

Michael and all Angels Sunday 09/29/2024

Today we are celebrating Michael and all Angels Sunday. This is a festival dedicated to the archangel Michael that started in the fifth Sunday in Rome. Michael is not a saint, but in Jewish angelology, he is one of the four arch angels who carry out the will of God. The stories about Michael center around war scenes which are battles between good and evil.

The second lesson from Revelation today finds Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon, which relates to the serpent in Genesis. The serpent and dragon are seen as the devil or satan, the deceiver of the whole world. He was thrown down to the earth along with his angels.

The book of Revelation was written by John from the island of Patmos to Christians who were being persecuted by the Roman Empire. John received visions from an angel to comfort and challenge Christians.

Revelation is an apocalypse or unveiling of what soon must take place. Although this is not a book to predict the future. It's a message of hope for all Christians, for all ages. We find a great deal of symbolism based on the Old Testament.

As I have stated earlier, in our text from Revelation today we have a connection to the Old Testament the serpent and the dragon. In Genesis chapter 3 we have the serpent in the Garden of Eden enticing Adam and Eve, that if they eat the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden, they will be like God. This is after God said do not eat from the tree in the middle of the garden, for if you do, you will die.

The serpent appealed to them and twisted God's words and said God would not kill them as God knows that when one eats fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that their eyes would be opened, and they will then know the difference between good and evil. The woman ate one of the fruit and offered it to the man and he ate also.

Their eyes were opened, and they did not die. They did realize that they were naked. This was the first time that human being on earth had contact with evil, the serpent. The sin here was wanting to be like God and listening to the wrong person. This same issue continues to plague us as human beings. We want power and control.

According to our text from Revelation, the dragon, representing the serpent, the devil, satan, wanted to be in control and Michael and his angels said no and

kicked him down to earth. Human beings have been dealing with evil, the devil, satan from the beginning of time, Adam and Eve.

What is going on here is that evil was defeated in heaven. Now, something we discussed in bible study on Tuesday was the fact that we thought heaven was devoid of evil. I believe the message here is that if evil was defeated in heaven, it has been defeated here on earth in the person of Jesus. Through Jesus' death and resurrection, sin, death and the power of the devil have been defeated.

We may ask, then why are we still dealing with evil in the world? Because we continue to try and do everything on our own and we have not defeated evil. Jesus has. Thus, we need God, Jesus and Holy Spirit to help us deal with evil in the world.

So often it seems to be so easy just to point a finger at a person and say they are evil. The person themselves are not evil, but evil may have more control over them. Evil can be in a person's actions and words.

In reality, as human beings, we can allow evil to influence our thoughts, words and actions. When we are tired, frustrated and/or scared, we are vulnerable and often rely more on ourselves. This is when evil can influence us. Our other option is to stay connected to Jesus and this is not easy as it takes work.

Staying connected to Jesus, means that we are called to examine what we hear and observe as well as what we think say or do and measure it against what we have learned and understand God's Word to say. When we are tired, frustrated and/or scared, we often just go with the flow.

I would like to define evil at this point as going against God's will in thoughts words and actions. We can hear and see it in others. But it is not our job to judge them, but we are called to challenge them, if we feel that we can have a healthy discussion.

Some things for us to listen to as followers of Jesus in our own and others words and actions: Do we hear and observe love or hate? Do we hear and observe that our world is full of enemies or neighbors to be loved? Do we hear and observe the ability to listen even though we may not agree? Do we hear and observe people taking responsibility for their words and actions and admitting if they are wrong?.

When we try and manage our lives on our own, it tells Jesus that we have chosen not to follow him. It means that we are trying to have power and control over our thoughts, words and actions and as a result we try and do the same thing over others. This is when we are vulnerable and will find it easier to listen to the serpent or dragon.

The serpent or dragon is alive and active here on earth. They are always trying to tell us that we don't need God's help, that we have the power and control within ourselves to know and understand everything. This does not mean that God hasn't given us abilities to understand many things and to be able to determine the truth. The serpent or dragon continues to spread evil with messages that are not in accordance with God's will. When we are vulnerable and don't search for the truth, we are allowing evil to come into our lives.

In our country today, many of us would like to point fingers at specific people and say that they are evil. I would challenge us not to do that. Their words and actions may be evil. The truth is becoming more difficult to determine in words and actions.

Today we are reminded that first of all our salvation is paid for by Jesus and we can rejoice. Also, that Jesus has defeated sin, death and the power of the devil. Unfortunately, this does not mean that we don't have any work to do in this arena. It does mean that we are not alone in this battle of good and evil in our own lives and the life of our country.

Evil lies in the shadows of our lives and our country. What is in the shadows needs to be revealed. This is where our work comes in, but not without asking the Holy Spirit to give us wisdom in trying to figure out truth from untruth. We have people and countries trying to keep the truth in the shadows. This is evil at work.

Michael and the angels defeated the dragon in heaven. We have been given the power through Jesus to do it here. It takes more work to love than hate, it takes more work to look at people as neighbors and not enemies, it takes more work to listen to people that we may not agree with, and it takes more work to take responsibility for our words and actions.

When we don't do the work is when the serpent or dragon spreads evil and we can be colluding with them.

With the power of Jesus, we can do the work to love our neighbors and discover the truth as we take responsibility for our words and actions and defeat evil as Michael and angels did.

Let us pray, Hi God, when it comes to determining good and evil, we need your help. We know that truth is good, but it becomes more and more difficult to discern it. During this time in our country, we continue to come back to you and admit that we cannot do this on our own. You have given us the tools, your Word and your Son, Jesus has defeated evil. Today we bring our vulnerability to you and seek to hear your voice over the serpent/dragon's voice that we may do your will. In Jesus' name, Amen.