

**Sermon Notes – September 29, 2024**  
**The Holy Gospel of St. Mark 9: 30-37**  
**Peace Lutheran Church**  
**“God's Ultimate Victory”**

Today's readings remind us that the days of evil's reign are numbered. Guarded and assisted by God and divine messengers, we are invited to join in constructive work to make the reign of Christ more visible.

The first reading entails two segments from an extended vision of geopolitical events from the sixth through second centuries BCE, portrayed against the backdrop of a heavenly struggle (Dan. 10: 1-12: 13). In the first segment (10: 10-14), the archangel (“chief prince”) Michael assists in opposing Persia's guardian angel. In the second segment (12: 1-3, Michael is Israel's “protector,” “the one who stands over”; Hebrew, *ha-ome-al*). The precise time and form of deliverance professed in 12: 1 are unclear. Since this “anguish” (12: 1) resonates with depictions elsewhere of the day of the Lord (e.g., Jer. 30: 7; Amos 5: 18-20), an apocalyptic timeline and ultimate deliverance make the most sense. Daniel 12: 2-3 is the first clear depiction of individual resurrection in scripture. The two phrases “those who are wise” and “those who lead many to righteousness” are synonymous, a product of Hebrew parallelism (v. 3).

The second reading comes from the distinctive vision of war in heaven (Rev. 12: 1-17). Nowhere else in Jewish or early Christian literature is a heavenly battle so described. Whether this takes place at the beginning of primordial time throughout human history, apart from history, or at the end of time, is unclear. What triggers the conflict is the arrival and deliverance of the child Messiah (12: 1-6). Satan is thrown down to earth (not to hell), where he roams angrily because his doom is sealed. The portrayal of a cosmic battle between good and evil would have made sense to first-century Christians who experienced hostility and persecution as a daily struggle.

Our gospel reading follows upon Luke 10: 1-6, where Jesus sends out seventy to heal, exorcise and proclaim the kingdom of God. In Luke, joy is a sign of the reign of God (1: 14, 44; 2: 10,; 8: 13; 15: 6-7, 9-10; 24: 41). Based on Luke's cosmology and the verb tense (“watched” should be “was watching”; Greek, *etheoroun*, 10: 18). Satan's “fall” takes place during the ministry of the seventy. Their work is a harbinger of Christ's ultimate triumph over Satan. In the last century, and without any clear consensus, theologians have “demythologized” the New Testament by omitting aspects of the conflict with a modern worldview. Most forms of global Christianity acknowledged evil, demons, and demonic activity, making it arrogant of Euro-American Westerners to dismiss them out of

hand. For Jesus in Luke's gospel, God will ultimately prevail over evil. Meanwhile, we may rejoice not at our role in this drama, but at God's claim on our lives.

This day reminds us we are not alone in our faithful struggle. God sends divine and human messengers to guard us, watch over us, and assist us. In the end, God's good work will prevail in Jesus' name.

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