

Karen Hollis | Dec 25, 2022  
Luke 2:1-20  
Christmas Day 10am – Angels

**Luke 2:1-20:** In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.' And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours!' When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.' So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be reflections of your word to us today, in Jesus' name we pray. Amen

## Outline:

- Intro – Tom Hunter song, curiosity and imagination about angels, Biblical writers also had imagination
- descriptions of angels
- definition of angels
- Heavenly host
- Coming back to the text and shepherds experiencing this messenger
- Expecting messengers in this time in between.

Angels might be anywhere at all  
listening, gossiping, anywhere at all  
on cloud, on a rooftop, or climbing up the wall  
Angels might be anywhere at all

That song was written by the late great Tom Hunter, folk singer of my childhood. He had a wonderful imagination. He used to wonder about things . . . for instance, what are angels like? Where are they? What do they do? A good biblical scholar, he knew angels don't have wings . . . sometimes they show up in other-worldly forms . . . and other times they're as ordinary as you and me. Tom's curiosity was contagious . . . and I like to think it still helps people think again about what we think we know.

As I alluded to a minute ago, biblical depictions of angels are roughly divided into two categories: angels appear in human form in everyday life . . . in dreams and visions, angels take on strange and terrifying forms, the most elaborate of which is probably from Ezekiel, where the angel resembles an elaborate structure of wheels with eyes everywhere. It really does sound terrifying. The one thing this wide range of appearance has in common

is that angels are messengers, who are able to move back and forth across the veil between the physical and spiritual worlds. One of the best biblical stories of angel encounters must be Baalam and his donkey from the book of Numbers. Baalam was riding his donkey along the road. The donkey sees the angel in the road and veers off. Baalam gets angry and hits the donkey to get him back on the road. Donkey sees the angel again and swerves off the road. Baalam hits him again . . . all of this happens one more time before the angel finally opens the donkey's mouth and says, 'Am I not your donkey, which you have ridden all your life to this day? Have I been in the habit of treating **you** in this way?' After a short exchange of conversation, God opens Baalam's eyes to reveal the angel standing in the road. Rich Mullins, one of my favourite Christian musicians used to tell this story during his concerts – he said, an angel of the Lord spoke to Baalam through his donkey . . . so if an angel of the Lord speaks through you, you need not think too highly of yourself.

But that's an interesting idea: if angels appear in human form, who's to say messengers are not speaking through us and those around us along the way, words of encouragement, caution, hope, and

more. Perhaps you've even been in conversation and heard a seemingly offhand comment ring and echo in your ears. Sometimes the message is so specific, it's hard to imagine the information is meant for anything other than your specific situation. If we drill down to the core of the matter, it seems angels bring the power and life of God's heavenly realm to Earth. They are a conduit for new information, offer guidance for heavenly possibilities to become a reality on earth.

On the night Jesus was born, shepherds were watching their flocks by night . . . whether in a vision or in human form, an angel of the Lord stood before them to share the good news of Jesus' birth to those who need to hear it the most . . . that in their joy and praise of God, they would share the news so that people far and wide might hear and live in hope for a new world to come.

Have you noticed that the word angel is tucked inside "evangelist"? It's just sitting there . . . right in the middle of the word! While angels bring good news into the world, evangelists share the good news throughout the world. As hearers of the good news of Jesus' birth, let us be among those spreading the word . . . that God's love is born again and has

taken on flesh to live among us . . . and the world will never be the same. Thanks be to God!<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Sources include Enfleshed.com Dec 25, 2022; The Bible Project: Angels; <http://www.exploringgodsword.co/egw/Vocab/angel-prophet-evangelist.htm>