

Michaelmas
St. Luke 10:17-20; Revelation 12:7-12

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

"For He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you in all your ways." Such is the first verse of today's Gradual. Satan used this verse to tempt Jesus to throw Himself down off the temple mount (cf. Luke 4:9-10), telling Jesus that He could do so without fear of injuring or killing Himself. While that is true, it is no reason to put God to the test, as Jesus informs the crafty serpent. This verse, and the entire 91st Psalm, is written for your benefit; it is written about you with the Christ in mind. You are the one, like Christ, who God has given His angels charge over, to keep you in all your ways.

So, look at Christ and this Psalm. Building up to verse 11, the Psalm lists danger after danger that could befall you after acknowledging that YHWH is your refuge and fortress: a fowler's snare, perilous pestilence, night terror, arrows by day, thousands upon thousands of perils that may fall at your sides. "But [none] shall come near you." (Psalm 91:7c) Jesus certainly had perils to contend with from the moment He was conceived and born, and not once did they lay a hand on Him until it was His time to die for you.

But, these dangers also come your way. You know it, and you can feel it. An enemy sets a trap for you, besmirching your reputation. Illnesses overcome you. There are those who seek your life and property who prowl around at night, and it seems no more safe during the day at times. You walk in danger all the way as you sang to start the service today. Yet, God gives His angels charge over you, to keep you in all of your ways. They will not let you dash your foot against a stone.

Your experience may tell you otherwise. You bear scars that tell you otherwise. Broken bones and skin, coughs and sore throats, all testify that it has been more than a stone against which you have dashed your foot. So what are the angels protecting you against?

Look further. "You shall tread upon the lion and the cobra, The young lion and the serpent you shall trample underfoot." (Psalm 91:13) Once again, this is Jesus that the Psalmist sings about. Look at the promise God made to the serpent in the Garden before expelling Adam and Eve: "And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel." (Genesis 3:15) Jesus is the one who will trample the serpent under foot.

What about the lion? Well, remember that, "[Y]our adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." (1 Peter 5:8) The devil seeks to tempt you away from your Lord and Savior and into his wretched company, and in so doing he will have devoured you. The tools he uses are sorrow and doubt. He causes sorrow in order to drive you to despair. He causes you to doubt that God does actually care for you. He uses your scars and bruises and sorrow to prove to you that God doesn't give His angels charge over you. You doubt God's providence and protection. You doubt God's gift of Michael and angels. You doubt that God sent His Son in the flesh to be the propitiation for your sins. You doubt God.

If, in your sorrow and despair and suffering you have doubted God, His Son, His angels, and His providence, repent. And I can promise you that at one time or another, you have doubted God, His Son, His angels, and His providence; this is the curse of your fallen flesh, inherited from your first father, Adam. The Word of God declares to you that these things are true, that God does indeed provide for you (cf. Psalm 145:15-16), that He does give His angels for you, that he sent His Son to be your propitiation (cf. 1 John 4:10), and that He does exist (cf. Exodus 3:14); but some sorrow or grief comes along, worse than the last, and you doubt it all as a result of the severity or the serial nature of sorrow and grief. So, you trust yourself—your reason, senses, and emotions—over and above the true Word of God.

Repent, because He does give His angels charge over you to keep you in all your ways. He is

with you always, to the very end of the age (cf. Matthew 28:20), even as He sends His angels to guard and keep you. So, wherever you go, whatever you encounter, whatever sorrows may befall you, you are in Christ, and His angels are with you. They are there to remind you of your place and standing before God. And the tool they use? The blood of the Lamb! You heard it in today's Epistle, where Michael and his angels fought against Satan and his angels. Michael prevailed, and Satan and his angels were cast from the heavenly council. "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death."

This is what Jesus was talking about when He said in today's Gospel, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven." By His blood is Satan defeated. His head is crushed as the Jesus, the very Lamb of God, shed His blood on the cross, whereat His own heel was bruised. Michael and his angels prevailed, Satan and his angels were cast out of heaven, and Jesus saw him fall like lightning from heaven. The blood of Christ conquers the devil.

But where did Satan land? Right here! He is among you, prowling like that roaring lion, seeking to cause despair and doubt and anger against God, for he himself is angry, knowing that his time is short. He is conquered, the blood of the Lamb renders Him impotent against Jesus Christ, Michael, and His angels.

And it's that very same blood of the Lamb that renders Satan and his angels impotent against you! When the seventy returned to Jesus, they did so with great joy, because even the demons were subject to them in Jesus' name. Without Jesus' blood, those demons would have free reign over the world—over you! But, Jesus has come, and He has died, shedding His blood for your propitiation, and in His name, Satan and the demons are subject to you.

The story goes that Martin Luther was holed up in Wartburg Castle, hidden away from his enemies who sought to kill him and destroy what this little monk from Germany had done. There, he was under constant attack from the devil, as he himself writes. He is said to have written on all of the walls, and even the floor and ceiling, the Latin phrase *Baptismatus sum*—I am baptized! He is said to have told the devil that he farts in his direction. He battled against Satan and his angels, not on his own merits, but on those of Jesus Christ and His blood.

The same thing applies to you. Once again, you know the sorrows that lie around you. You confess these to be part and parcel of your life in this Vale of Tears. But, these cannot come near you or have effect on your salvation, because you are bought with the blood of the Lamb. You are baptized; let Luther's motto be your own!

"Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."

Therefore, let Satan and his angels rage. Let them prowl like a roaring lion. Let the crafty serpent try his best. Let the sorrows and sufferings come. You have dominion over them on account of the blood of the Lamb, in which you are washed, because Jesus has crushed the serpent's head, even as He has trampled on the head of the lion. This is cause for much rejoicing.

Still, there is something greater for which to rejoice. Rejoice because your names are written in heaven. That glorious place from which Michael cast Satan and his angels also now bears your name! It is written there in the Lamb's Book of Life because it is written in the red ink of His blood. You are covered. You are washed. You are redeemed. All of this for the sake of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, by whose merits you are forgiven for all of your sins.

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.