

## **12-3-23 (First Sunday in Advent & Communion Sunday)**

Sermon- The Angels Brought Hope

Scripture- Luke 1:5-22, CTW Ps 80:1-7

Hymns- 163, 157, 167

Theme- This is the story of Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth, who had no hope that they would have a child and the hope of a coming Messiah was distant. God changed all that with the visit from an Angel.

### **I. Introduction**

**A. The word angel means, "messenger," but although they deliver God's message, their activity, most often, goes unseen by the human eye.** In the NIV they are mentioned in 33 of the 66 books of the Bible.

Even though they mostly operate in the spiritual realm on occasion God sent angels to certain people and they appeared in a visible form.

One of those times for the appearance of the angel was when God wanted to get a message to Zechariah the priest. The angel informed Zechariah that the prayers he and his wife, Elizabeth had been praying, for a child were going to be answered.

The reason for God to send an angel to deliver this message was very important. God was not just answering with the birth of any child, you see, this child was going to be so special to God's plan for the public ministry of Jesus. This birth would bring into the world, John the Baptist who would prepare the way for Christ.

Look at verse 12, 13... Notice that the angel told Zechariah, "Don't be afraid." It appears that the appearance of the angel causes Zechariah's fear.

## **II. Why are humans afraid of angels?**

**A. Well think about it for a moment... Angels come from another realm.** They're characteristics aren't familiar to us even though the Bible most often describes them as being very human-like in their appearance.

Another thing, they don't make public appearances that often. We often read, in the Bible, that sometimes they showed up because God was using them as messengers of judgment, not just bearers of good news. It could be that Zechariah feared the worst.

I know that some of you might say, "Well if I had been Zechariah I wouldn't be afraid of an angel!" Really? Maybe not if they actually looked like those puffy cheeked things sitting on the mantle...

For whatever reason, Zechariah's fear was in response to the presence of the angel in the temple.

### **B. Why is it that we are sometimes afraid of the very things that ought to bring us courage?**

Many are afraid because they are afraid of what they can't see. But in this case, Zechariah was afraid of something he had never seen before. He believed in angels – but up to this point in his life he had never seen one.

We talk a lot about our spirituality, but God doesn't want our spirituality to be something we just talk about. He wants it to be something we live. We live in the physical realm and often treat it like it's the only reality.

What is going on in the spiritual world is just as real and it will last forever while what we see is only temporary. I want to answer the question, are angels really among us and if so, what do they do?

Today, I want to focus on the visits of the angels and maybe look at why we don't need to fear angels and other parts of the heavenly realm...at least in the normal definition of the word "fear".

This spiritual environment is going to be going on in heaven, when we get there, and we'll be there forever so we might as well get a grip on it.

Just like Zechariah, you don't have to fear angels or any other spiritual reality, but your first reaction might just be fear!

### **III. How does God Use Angels to do the Work of the Kingdom?**

#### **A. Angels served to communicate God's Word.**

Did you know that angels were involved in revealing God's law to Moses? When Stephen was talking to his fellow Jews, he said in **Acts 7:53** NIV "you who have received the law that was given through angels..."

Moses wrote down God's law in the Torah, the first five books of the Bible, but he had help. We know the Holy Spirit inspired him, but here we see that one of the ways the Holy Spirit delivered God's Word through Moses and others was through angels communicating parts of the story from God.

The Bible also makes mention of their similar ministry to Daniel in writing his prophecies and John while writing the book of Revelation.

Not only did angels help Bible writers but they also guided God's people with His instructions at times.

Angels gave instructions to Joseph about the birth of Jesus (**Matthew 1-2**)...To the women at the empty tomb of Jesus (**Mt. 28, Mk. 16, Lk. 24**)...To Philip, one of the deacons in the early

church (**Acts 8:26**), and to Cornelius, a Gentile seeking salvation (**Acts 10**).

**B. Angels help provide physical needs and protection.**

The angels ministered to Christ after 40 days of fasting and afterward being tempted by Satan in the wilderness.

**Mat 4:11 NIV - 11** Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

When Elijah the prophet was running from the wicked king and queen of Israel who were trying to kill him, he fell exhausted in the wilderness.

**1Kings 19:5-6 NIV - 5** Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep. All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat." **6** He looked around, and there by his head was some bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again.

The same word as used here for angel is used 176 times in the New Testament in the NIV.

