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Our Saviour Lutheran Church
September 29, 2024
Michael and All Angels

Sisters and Brothers in Christ, let us pray...May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, for you are our strength and you are most certainly our redeemer. AMEN.

Sisters and Brothers, as I mentioned at the beginning of the announcements, today the church observes the festival of Michael and All Angels.

And, we, as people, don't necessarily talk a lot about angels in every conversation.

Yes, there is the Los Angeles Angels, the baseball team.

But that is not what I am getting at.

No, I am referring to angels as in heavenly beings with wings, white gowns, and halos.

Those angels.

We don't talk a lot about those angelic beings.

But this day in the church year, September 29th...this day would have us think about angels.

This day would have us think about that which is beyond our vision, beyond our eyesight.

"There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy," as Hamlet would say.

There are more things than what we perceive on the surface of our reality.

PAUSE

And, I would dare say that this is something almost inherent in the human psyche...

This idea that there something beyond our human perception.

Think of all the movies or books that begin with this concept.

There is *The Wizard of Oz*.

Dorothy is transported from her life in Kansas to a whole different world called Oz.

Or think of Alice who tumbles down the rabbit hole only to end up in Wonderland.

Or think of Boo from *Monster, Inc.* who inadvertently winds up in the Monster World by going through her closet door.

There is also the C.S. Lewis series *The Chronicles of Narnia*, where a small group of siblings enter a wardrobe only to land themselves in the land of Narnia.

There is also the science fiction movie *The Matrix*, wherein human beings are awakened from the neural-interactive computer simulation, in which all human beings are plugged into.

There is also that wonderful Jimmy Stuart Christmas movie, *It's a Wonderful Life*.

In that movie George Bailey is taken on a journey to see an alternate reality...a reality in which he had never been born, to see then what Bedford Falls would have been like without him.

I could continue to share other examples, but we get the picture.

Yes, to be sure, we could all probably add to this list of stories where there is a whole other reality beyond what we perceive right before our eyes.

PAUSE

Yes, the reason I think we like the stories I mentioned and others like it is because there is something inherent in the human psyche, regarding other realities.

Maybe it has to do with the fact that we spend a good portion of our lives—upwards of a third of our lives—in sleep, and with sleep often comes dreams, that indeed feel like an alternate reality.

PAUSE

Now, our ancestors of the faith put quite a bit of stock into dreams.

They understood that God in God's world connected to us in our world through the power of dreams.

Think of Joseph in the Old Testament, where Joseph dreams that he will rise in power over his brothers.

Ironically, those dreams come to fruition, because his brothers are upset by Joseph's boasting of power, and so they sell Joseph to Midianite traders, which sets in course a series of events whereby Joseph comes to rise in power in Egypt.

Or think of that other Joseph in the New Testament, Joseph, Mary's husband, and Jesus' surrogate father...

Think of Joseph who is told in a dream to flee to Egypt because King Herod is seeking to destroy baby Jesus.

PAUSE

Yes, dreams were seen in antiquity as an interface between two worlds—God's world and our human world.

And dreams sometimes are still seen in this way, even in our modern day.

And so, it might be that the reason we like stories where there is an alternative reality is because we can relate as humans, especially with respect to our dreams.

PAUSE

But might it not also have something to do with the reality of God?

What I mean by this is that, might not our interest in alternative realities in such stories as *The Wizard of Oz*, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and *The Matrix*...

Might not it just be in fact, that God has indeed implanted in us human beings an understanding of earth and heaven?

Forget dreams, forget the world of wakefulness vs. the world of sleep...might our interest in alternate realities, be the result of the fact that this is exactly the way things are?

That there are such things as earth and heaven?

That there are such things as earthly beings and heavenly beings?

PAUSE

The Festival of Michael and All Angels is the day in the church year that indeed makes us ponder this very question of alternate realities.

And the question is really this.

Are there really angels? And if there are really angels, then there must be a heavenly realm.

It is then a matter of what we believe.

PAUSE

Now, J.R.R. Tolkien, of *The Lord of the Rings* fame, is the one who addressed this question from the perspective of myths.

He said that we as human beings are drawn to certain stories, certain myths, if you will, because there has been something implanted in us human beings whereby we are drawn to those stories, and we can't help ourselves.

I use the word myth, as Tolkien did, not to speak of an untrue story, but as a traditional story, concerning the early history of a people.

We, as people, are drawn to certain stories, certain myths because we can't help ourselves—there is something implanted in us that make us resonate with them.

PAUSE

For instance, why have people been drawn to the Harry Potter books?

Now some people were in fact upset that about the Harry Potter books because they felt the books dealt with the occult, because of their focus on magic and wizards, etc.

But, on the flip side, the Harry Potter books have been immensely popular.

Why?

Tolkien would say it is because these books, the Harry Potter books, tap into the very thing that is inherent in the human psyche, namely the story of death and resurrection, namely the story where love wins.

It is exactly why Christianity resonates with so many—because of its focus on death and resurrection.

And it is may be the very same thing is true of heaven and earth, and angels.

Something has been implanted in us that draws us to stories of alternate realities, and specifically for us Christians, the alternate reality of heaven and earth and angels.

PAUSE

And, personally, I find this strangely comforting.

I find it strangely comforting that that for a great many of us, we human beings are drawn to this notion that there is a greater reality, an alternate reality beyond just what we perceive.

I find this strangely comforting, ONE, because so many of us are drawn to this, which again strengthens the hypothesis that indeed something has been implanted in us human beings such that we are drawn to this notion of an alternate reality.

And if something has been implanted in us, then someone, namely God, has implanted it in us.

So I find it strangely comforting that so many are drawn to this notion of an alternate reality because for me it confirms for us that there is God at work, and God's Spirit is working on us.

And, TWO, I find this notion of an alternate reality so strangely comforting because it instills in us a sense of hope.

That this world is not all there is.

Notice that in the stories we read today from Daniel and Revelation, those visions of an alternate reality, emphasize a sense of victory.

Micheal, the archangel, will protect and will overcome the opposing forces of evil, and we shall be saved.

PAUSE

And all the more, it is Christ who ultimately wins the day.

In fact, the apostle Paul speaks of Christ at the end time as being all in all.

Christ at the end time will be all in all.

In short, everything will be reconciled unto God through Jesus Christ.

Everything will be reconciled unto God through Christ our Lord.

At the end time, NOTHING will be outside of the sphere of Jesus Christ.

At the end time, NOTHING will be outside the power of Jesus Christ.

Nothing. Not one thing.

All things will be reconciled unto God through Jesus Christ.

This includes even evil itself—the likes of the worst warmongers, fascist dictators, genocidal autocrats, you name it.

Everything will be reconciled unto God.

That is the vision of apostle Paul.

There is a reality greater than what we know, and within that greater reality, everything has been accomplished in Christ.

We even regularly pray for this vision of Christ being all in all to come to fruition in the words of the Lord's Prayer.

We pray in that prayer that Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory.

Yours, God, is everything. You encompass everything.

Yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory. Amen.

PAUSE

So, yes, today, we acknowledge Michael and all angels.

Today, we acknowledge that there is another reality beyond what we see before us with our eyes.

Today, we acknowledge that we are caught in something larger than ourselves, than the world as we know it, and that God does accomplish his victory over all things.

Thanks be to God. AMEN.