**Luke 10:17-20**

The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!” **18** And he said to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. **19** Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. **20**  Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

**“Unhindered Joy In Christ”**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen. When you are out doing whatever you need to do this week. Consider the Minor Festival of St. Michael and All Angels for it falls on Tuesday, but we go out of the way to celebrate it today. In our complex society ruled by industrialization, scientific discovery, and technologic advancement, few have time or are open-minded enough to consider things like angels. Even among the churched in America a survey notes, “Less than four out of every ten self-identified Christians firmly accept the teaching that a person can be influenced by spiritual forces, such as angels or demons.”[[1]](#footnote-1) At best, the entertainment industry has a niche enticing the interest of people for profit. Regrettably, hyped up spirituality is never the same as what God’s Word says.

What appears unimpressive to some changes nothing of God’s service by His angels. Our LCMS president recently sent an email entitled, “The Global Refugee Crisis.” He remarks, “It’s unprecedented. For the first time in most of our lifetimes, there are more than 50 million refugees worldwide. That’s six times the population of New York City.”[[2]](#footnote-2) If you ask me, no doubt, the angels have helped to protect and preserve these fleeing people. This has happened in part with nations, like Germany, welcoming strangers into their country. The pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church in Berlin noted, “We have about 860 members; more than 600 of them are former Muslims who have become Christians during the last [few] years.”[[3]](#footnote-3) God pierces the darkness by His light. The joy Christ gives even comes with all the company of heaven.

When the seventy-two disciples returned from preaching the Gospel, there was joy and why not? Jesus had sent them out. He knew His Word would not return empty. They said, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!” What the disciples witnessed were the fallen angels, those allied with the devil, meeting their demise with their master. The disciples saw all this only in part for Jesus told them, “I saw Satan fall like lightening from heaven.” The adversary of man, the accuser of sinners had met the authority of Christ and His Word. The seventy-two went out imaging they were alone. However, the authority of Christ given them carried with it all the company heaven. Those sheep being sent out among wolves were shielded by the angels every step of the way.

Heaven is for real, since God sends His angels in our defense. They are ever at work these spiritual beings, especially among the baptized for Christ claimed you by His authority. Luther comments, “Because of his kindness we ought to thank our loving Lord God for giving us the beloved angels who, like walls, guard and protect us against the devil; we must not become impudent and secure, as if we were alone on earth and the devil a thousand miles away” (House Postil, Vol. 378). Satan has no problem with the authority of men, but the authority of Christ reigns with heaven itself. Our Lord says, “The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me…” (Luke 10:16). To receive Jesus and His Word comes with the assistance of angels, but to reject Him means rejoicing only by yourself in the darkness.

The seventy-two were on the verge of rejecting Jesus when they came back. They did not notice it, but their cause for rejoicing was not in Christ alone. Self-glory started to cramp out any need for God’s Son as the promised Savior. Things turned to focus on their ability and service. As if, the Devil and His demons were ever subject to men! All we are is one sinful generation after the next and they will be happy to point that out. Jesus denies rejoicing even over good works like the spirits being subject to the disciples. Losing sight of Him as Savior is just too dangerous. He warns of the outcome, “On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness” (Matthew 7:22-23).

True joy is beyond having it rest in our hands. Even the angels did not boast in their victory in heaven over Satan and the demons. They proclaimed, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come…” If the holy angels give glory to Christ alone in all that they do, what of sinners like us? Success and joy even with good works still has the stain of sin upon it. Certainly, love of God and man is what we need but none loves God or man enough! St. Paul says how this utterly falls shorts, “For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse” (Galatians 3:10). Being aware of my sin, the pain of death, and the power of the Devil actually works to drive me to Jesus. Heaven now rejoices, but on earth repentance is key so forgiveness comes alone by the Gospel. This means the good news is not in what I do for God, but in what God has done for me.

Jesus sums up the victory He has worked in full for all. He says, “I saw Satan fall like lighting from heaven.” This fall was not just a slip, but the permanent destruction and ruin of the Devil and His kingdom. Jesus on the night before His suffering and death would say, “…The ruler of this world is judged” (John 16:11). The cross would bring the final blow with the angels and the Father abandoning God’s Son. Conquering would come by the blood of the lamb. Jesus has sent out this gift to the ends of earth through His Word and Sacrament. Likewise, by His sacrifice the greatest authority He has given for we confess in the creed, “He descended into hell!” It means the power of Satan and His kingdom are a smokescreen. Suffering is still very real as with so many persecuted Christians. They need our mercy and prayers, but deliverance is bigger than anything in this life. St. Paul says, “No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us” (Romans 8:37).

Christ alone delivers us to heavenly glory by His Name. Jesus denounced a lesser glory for something far better, “…but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.” We are in a warzone in this world with the Devil’s time growing ever shorter by the day. His full quart press has led some to sacrifice the truth for lies, others have runaway for greener pastures that has no good shepherd, and still others want nothing to do with God turning to self. In all this chaos caused by the Devil today, where is your joy? It rests in what the angels celebrate for Jesus has written Your name in heaven. To have it written means all is won already for you. God knows your name by baptism into Christ. His Divine Service of Word and Sacrament continues to bring heaven down to us on earth. And how can we forget, this joy Christ gives comes with all the company of heaven. Amen. Now may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, be with you hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.

1. https://www.barna.org/barna-update/faith-spirituality/325-barna-studies-the-research-offers-a-year-in-review-perspective#.VgRyatKFPs0 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Email LCMS [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. http://blogs.lcms.org/2015/persecuted-christians-refugees [↑](#footnote-ref-3)