

Wednesday, September 29, 2021

Saint Michael and All Angels:

Things Seen and Unseen

by Pastor Tim for St. Laika's



Today Saint Laika's joins most of the Western Church in celebrating the festival of Saint Michael and All Angels, sometimes called Michaelmas. We give thanks for the many ways in which God's loving care watches over us, both directly and indirectly, and we are reminded that the richness and variety of God's creation far exceed our knowledge of it.

The Bible often speaks of created intelligences other than humans. They worship God in heaven and act as his messengers and agents on earth. We are not told much about them and it is not clear how much of what we are told is figurative. They seem to have been a way for God to be present in the lives of individuals to help them do God's will.

One of my favourite stories is from the "Book of Numbers" where God's prophet Balaam is doing something God does not want. The donkey he is riding upon sees an angel up ahead blocking the road. He does everything possible to get that donkey down the road. but that donkey will not go. Here is how Scripture finishes the story:

"Then the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the road, with his drawn sword in his hand; and he bowed down, falling on his face.

"The angel of the Lord said to him, 'Why have you struck your donkey these three times? I have come out as an adversary because your way is perverse before me. The donkey saw me and turned away from me these three times. If it had not turned away from me, surely I would by now have killed you and let it live.'" (Numbers 22: 31-33)

What is the value to us of remembering the Holy Angels? Well, since they appear to excel us in both knowledge and power, they remind us that, even among created things, we humans are not the top of the heap. Since it is a common belief that demons are angels who have chosen to disobey God and to be his enemies rather than his willing servants, they remind us that the higher we are the further we can fall. In the picture of God sending his angels to help and defend us, we are reminded that apparently God, instead of doing good things directly, often prefers to do them through his willing servants, enabling those who have accepted his love to show their love for one another.

Scripture. In "Psalm One Hundred and Three," at verse twenty, we read:

"Bless the Lord, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, obedient to his spoken word."

Prayer. Everlasting God, who has ordained and constituted in a wonderful order the ministries of angels and mortals, mercifully grant that, as your holy angels always serve and worship you in heaven, so by your appointment, they may help and defend us here on earth; through Jesus Christ our lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Thank you, Pastor Tim., for this beautiful reflection on the angelic persons, and the reminder of their superior intelligence and power. It is interesting that it wasn't so much the superior being, the angel of the Lord, who humbled Balaam, but the donkey. Isn't that so often the way? When we rest on our laurels and competencies and even, God forbid, beat our "inferiors" because of them, God humbles us and shows us what he really values, what holiness really looks like. Michael's name means "Who Is Like God?" Michael's very name is a reflection of God's glory. This allows his superior intelligence and power to be used for God's purposes and the whole world's good. Once again, humility reigns. All you holy angels of God, pray for us!

I want to take a moment to thank all of you for your prayers during my mother's last days. Grief hasn't really hit me yet. I'm still floating on the grace of all of your prayers, and thankfulness for God's grace in such a mother. Thank you so very much.

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