

Sunday Sermon – 14th Matthew – Archangel Michael’s Miracle at Chonae

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In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Among the many churches St. Paul addressed letters to was a church in the town of Colossae in Asia Minor in what is today modern Turkey. This was his letter to the Colossians. Our church commemorates a miracle attributed to the Archangel Michael that occurred in that town after which it was renamed Chonae from which we get the word cone.

There was a church there built by a former pagan inhabitant of the city of Laodicea in gratitude to God for healing his mute daughter. While this man was still a pagan, the holy Chief Commander and Archangel Michael appeared to him in a dream and revealed to him that his daughter would receive the gift of speech after drinking from the water of the spring at nearby Colossae. The girl did receive healing and began to speak. After this miracle, the father and his daughter and all their family were baptized. In gratitude, the father built the church in honor of the holy Chief Commander and Archangel Michael at the spring in Colossae where his daughter was healed. Not only did Christians begin to come to the spring for healing, but also many pagans. In so doing, many of the pagans turned from their idols and were converted to faith in Christ.

At this church of the holy Chief Commander and Archangel Michael, a certain pious man by the name of Archippus served for sixty years as church custodian. By his preaching and by the example of his saintly life he brought many pagans to faith in Christ. The local pagans hated the Christians, and especially Archippus. They sought to destroy the church in order to prevent people from coming to that holy place of healing, and at the same time kill Archippus.

They conspired and worked to make a confluence of two rivers, the Lykokaperos and Kufos, and redirect their combined flow against the church. Archippus prayed fervently to the Chief Commander and Archangel Michael to ward off the danger. In answer to his prayer the Archangel Michael appeared at the temple, and with a blow of his staff, opened a wide cone shaped fissure in the rock which directed the rivers’ waters underground. The temple and Archippus were saved and remained unharmed. Seeing this awesome miracle, the pagans fled in terror. Archippus and the Christians gathered in the church, glorified God and gave thanks to the holy Archangel Michael

for his help. The place where the rivers plunged into the fissure received the name "Chonae", which means plunging or more accurately funnel or cone. Today that place is called Honaz in modern Turkey.

The Archangel Michael is a favorite saint of our military and police. Though the military and police are tasked with physically protecting us, the angels, led by the Archangel Michael, are tasked with protecting us both spiritually and physically. We need to seek their protection by honoring our faith commitment to God and seeking to be guided and guarded by the angelic host.

Today's Gospel reading is similar to last week's. Last week we heard a parable of the kingdom where we are tenants who refuse to pay rent to our Landlord, who is God. The result is that we are thrown out of the vineyard, His Kingdom. Today we heard a parable of the kingdom where we are invited by the King to a feast and make excuses about why we cannot attend. Though this is certainly about coming to church on Sunday, it is more especially about accepting God's invitation to live a Christian life in obedience to His Commandments. Many of us who believe don't much act on that belief.

In St. Paul's letter to the Colossians, he makes reference to both the proximity and close relationship they have with the church in Laodicea. This part of Asia Minor was also under the spiritual guidance of the Apostle, Theologian and Evangelist John who was also the author the Book of Revelation. In his warning to the Laodiceans, we hear a beautiful, positive passage among all the dire warnings. Revelation 3:20 reads: *"Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with me."* St. John continues in verse 21, *"To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne."*

Did you hear that? We not only do we get to dine with Jesus in heaven, we also get to sit with Him on His throne...if we are courageous and committed to living the Christian life with love and dedication. Things are getting pretty dark for Christians around the world. This week a Christian Clerk of Courts in Kentucky was thrown into prison for seeking to obey God and disobeying man-made law made in opposition to God. That time may come for you and me as well. Some are calling for the same thing to be done to any judge who refuses to perform weddings. We need to pray for our civil leaders that they may seek to honor God. When they don't, we need to pray for the courage to stand up to them and to honor God.

This past Friday, a call was put out for a national day of prayer for those in law enforcement. We answered that call. We rang our church bells at noon, offered a Trisagion for the 63 law enforcement officers who gave their lives this year while in the line of duty, offered a prayer for all those who protect and serve, and closed with a Paracletis on behalf of Brevard Deputy Casey Smith and all our law enforcement, fire, rescue, and military personnel and their families.

At this time, I invite you to join me in offering that same prayer for those who protect and serve.

Prayer for Those Who Protect and Serve

Dear Heavenly Father,

We come before you with humbled hearts. We pray Your protection over all our law enforcement as they faithfully serve our communities. We lift up to You the family of Deputy Darren Goforth and all the families of our first responders and our military who have lost loved ones. Comfort them and provide them with Your peace that surpasses understanding in the midst of unimaginable grief. God, we ask for Your healing over our communities. Let us come together and unite in peace and prayer.

In Your name we pray,

Amen

Holy Archangel Michael, Commander of All the Heavenly Host, we ask that you may be strengthened by God to watch over, guide and protect us all, but especially those who serve and protect us in law enforcement, fire, rescue and the military. Help us put our faith, hope, trust and dependence on our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, seeking to always honor and obey Him. We pray that you may bring us all to humility and repentance. Grant us both discernment and love. Help us rededicate our lives, our families and our government to You. As you delivered Archippus and your church in Colossae from those who sought to destroy them, please deliver also our brothers and sisters who are being persecuted for their faith in Christ in predominantly muslim lands and here in America. God we pray that You may have mercy upon us and save us all. These things we pray in God's Holy Name, in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

