

## **The Feast of St. Michael and All Angels, A✠D 2010**

### **Matthew 18:1-11**

*In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

1 Not like a man with intellect and reason and experience, not like a seasoned veteran of war, not like a teacher with initials and degrees come down from the ivory tower, or even like a man who has run a business and shown a profit, but like a child, a little one, you must become. You must give up your airs, your status, your independence and control. You must be vulnerable. You must turn, repent, be converted and risk all on the simple trust that God is good, that He knows best, and that He will take care of you. That, dear friends, is faith.

2 So it is that greatness in the Kingdom of heaven is measured differently from greatness in the kingdoms of men. For the greatest and most wonderful thing in the Kingdom of heaven is the most despised and pitiable thing in the kingdoms of men: the unjust, brutal, and bloody execution of Our Lord. In Christ's kingdom, where grace rules, weakness is strength, poverty is riches, and dependence and vulnerability are virtues.

3 Child-like faith is not the exception. It is the rule. We should not be surprised that infants are capable of believing because faith is not of the intellect, but of the heart. It lives and moves in the soul. No one is saved apart from faith in Jesus Christ. No one enters the Kingdom without a vulnerable and dependent trust that risks everything on His death and resurrection. Child-like faith does not mean naïve faith. It means letting having a Father who will change your diaper, wipe away the stinking filth from the most intimate and private parts of your life, confident that He will neither humiliate nor laugh at you but He will cleanse you and keep you healthy. It means having a mother who will give birth to you at the font and feed you at the altar. It means having an older Brother who will show you the way from death into life.

4 Whoever humbles himself like a child, whoever is dependent and vulnerable and trusting in the mercy of the Father by way of the Son in the Holy Spirit, he is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven. This is the faith which you have been given. You are not independent or self-sustaining. You rely completely on the work of another in order to live from day to day. You are not free, but are sheltered and supported as a child. You submit to discipline and order because you know your Father loves you and knows what's best for you even more than you do yourself. If you will be a child, if you will receive His gift of faith, then you will have a Father. This faith makes you dependant on Him and vulnerable to His mercy.

5 "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for" our accuser "has been thrown down." He, who accused us "day and night before our God" has been defeated, overcome by the Sacrifice of a perfect Lamb, who had no blemish, no guilt, who went silent to the slaughter for the love of man that words and angels cannot express, which the grave with all its terror could not hold. So it is that you "have conquered" that foul tempter and accuser, that pretender, that demonic liar and seducer. How? "By the Blood of the Lamb." By the death of the Innocent for the guilty, by the intervention of the perfect, immaculate One for the imperfect and corrupt, by the power of His resurrection from the dead. For there was war in heaven. But that war is over, that dragon done. It is only the last skirmishes, the flickering fights of a trounced enemy heading for Hell, that continue spark around us.

6 Angels long to look into this victory, this mystery: God became man, died in man's place, satisfied His own holy wrath over man's rebellion, that man would be free and belong again to Him! No angel, however mighty, pure, and loyal he might be, calls God, "Father" and His Son, "Brother and Kinsman." But, you, weak, defiled, unfaithful rebel, you may be so bold, for you are a son or a daughter

by Divine decree, by Grace, by the Blood of the Lamb. You are pure. You belong in the Kingdom. It is yours. You have been purchased and forgiven. You are His own little child, and your angels, hosts upon hosts of supernatural powerful beings, are always before the face of your Father in heaven. Those angels pray for you. They serve you. And at last they shall bear you home.

7 By the blood of the Lamb, Michael defeated the devil. By the same blood of the Lamb, you have been delivered from the devil's grasp. The Lamb's blood, the very same blood shed on the cross, the very same blood by which Michael defeated the devil, will be here for you. The blood, around which the devil cannot stay, around which angels and archangels—St. Michael himself—gather to sing "Holy, Holy, Holy," is for you to drink, for the forgiveness of your sins. Surrounding the altar are legions of angels, even though your eyes cannot behold them. Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.

8 Woe to him who causes you to sin. Who would dare to stand against you, God's elect, marked with the watery cross of Baptism? Who would accuse you? There is no one. There is only Him who was slain but who lives, He who loves you, surrounded by His holy angels that pray for and serve you. Be comforted by this: the wars and troubles of earth will not last, but the mercy of God endures forever, and your angels, yes, your angels, are always before Him.

*In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

*Adapted from a sermon by Pr. David Petersen*

*Soli Deo Gloria*

Pastor Jeff Hemmer