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“Survey Said: Angels”
Hebrews 2:5-9; Luke 20:35-36

“I could not have made it this far had there not been angels along the way.”

This quote concerning one individual’s personal experience relative to the presence of our topic for today, “ANGELS,” was not from a renowned church leader or theological authority. It was made instead by that ‘expert’ on the subject... Actress Della Reese... who, as many of you know, starred on the popular TV series in the 90’s, “Touched by an Angel.” As you may also be aware, she passed away just last year. IN TRUTH, she was actually more of an ‘authority’ on this subject of ‘angels’ than we might give her credit for... being not only an accomplished **gospel singer**, but also an **ordained minister**. For her, the existence of heavenly beings known as ‘angels’ was very real, and much more than a TV show... that in her life, she truly had been ‘touched by angels.’

As I considered this suggested topic, the title given for our consideration presupposed the truth that angels DO exist... for the anonymous ‘donor’ wanted to know more about **“The TYPES of Angels.”** ‘*TYPOLGY*’ goes beyond ‘*ETIOLOGY*’... if you talk about different KINDS of a particular object, you have moved on from what CAUSED it to be. So we won’t be considering ‘cause’... but rather, ‘effect’...

Talking about ‘angels,’ though, is usually NOT a big topic in our lives... spiritual or otherwise. Especially in our ‘frozen chosen’ lives as Presbyterians. I would say that our Roman Catholic brethren might address this topic more than we do. But I was interested to see that even in one of our older Reformed Confessions of faith, the *“Westminster Larger Catechism,”* which was written in ‘stodgy’ 17th Century England, there were several references to this subject... in particular:

*“God created all the angels (as) **spirits, immortal, holy, excelling in knowledge, mighty in power, to execute his commandments (in the administration of his power, mercy, and justice), and to praise his name...yet subject to change.**”*

Angels are **spirit... immortal... holy...** filled with **knowledge** and **power...** carrying out God's purposes of mercy and justice, always praising His holy name. That last phrase... 'subject to change'...might seem like a legal term, but was simply intended to communicate that while angels have a very holy purpose, they were yet NOT infallible, and perfect. Only God... Father, Son, and Spirit... could be that. Angels, like God's human creation... could yet stray from God's will.

For any doubting their importance... or even *existence...* the Scriptures are filled... from start to finish, from *Genesis* to *Revelation...* with references to the actions of those holy **messengers** from God (which is basically what the term 'angel' means... a 'messenger'). As far as the 'types' of angels in Scripture, the two most confusing names used are 'cherubim' and 'seraphim.' The former is the plural from of "cherub," which in the Aramaic means "*like a child.*" Seraphim comes from the singular "seraph," which literally means "*the burning one.*" That 'cherub' quality would explain why angels were so often depicted as 'chubby little children.' The latter term would be compatible with Paul's admonition in his 2nd letter to the Thessalonians that upon His return, "***the Lord Jesus (will be) revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels.***" (2 Thess. 1:7)

And perhaps that, in some ways, sums up the range of 'character traits' of God's angels: messengers who possess that childlike faith necessary to follow God's commands, but also exhibiting fiery power when necessary. As we consider just a few of the numerous references to angels in Scripture, perhaps we can pick up a few 'pointers' on how to ourselves be more faithful 'messengers' of God. How the various **PURPOSES** that angels fulfilled might inform our **OWN purpose.**

One of the primary purposes of angels is to **PRAISE** God. From the time Jesus came down from heaven as the Christ Child in Bethlehem... singing

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among mankind with whom he is well pleased" (Luke 2:14)... to the rejoicing they do when even one wayward sinner repents, as we heard earlier in the service... to Jesus' place on the throne upon returning to His Heavenly Kingdom, where in Revelation we read that the angels surround Him singing, "***Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and might and honor and glory and blessing***" (Rev.

5:12)...one of the main 'messages' that these 'messengers' are empowered to bring is that of PRAISE. So too should this true with US. In the words of David, ***"Bless the LORD, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, obedient to his spoken word. Bless the LORD, all his hosts, his ministers that do his will. Bless the LORD in all places..."*** (Psalm 103:20-22) Like those angels, we TOO are 'mighty ones' empowered to be 'ministers that do his will'... in 'obedience to his Word'... 'in all places'... Let all that is within us 'bless the LORD!'

