

Chris Murphy
December 10, 2023
Scripture: Luke 1: 26-38
Sermon Title: Angel Visitation

Prayer...

Introduction:

How do you feel about the topic of angels? Normally, we read this passage and focus on Mary's humble openness to the message that she will give birth to Jesus. I want to remind us of Mary's response and next week I want to share with you more about Mary and Elizabeth, but this morning I want to especially talk to you about angels, and particularly the message of Gabriel.

So how do you really feel about angels? Some common responses.

- Curiosity.
- Nervous.
- Excited.
- Scared.

Fear is a common initial response to angels. Mary certainly felt initial fear, which is why Gabriel tells her not to fear.

Share some highlights about angels and prominence in the Bible:

Prominent in the Bible- Over 300 verses that reference the word angel or angels. A significant number of the verses in both Old and New Testament.

Angel Names include Gabriel, Michael, the Apocrypha mentions Raphael, and Uriel and in 1 Enoch which is a book from found among the Dead Sea Scrolls gives names to many angels.

We do not know how many angels exist, but we know that a multitude of angels appeared before the shepherds. Do you believe in guardian angels? The main verse that supports guardian angels comes from the words of Jesus. In Matthew 18:10 we read that Jesus is blessing the children when he says:

“Take care that you do not despise one of these little ones: for I tell you, in heaven their angels continually see the face of God my Father in Heaven.”

Share view of John Calvin and John Wesley. Angels have gained more interest by Catholics and Charismatics or Pentecostals.

"But the point on which the Scriptures specially insist is that which tends most to our comfort, and to the confirmation of our faith, namely, that angels are the ministers and dispensers of the divine bounty towards us. Accordingly, we are told how they watch for our safety, how they undertake our defense, direct our path, and take heed that no evil befall us." (John Calvin, Christian Institutes, p. 196)

"They may prevent our falling into many dangers, which we are not sensible of; and may deliver us out of many others, though we know not whence our deliverance comes. How many times have we been strangely and unaccountably preserved, in sudden and dangerous

falls!...And who can hurt us while we have armies of angels, and the God of angels, on our side?" (John Wesley, Sermon on Good Angels)

Angel Actions:

Worship God singing- Musical Artists for God, Remember the angels and the shepherds. The angels also worship God in the book of Revelation.

In Revelation 7: 13- "And all the angels stood round the throne and worshipped God, singing, Amen, Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen."

Protectors- The Composer George Friderich Handel's Guardian angels- protect us and guide us into virtue (confirm lyrics)

Messengers- Angelos- in the Greek. Where we get the word Angel.

Guides and Encouragers.

Comforters- like when Jesus was in the wilderness and later when he was in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Healing angels

Angels guide us into heaven- Many people believe angels help guide or accompany people into heaven when they die.

Angels in human form- Have you ever thought you met an angel.

Hebrews 13: 2 –

“2 Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.”

Angel Gabriel: Most well known angel in the Bible.

Appears in the book of Daniel where he helps the prophet Daniel interpret his dream.

He appears to Mary and announces that she will give birth to Jesus. He calls her favored one and listens to her questions. He is gentle with her.

He appears to Zechariah and lets him know that he will have a son who shall be named John. He actually takes away Zechariah's voice for the

whole nine months that his wife Elizabeth is pregnant because

Zechariah doubts that his wife will become pregnant. Eventually

Zechariah gets his voice back.

It is possible that Gabriel is also the angel that guides Joseph through dreams. First an angel convinces Joseph in a dream that Mary really is telling the truth about becoming pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit. Later an angel guides Joseph to flee with his family to Egypt. The Magi also are warned in a dream. An angel also appears to the shepherds when Jesus is born. Maybe Gabriel is the angel that does all these things.

Share my own experience of an angel visitation.

- I grew up curious of angels but never expected to experience them.
- I had a charismatic awakening and learned more about angels.
- My wife Karen shared with me some of her experiences of angels. How they have comforted her at times in her life.
- This last year I have experienced angels a little more. A few months ago, I woke up and saw an angel hovering above my bed.

It was beautiful and translucent. It moved kind of like a jellyfish moves. I also had a dream with an angel.

- Angels in my Hair is a book I recommend about angels. In Angels in my Hair Lorna Byrne writes,

“ I love churches. They are full of angels. There might only be a few people in the church, but there is always a great hustle and bustle among the angels there. People don’t realize how many angels there are in a church, the angels are there praising God and waiting for God’s people to come and join them, but frequently no one does. At Mass on a Sunday the place is packed; there are guardian angels with every person, angels standing around the priest at the altar, and lots more Angels that God sends down.

Churches are very powerful places: when I see someone at church surrounded by angels and light, I pray for them: Please let that person hear their angel today and in some way come into contact with their angel and through him with God.” She goes onto say, “Angels are not just found in Christian churches, they are in

synagogues, in mosques, and in all the holy places.” (Angels in my Hair, P. 28-29) Incidentally, it is good to remember that many faith believe in angels. The three Abrahamic faiths- Christianity, Judaism, and Islam all have significant teachings about angels.

- In my experience with angels, here are a few things I am learning from them.

Angels want us to know they exist.

- We are always with you.
- We are available to you to provide protection, comfort, healing, and guidance.
- Ask for help from the angels. Pray to God to send angels to you and to those you know who are in need.
- We are not to worship angels. We are to only worship God, but know that angels are the messengers of God who are available to help us. I think it is okay to talk to angels as if they really exist because they do and the Bible tells us they do.

Conclusion:

It is easy during Advent to talk about the stories surrounding the birth of Jesus as if they are old stories that inform us of the past and how Jesus came. They certainly are important stories to understand how Jesus came to earth, but they are also inspirational stories that give us an opportunity to connect to Jesus in the present. We are to identify with Mary and be open to all that God wants to do in our lives. We are even to be open to the presence of angels and how they wish to be active in our lives.

Praise God for the Angel Gabriel's visitation to Mary. Praise God for the countless ways angels continue to be active in our world. If you are interested in learning more about angels, consider doing a study of them in Scripture. Pray to God to give you greater awareness of angels in your life. Listen to the subtle guidance from the Holy Spirit and angels. They are giving you messages every day if you have ears to hear. Be open to them and pray for God to use them in your life and the lives of others. Let us pray... (Pray to God to help us be aware of angels).

Luke 1:26-38

26 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, 27 to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. 28 And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." [a] 29 But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. 30 The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. 33 He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." 34 Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" [b] 35 The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born [c] will be holy; he will be called Son of God. 36 And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. 37 For nothing will be impossible with God." 38 Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.