

WEEKLY DEVOTION – Tuesday, December 26, 2023
Pastor Bruce Kischnick, Grace Lutheran Church, New Albany, IN

“Dragon His Tale”

READING: Revelation 12:1-9 – A great and wondrous sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth. Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads. His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that he might devour her child the moment it was born. She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter. And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne. The woman fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days. And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down – that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.

If you have followed my devotions for the past couple of Advent seasons, then you have heard me rant a time or two about the goofy Christmas decorations people put out in front of their homes. I’m not so much talking about Santa or Frosty or Rudolf. Those at least have a fairly long connection to our Christmas traditions. Mostly I have shaken my head in disbelief at penguins, polar bears, moose, and the like who have absolutely nothing to do with Christmas beyond some cute Coca Cola commercials of a few years vintage. And don’t get me started on inflatables! Uugggh!

A week or so ago on my way to visit a couple of our folks at Baptist Floyd I was driving down Country Club Drive when I noticed a house that had not one, but two huge dragons in its yard. I think they were there during the Halloween season, but I think they’ve left them up for the Christmas season either as a joke or maybe as a statement. Those two reminded me of a home on Klerner Lane that for the last couple of Christmases had a large dragon in its yard. That one I am sure was done to make a point. I think they’re thumbing their noses at Christmas decorations around town and maybe at the whole idea of Christmas. If you are an atheist or a sworn-again agnostic, the central story of Christmas is repugnant to you. So how better to let everyone know what you think about the whole thing than to put something so monstrously foreign to Christmas in your front yard? “A pox on all you Christians and your silly Christmas story!” they seem to be saying.

Well I say the joke is on them. Bring on the dragons! Little do they know what a real connection dragons have to the story of Christmas. It’s right there in our reading for today from St. John’s Revelation. He reiterates the Christmas story from a spiritual viewpoint. When Jesus, the Son of God, came into the world through the very real pains and efforts of his mother, Mary, Satan, that Old Serpent, was waiting to devour Jesus. From the moment he was conceived, the devil tried to end him. First came all the evil whispers and catcalls in Nazareth because Mary conceived before she and Joseph were married. Then came the Roman census that required her to travel when she was already far into her pregnancy. On their arrival in Bethlehem there was no decent place for her when the labor pains came. The Son of God is born in a cattle shed that smells of excrement, laid in a manger crusted with animal snot, and celebrated only by some motley shepherds who smell of sheep and sweat. Nothing easy comes to his parents. Nothing safe for a newborn child is offered here. The devil placed one obstacle after another in their way.

Then a bit later Magi from the east find the family in a home they've now found shelter in. They bring gifts that bless the family and speak of mysteries yet to come, but in their wake comes another even greater danger: Herod the Great, one of the most megalomaniac, devious, and paranoid rulers to ever occupy a throne, learns of the birth of a "King of the Jews." He will brook no possibility that someone outside his family should hold that title. He requests the Magi to inform him of the child's whereabouts, and when they fail to return to him, he sends soldiers out to destroy the child. This is the great Red Dragon positioning himself before the birthing stool waiting to devour the Christ Child.

So the dragon-fanciers, who think they are thumbing their noses at Christ, are unintentionally placing a very potent symbol of Satan's fierce resistance to God's plan of salvation. He tries again and again to destroy Jesus, either physically or spiritually. If he can kill Jesus, great. If he can tempt Jesus to sin, even better. Finally, at the cross, when the Son of God takes his last breath and succumbs, Satan and his minions rejoice and celebrate. The dragon has consumed the child! Only, there too, the joke is on them. What they celebrate as the greatest evil ever achieved becomes the greatest good that God can ever give: salvation for every sinner who puts his trust in Jesus.

So bring in the dragons! The terrible curse that had befallen sinful mankind and its bondage to the great Red Dragon, that ancient serpent and deceiver, had a cure. The child born in Bethlehem was sent to be our Savior and Redeemer. The serpent would bite his heel, but the Son would crush his head. And we celebrate his birth for in it we see hope aborning. God bless you with a Blessed Christmas-tide. Amen.

PRAYER:

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

1) **PASTORS CLASS** will commence on Sunday, January 7, from 1:00-3:00 PM in the Board Room. This is a great opportunity for you to review the Faith if it's been some time since you last did so. It's also an opportunity for those who haven't been instructed to learn more about Christianity and the Lutheran understanding of the Word.

2) **THANK YOU** to everyone who helped us gift more than 50 children, teens, and needy adults with Christmas gifts again this year. Your donations brought joy and smiles to many faces!