



ST. PATRICK'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

4797 Curtis RD Port St. John FL 32927

St Michael the Archangel

September 22, 2024

**✠ In The Name of The Father and of The Son
and of The Holy Ghost. Amen.**

The passage selected for the sermon this morning is taken from the Gospel:

"Who such receiveth one such little child in my name receiveth me . But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged around his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. St. Matthew 18:5-7

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

In the readings today, we have this account of the greatest battle of all Creation, the battle of Satan and his angels against the angels of St Michael. Paired with it, though, is this very personal account about the betrayal of the innocents and those who would harm children. Together the readings remind us that the battle between good and evil is waged throughout Creation, and that we have no less a role in that battle than the greatest of the angels.

It is certainly interesting to note, that in our wildest imaginings of the conflicts of the future like the Star Wars movies and the Gundam toys so popular with young teens, when heroes are armed with lasers, and nuclear cannons and weapons that can destroy worlds from light miles away, that the ultimate weapon of confrontation of the battle between good and evil is still the sword of light.

The true sword of light, the one wielded by St Michael, is the most unique of weapons. It is not meant to piece like a saber, or crush like a broadsword. It repels the enemy by the power of light and love, the essence of God. It is bestowed upon St. Michael the Archangel because of his humility and obedience. Interestingly, it is that weapon that creates the boundary that is the banishing of Satan and his minions from heaven, and it is also the sword that set the boundary and barrier between Adam and Eve and the Garden of Eden.

At the end of time, God Himself casts Satan into the eternal fiery destruction. What is of man that will not repent and be transformed is cast there as well. But the Sword of Light is not the instrument of that destruction. Instead, the sword is used to make time and space, to allow the enemies of God to repent their pride, to see the fruit of their selfishness, and to be transformed and redeemed. The war between good and evil takes place in that time and space created by the Sword.

We need to be mindful that this war between good and evil will not be won when the seemingly endless waves of terrorists and demons and hate are brought to justice. This war was already won on the Cross, and the destruction of the remnant of our enemy will be swept away forever and finally at the Second Coming of Our

Lord Jesus Christ. So what is our role to be at this junction in the eternal conflict? We are to bear witness to Christ in our words and in our lives, and to emulate His selfless sacrifice, not loving our satisfaction in this life so much that we die forever to eternal life by our selfishness and sinfulness.

After 9/11, there was an arrest of a man in Northern Virginia that did not garner significant headlines. He was not an extremist or fanatic. He was just a greedy, sinful man, who helped a stranger get false paperwork for quick money and personal gratification. That paperwork was used to get real extremists onto a plane and to kill all aboard when it crashed into the Pentagon. A simple act of personal sin effected a global manifestation of evil.

Many preachers, writers and commentators have echoed a call for us to examine our own responsibility for the 9/11 atrocity at a national and societal level. They are right to make this demand. We need to reassess the images we send to the world. If our movies, television, music and business are the instruments of corruption and sin for the children of the world, woe be to us as a nation and a society. It is better that we have a millstone tied about our neck and are cast into the sea, than we remain the instrument that promotes hedonism, selfishness, hatred of self and others, and the hopelessness that are the trademark exports of our culture to the children of the world.

However, we can't restrict this self-examination to the global stage. When Jesus warns against becoming an instrument of offense that harms one of these little ones who believe in Him, He is warning us to be diligent in our personal and everyday lives as well. Like the man that made a few quick dollars selling illegal identification, our own seemingly harmless sin can be the launch point of the greatest evil.

Last week we were reminded that the world is watching us as Christians. While we know

better than to entice our children, or even the children of God that are our brothers and sisters, into joining us in active sin, we also have to remember that our failure to live as Christians, our failure to be true reflections of the teachings of Christ, can be as deadly and damning to our souls as any public active sin.

The world does look to us as Christians. If by our acts of selfishness, or hypocrisy, or sinfulness or un-loving behavior, a person is turned away from Christianity and salvation, woe be to us. We are the ones who would be better off having a millstone tied around our necks and cast into the ocean. God help us to avoid that fate.

But the Covenant of the Cross is not just of Covenant of prohibitions and punishments. For every devil that tempts us, we have our guardian angels at our side to protect and preserve us, to set the impassable boundary between temptation and godliness.

In the gospel today, we are not only told how we will be damned for offending against a child, we are also promised blessings, for living in Christian love with the children of the world, for accepting the grace of our adoption in Christ with humility rather than pride. For this work we will be great in the kingdom of heaven. And if we receive a child, acting selflessly and lovingly, in the image of Jesus Christ and for His name, then we will be blessed as if we had done the same for Jesus Himself.

We are called to be fearless and great warriors, with Michael and His Angels, armed by the Blood of the Lamb, by witness to the Word, by a love of Jesus that exceeds our love for this life. Our part in the battle is to live courageously, receiving the children of God in the Name of Jesus, living a life that offends them not, but instead, leads them to the Lamb, and to Eternal life.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

