

The Festival of St. Michael and All Angels
September 29, 2013
Amazing Grace Lutheran Church – Pastor Chip Wilke

Matthew 18:1-6, 10

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" He called a little child and had him stand among them. And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. "And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea..."See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven. (NIV)

"Five little angels around my bed, one at the foot, one at the head, one to sing, one to pray, one to watch me night and day." This is one of the prayers my parents taught me to say at night when I was young, and one that Lisa and I have taught our children. One of the things I like about this prayer is it speaks a truth which we perhaps do not think about very much. This is a truth the festival of St. Michael and all angels allows us to consider. God's angels are all around us. God's angels are watching us, praying for us, singing praise every time one of us repents, and at God's command protecting us from harm and danger. This morning, as we begin another year of Sunday school, we are going to especially focus on how God does these things for His children. So today we: **Thank God for taking care of our little ones - with His ministering spirits out there! - with His ministering servants right here!**

Do we even really need to ask why our little ones need God's protection in this world? This world can be a scary place. I want so much to protect our children from sickness, disease, crime, bullying, accidents, and anything else that might cause them pain or do them harm. Do you ever feel a bit helpless when you recognize there are so many dangers around every corner?

But dear brothers and sisters in Christ all these troubles that can cause pain or do harm to our children isn't even the half of it! There is a whole other realm out there we do not even see – a very dangerous one. Our reading in Revelation this morning told us about the war in heaven and how the devil and his demons have been tossed out. But now they do their work here and the devil *"is filled with fury, because he know that his time is short."* Yes, our struggle is not against flesh and blood, as Paul writes, but against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Satan is prowling around like a roaring lion looking for his chance to devour all of our little ones. We are truly living in a war zone with constant battles everywhere. No wonder Jesus teaches us to pray *"but deliver us from evil!"*

Again do we really need to ask why our little ones need God's protection? Instead, I pray we thank God they have it! One of the ways God takes care of His children is with His own army of good angels. The writer of Hebrews reminds us: *"Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?"* These servants are holy and powerful spirits or beings created by God. The Bible says God makes his angels winds and servants of fire. These angels are not only powerful but there are many of them – more than we could count. Jesus told Peter in Gethsemane God the Father had at his disposal 12 legions of angels to send immediately if needed. (1 legion equals 6000) God uses these many, many angels to protect both our

physical and our spiritual needs. Wouldn't it be great if our eyes were opened like the servant of Elisha when he was told there was more with them than those against them and his eyes were opened to God's angels all around Elisha ready to fight for him?

While there are many accounts of angels doing God's bidding by watching over and protecting God's people, I find this one verse in Matthew especially comforting. The context has to do with little ones who believe in Jesus. With very strong words Jesus says he doesn't want anyone to do anything that might hurt or harm the faith that these little ones have in Him. Then in verse ten our Savior says: "***See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven.***" This makes God's protecting angels personal, doesn't it? How can we look down on these little ones who have God's mighty angels attending them! How could we do something to deceive these children or think they are not that important, when the fact is they are so important God has guardian angels watching over them! Some use this verse to say every child has his or her own personal guardian angel. We can't go that far because the Bible leaves that open. Speaking in basketball terms we can't say if God is using His angels to play man to man defense or zone defense on us. Yet the point is clear that God loves and protects His children. Thank God the Lord takes care of our little ones with ministering spirits out there.

Isn't there a valuable lesson for us here when it comes to what we do for our little ones here at Amazing Grace? Won't we want to take all the resources and time and energy we possibly can in taking care of our little ones? Will we not want to remember Jesus telling His disciples, "***And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me.***" This is why I want us to thank God today not only for His ministering spirits out there, but for his ministering servant right here. Thank God for the teachers who in a few minutes will promise to spend time throughout this year preparing and then teaching our children God's Word! Thank God for parents who recognize how important it is that their little ones are getting the one thing needful! Thank God that His Word and truth are being taught at this place for this Word is the armor of God our little ones need to stand against the devil's schemes! Thank God for taking care of our little ones through His ministering servants right here.

As we thank God today for taking care of our little ones, I want us to consider one final point. Who are God's little ones? Who are these children He cares for so much that the angels who see the face of God are sent to guard them? Go back to this lesson from Matthew. The disciples are once again arguing about greatness. Then Jesus calls a little child and has him stand among them. "***And he said: 'I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.'***" Little children simply trust. I hold out my arms and tell my little child to jump and my child jumps with no questions asked. Little ones are also very dependant, they need to depend on others to take care of all their needs.

Are we starting to understand the point Jesus is making? So who is more of a little child than us for we place all our trust in Jesus? Who is more of a little one than we are for we need to depend on our God for everything? And our God gives us everything we need – including not only His angels care but a home waiting for us one day with His angels. God provided this heaven for us by sending Jesus to become a little one – the Holy Son of God. Jesus, as true man, even at times depended on the care of God's created angels. Jesus also trusted His Father even though it led Him on a path to a cross and grave. For this was the only way for sinners, like us, to be saved. This is why we are glad to be called God's children because the blood of Jesus purifies us from all sin. This is why we will happily be known as God's little ones because we

can depend on Jesus for everything, even life after death.

So today join me in thanking God for taking care of our little ones. Thank God for using us to serve all our children, whether as parents bringing our children to Sunday school, or teachers who teach, or members who support the work. Thank God for teaching us the importance of becoming like little children who also need time in the Word to grow, who also depend on our God and Savior for everything, who also like our own children need God's protection in this sometimes scary world. Thank God that we are never too old to pray: *"Five little angels around my bed, one at the foot, one at the head, one to sing, one to pray, one to watch me night and day."* Amen.