But "Does God still do this today? Does He still send angels when we face life's wilderness experiences? Do they deliver God's assistance when we are at the end of our rope?"

**Hebrews 1:14 NLT - 14** Therefore, angels are only servants--spirits sent to care for people who will inherit salvation.

**Psalm 91:11 (NLT)** For he orders his angels to protect you wherever you go.

I want to encourage you today and tell you that if you are a follower of Christ, you have spiritual bodyguards! Their purpose is to serve God by helping and protecting you.

It was an angel that shut the mouths of the lions when Daniel was thrown into that lion's den. (**Daniel 6**) Angels delivered several apostles from jail in **Acts 5**, and an angel delivered Peter from prison in **Acts 12**.

Let me read you an account from "Angels, God's Secret Agents" by Billy Graham:

"The Reverend John G. Patton, pioneer missionary in the New Hebrides Islands, told a thrilling story involving the protective care of angels. Hostile natives surrounded his mission headquarters one night, intent on burning the Patton family out and killing them.

John Patton and his wife prayed all during that terror-filled night that God would deliver them. When daylight came they were amazed to see that, unaccountably, the attackers had left. They thanked God for delivering them.

A year later, the chief of the tribe was converted to Jesus Christ, and Mr. Patton, remembering what had happened, asked the chief what had kept him and his men from burning down the house and killing them.

The chief replied in surprise, "Who were all those men you had there with you?" The missionary answered, "There were no men there, just my wife and I." The chief argued that they had seen many men standing guard - hundreds of big men in shining garments with drawn swords in their hands. They seemed to circle the mission station so that the natives were afraid to attack.

Only then did Mr. Patton realize that God had sent His angels to protect them. The chief agreed that there was no other explanation."

If you are a believer, expect powerful angels to accompany **you** in your life experiences.

### **C. Angels strengthen and encourage...they bring Hope.**

The Apostle Paul was on a ship bound for Rome. He was a prisoner for preaching the Good News about Jesus. A storm arose

and everyone was afraid of losing their life. That's when Paul spoke up.

**Acts 27:23** states: "For last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me, **24** and he said, "Don't be afraid, Paul, for you will surely stand trial before Caesar! What's more, God in his goodness has granted safety to everyone sailing with you." **25** So take courage! For I believe God. It will be just as he said.

The ship Paul and the other 275 men were on broke apart in the stormy sea, but all of them survived. We could say that it's a good idea to hang out with people whom God is protecting.

During the time Israel was ruled by kings in the Old Testament, a prophet named Elisha spoke for God when Israel was at war with Syria.

The king of Syria was furious because someone kept telling Israel's king where Syria's troops were placed. He called in his officers and wanted to know who was giving away his secrets and they informed him that their intelligence said Elisha the prophet was to blame.

**2 Kings 6:12 (NLT)** "It's not us, my lord," one of the officers replied. "Elisha, the prophet in Israel, tells the king of Israel even the words you speak in the privacy of your bedroom!"

**13** The king commanded, "Go and find out where Elisha is, and we will send troops to seize him."

When the king of Syria found out where Elisha was, he sent troops after him. The enemy soldiers surrounded the city of Dothan to take Elisha. The servant with Elisha was filled with fear when he saw the enemy soldiers with their horses and chariots.

So check out what Elisha said to this fearful little guy:

**2 Kings 6:16 (NLT)** "Don't be afraid!" Elisha told him. "For there are more on our side than on theirs!" **17** Then Elisha prayed, "O LORD, open his eyes and let him see!" The LORD opened his servant's eyes, and when he looked up, he saw that the hillside around Elisha was filled with horses and chariots of fire.

Those horses and chariots of fire were angels sent BY GOD to protect Elisha.

It is important to understand that Elisha knew they were there but his servant did not – not until God let him see.

## **V. Conclusion: Believe that God still sends angels.**

I want you to know that these servant spirits of God not only helped get the Word of God written but they are still helping the Word get communicated today.

They're God's messengers who help God deliver our needs, they provide protection, and they strengthen and encourage us.

Are you fearful today? Is there something that is causing anxiety or worry? See and believe that God sends us hope in the form of angels!

The angel said to Zechariah "Don't be afraid."

For the next four weeks of Advent, we will examine the role of Angels in this Advent miracle that God put together for us all. The miracle of it all was proclaimed by Angels at God's mighty direction: **Hope, Joy, Peace, and Love were the message...and still are!**