

“Archangel”

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September 29, 2024

Feast of St. Michael & All Angels

St. Michael's Episcopal Church

Independence, MO

Sermon transcript in Essay Form

Summarized by ChatGPT

Once again, we find ourselves celebrating the Feast of St. Michael and All Angels, a moment that brings excitement for those of us who cherish these special occasions. Having been part of this community long enough now, I love to look back at what we discussed during past celebrations. It's like watching the seasons change: we revisit familiar themes but with fresh perspectives that show how we've grown together.

This year, we gather on September 29th, the traditional date for the Feast of St. Michael. It's interesting to note that some churches shift the celebration to the following day, September 30th, to avoid disrupting the flow of their liturgical calendar. However, for us, the 29th is a time to fully embrace and reflect on St. Michael without any distractions. Instead of being overwhelmed by all the angels, we get to zero in on Michael, which makes our exploration richer.

One of the most recognizable aspects of St. Michael is his depiction with a sword, often slaying a dragon. This imagery comes from the Book of Revelation, where Michael battles the devil and his minions. Growing up, I was surrounded by a spirituality that framed life as a cosmic battle between good and evil. It created a clear divide: us versus them. This mindset encouraged a sense of spiritual warfare that was thrilling but also somewhat limiting.

However, as we dive deeper into the meaning of St. Michael, we have to ask ourselves: how relevant is this imagery for us today? What do we do

with the idea of the flaming sword and the wounded dragon? This brings to mind the writing advice to “kill your darlings.” It’s a phrase that suggests letting go of cherished ideas that may not serve us well anymore. It’s a bit shocking at first, but the essence of it is to look critically at what we hold dear and determine if it’s still beneficial.

When we think about the dragon in this context, it’s interesting to note that Michael isn’t battling a lion or a human—creatures that God created and called good. Instead, the dragon represents something that humans have conjured up, perhaps our fears and the destructive forces we create. It’s a reminder that we often impose our own narratives onto God’s creation, sometimes forgetting the true essence of what God intended.

There’s a fascinating moment in the Book of Jude where Michael contends with Satan over the body of Moses. It’s such a curious story—Michael trying to keep the Israelites from idolizing Moses and holding onto the past. He understands that clinging to Moses would distract them from the new journey ahead. This moment serves as a powerful metaphor for us as well. How often do we find ourselves trapped in nostalgia, honoring the past at the expense of moving forward?

In our own church community, we sometimes feel that pressure. We have fond memories of bustling youth programs and lively gatherings, and it’s easy to worry about whether we can recreate those experiences. But Michael’s story reminds us that while it’s essential to honor our history, we can’t let it hinder our progress. We’re called to forge ahead, embracing new opportunities while learning from where we’ve been.

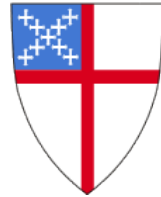
As we gather as St. Michael's Church, we need to discern what parts of our past are worth carrying into the future. This process of reflection is crucial; it shapes our identity and guides our mission moving forward. I'm inspired by the words of Jesus when he told Nathaniel, "You will see greater things than these." It's a gentle nudge to keep our eyes open to the possibilities that lie ahead.

So, as we celebrate the Feast of St. Michael, let's embrace both the challenges and the blessings of our journey. This isn't just a day to remember an archangel; it's a chance for us to reflect on our growth as a community. We can honor our past while boldly stepping into the future, ready to see the greater things that await us. Amen.

The Lessons Appointed for Use on the

Sunday closest to October 5

Proper 22
Year B
RCL



Track 1 or *Track 2*

Job 1:1; 2:1-10	Genesis 2:18-24
Psalm 26	Psalm 8
Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:5-12	Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:5-12
Mark 10:2-16	Mark 10:2-16

The Collect

Almighty and everlasting God, you are always more ready to hear than we to pray, and to give more than we either desire or deserve: Pour upon us the abundance of your mercy, forgiving us those things of which our conscience is afraid, and giving us those good things for which we are not worthy to ask, except through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ our Savior; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Old Testament

Job 1:1; 2:1-10

There was once a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job. That man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil.

One day the heavenly beings came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them to present himself before the Lord. The Lord said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the Lord, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it." The Lord said to

Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man who fears God and turns away from evil. He still persists in his integrity, although you incited me against him, to destroy him for no reason." Then Satan answered the Lord, "Skin for skin! All that people have they will give to save their lives. But stretch out your hand now and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse you to your face." The Lord said to Satan, "Very well, he is in your power; only spare his life."

So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord, and inflicted loathsome sores on Job from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. Job took a potsherd with which to scrape himself, and sat among the ashes.

Then his wife said to him, "Do you still persist in your integrity? Curse God, and die." But he said to her, "You speak as any foolish woman would speak. Shall we receive the good at the hand of God, and not receive the bad?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

The Psalm

Psalm 26

Judica me, Domine

1 Give judgment for me, O Lord,
for I have lived with integrity; *
I have trusted in the Lord and have not faltered.

2 Test me, O Lord, and try me; *
examine my heart and my mind.

3 For your love is before my eyes; *
I have walked faithfully with you.

4 I have not sat with the worthless, *
nor do I consort with the deceitful.

5 I have hated the company of evildoers; *
I will not sit down with the wicked.

6 I will wash my hands in innocence, O Lord, *
that I may go in procession round your altar,

7 Singing aloud a song of thanksgiving *
and recounting all your wonderful deeds.

8 Lord, I love the house in which you dwell *
and the place where your glory abides.

9 Do not sweep me away with sinners, *
nor my life with those who thirst for blood,

10 Whose hands are full of evil plots, *
and their right hand full of bribes.

11 As for me, I will live with integrity; *
redeem me, O Lord, and have pity on me.

12 My foot stands on level ground; *
in the full assembly I will bless the Lord.

The Epistle

Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:5-12

Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

Now God did not subject the coming world, about which we are speaking, to angels. But someone has testified somewhere,

“What are human beings that you are mindful of them, or mortals, that you care for them?

You have made them for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned them with glory and honor, subjecting all things under their feet.”

Now in subjecting all things to them, God left nothing outside their control. As it is, we do not yet see everything in subjection to them, but we do see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father. For this reason Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters, saying,

“I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters, in the midst of the congregation I will praise you.”

The Gospel

Mark 10:2-16

Some Pharisees came, and to test Jesus they asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” He answered them, “What did Moses command you?” They said, “Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her.” But Jesus said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart he wrote this commandment for you. But from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’ ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”

Then in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. He said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.”

People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, “Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.” And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

Optional parts of the readings are set off in square brackets.

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