Angels also serve as **PROTECTORS**. **Jesus himself** spoke often about their 'protection.' When Jesus was being arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, one of this followers drew a sword in order to defend him. Jesus admonished him, saying that if defense were necessary, ***"My Father would at once send twelve legions of angels."*** (Matthew 26:53). Even Jesus' enemy Satan, in his temptation attempt, would quote the Psalm saying that God would ***"command his angels"*** to protect Jesus from injury... that ***"on their hands they will bear you up, lest you dash your foot upon a stone."*** (Matthew 4:6)

This 'protection,' of course, is not limited to our Lord Christ. There are examples of God's holy messengers protecting His people throughout the Old and New Testament. Jesus, in lifting up the particular importance of caring for **children**, said that ***"their angels continually see the face of my Father in heaven."*** (Matthew 18:10) And that same protection is also extended to US. We should take to heart the words of Psalm 34: ***"I sought the Lord, and he answered me, and delivered from all my fears... The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them."*** (Psalm 34:4, 7)

A third way that angels fulfill God's **purposes** is by showing **COMPASSION** and **COMFORT**. In Luke's Gospel Jesus talks about 'poor man Lazarus, sick and disabled,' who is **lifted up** and taken to be at Abraham's side by the **angels**. When Mary Magdalene is heart-broken over the 'disappearance' of her Lord and friend, two angels are there to address the source of her deep sadness. The author of Hebrews speaks to this inherent nature of God's 'messengers of ministry': ***"Are not ALL angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation."*** (Hebrews 1:14) In the same way, we TOO are to be 'ministering spirits,' 'sent to serve' those who are hurting, and need God's salvation...

AND SO, besides typifying some of the character traits we too are to 'embody' (literally), what DO these 'heavenly messengers' really have to do with our everyday living? Well, for one, by virtue of our comparison to such 'lofty' representatives of Almighty God, you and I are in pretty good company. Whenever you get a little DOWN on yourself, doubting your self-worth... asking God 'Who am I, that you are mindful of ME?'... remember those words of Hebrews: 'You have made ME just a little lower than the angels; You have crowned ME with glory and honor.' *Can you repeat that with me?* Remember Jesus' words to His followers: "**You are considered worthy of a place in the resurrection from the dead. ... YOU are like the angels and are children of God, being children of the resurrection.**" (Luke 20:35-36) By trusting in the Lamb who was 'worthy' to be slain on our behalf, we TOO are worthy to be called 'children of God.'

Also, my fellow children, I would remind us all to always be on "**Angel Alert.**" We know from Scripture that those messengers took many different forms. One never knows when **God's plan** and **purpose** is being revealed through a most unlikely source. In that same book of *Hebrews*, the author warns his readers, "**Do not forget (neglect) to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.**" (Hebrews 13:2) Who are those 'strangers'? I don't know... maybe that bank teller... or waitress... or grocery clerk... or 'random person' you meet at a party or meeting. Like my favorite line says from that old movie "Angels in the Outfield": "*We're always watching...*"

And because others are often watching us 'without us knowing it,' remember: To someone else, who may be **hurting**, or **doubting**, or **searching**... cause like we 'heard' the disciples say to Jesus last week, "**Everybody is looking for you**"...**YOU may be THEIR 'angel.'** THIS VERY DAY there is likely someone that God will put before you that needs to hear words of PRAISE... who needs to feel PROTECTED... who could sorely use COMPASSION and COMFORT. Be open to God's leading you to that hurting person who just might be lead to say, "**Because of YOU, I believe in angels.**"

Earlier I made reference to the TV Show "Touched by an Angel." That show originally produced by a man who wrote the show as a reflection of his **spiritual anger** at the time for his two children being born disabled. When the show had, not surprisingly, a much **darker, less**

hopeful perspective, they sought out another producer, **Martha Williamson**, who was so captivated by the concept she passed up a much more lucrative position to take on this 'touching' project. She did emphasize, however, that she was a **Christian**, and could only do a show that depicted angels in a way she felt was **true** to her view of angels and that was **respectful towards God**. In keeping with that perspective, it is not surprising that Della Reese's character, 'head angel' Tess, often spoke to the hurting human being ministered to, "*I am an angel sent by God to tell you that He loves you.*" It is also not surprising that co-star Roma Downey spoke of her friend, "**To know Della is to know that she loves God.**"

MY friends, we too will encounter those who harbor **spiritual anger**, and possess a much **darker, less hopeful perspective** that we do. May our lives be a **living witness** to others that we too **love God...** sent by Him to tell of His love for them. There could be no higher compliment that we could be paid by one of our fellow human beings that... "**Because of YOU, I believe in angels.**"