you do not despise anyone. For their struggle, as well as ours, is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Friends, our battle is spiritual. Never forget that. Our enemies are powers and spirits, and they seek to destroy us. If St. Michael and All Angels would stop fighting and defending us, the devils would overwhelm us so quickly that everything would be ruined. Look what happened to Job, when God forbid his angels from preventing Satan's attacks. Job lost his possessions, his children, and his heath quicker than you can say jack robinson. This was so that Job would persevere and his faith would be tested and refined. So too, God leaves gaps in the defenses at times in order that, through the thorns and blows of the devil we know just how good we have it in Christ.

The devil prowls around like a roaring lion. God lets him. But God also set up a defensive guard so that he can never tempt you more than you can bear. God works through ministers--not just visible ones--but invisible as the author of Hebrews says about angels, “**Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to serve for the sake of those who will inherit salvation**.” It is both humbling and glorifying to think about. God has made us a little lower than the heavenly angels *and yet*...he has created them to serve us--not at our “beck and call”--but as God send them for our good. “**What is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that thou carest for him?**”

Jesus Christ is ***the*** Son of Man, born of a woman and yet true God. Though he was equal with God, he did not exult or glorify himself. He became as nothing, a servant, obedient to the point of hunger, thirst, exhaustion, and suffering. And in all these things he had angels assigned to him, and ministering to him. The devil tempted him, saying “jump off the temple to see if God will send an angel to protect you. Jesus said, “D**o not put the Lord your God to the test**.” And he didn’t. /// But God is faithful, and after the devil fled, Scripture says, “**Angels came and ministered to him**.” Even as he was tempted in the Garden, sweat blood and appealed to his Father will, angels came and were ministering to Him. God the Father, ministered to his own Son through angels. What an honor that he would give us the same service as his own Son who “**was tempted in every way as we are, only without sin**.”

As Christ was being tempted on earth, a 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.*  Before Jesus shed his blood for us, Satan had access to heaven to accuse the saints day and night of their sins before God. Satan accused Job, and God listened, (though he always knows the heart). But now **Satan has been cast out of the courtroom**. **He no longer prosecutes mankind before the Judge,** because ***all the evidence for his case has been ruled out of order and struck from the record***. And so St. John writes in a vision, *“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.*** *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.”*