

St. Michael and All Angels, 28 September 2025

This is the first time I have preached on angels. That seems odd because Scripture is full of angels—from the Garden of Eden to the Garden of Revelation. In the Hebrew Bible, angels appeared to the Patriarchs, to Moses, and to Joshua. They appear to Hagar in Genesis 16:9, to Lot in Genesis 19:1, and to Abraham in Genesis 22:11. They ascend and descend Jacob's ladder in Genesis 28:12 and appear to Jacob often refer to the heavenly host. Angels figure prominently in the book of Daniel. In the New Testament, hosts of angels appear at the birth of Jesus and guard the entrance of the tomb following the crucifixion. Angels appear to kings and to the poor; they glorify God in heaven and tromp the earth; they are both fearful and beautiful. Some are righteous and some are crooked. They bear good news and they mutiny and rebel.

So, how come I have never preached on them? Many of us, it seems, scoff at the idea of angels because they defy reason and so we dismiss them as quaint relics from a primitive past. Unless of course we have gone off the deep end and see angels everywhere.

There are a lot of false ideas about angels. We do not become angels when we die. Angels do not get their wings when a bell on a Christmas tree rings. Cherubs were never babies. Della Resse in the TV programme, *Touched by an Angel*, and Cary Grant in the film *The Bishop's Wife* do not represent what angels are really like.

Despite their presence in popular culture, most of us seem to have given up on angels. We have let them go to those we call superstitious. We have turned them into shadows of their former selves and stolen their power. Their mystery and beauty have become suspect.

But Scripture shows us beings with power and maybe that is why we prefer not to think about them. We recall those visited by angels in the Bible and the messages they conveyed, and we shudder at the thought that something similar might happen to us. Who wants to be visited by creatures whose first words are typically, "Be not afraid."

Most faiths have their equivalent to angels—beings from the heart of the Divine power who testify and challenge and protect the created universe. It is sad that we ignore them and I miss them. Especially now, I miss them. Now when other powers are rampaging in rage and arrogance and blindness through the world.

Michael, Archangel, we need you! We need your righteous sword that will cast down injustice and war mongering, and defy tyrants. We need you to stand in darkened rooms where children are abused to protect them; we need you to raise your hand against all the bullies in this world. We need you to give power to the weak and strength to the afflicted.

Gabriel, Archangel, who stood before Mary and announced a Saviour, we need you to speak again of the One who come to dark and empty places in the human soul. We need you to call us back. We need you to proclaim the freeing Word that gives hope to the hopeless and joy to the mourners. We need you to announce the coming of the One who restores and makes new.

Raphael, Archangel, we need you to spread healing in the war torn places of this world and under the bridges where the homeless shelter. We need you to fight famine and illness to bring nourishment to the hunger and comfort to the afflicted. We need you to teach us to spend our resources on life rather than death.

Uriel, Archangel, you stand in God's presence where there is only light. We need you to shine light in a world subsumed by the darkness of greed and power lust. We need you to shine light on the needs of the poor, on prisoners, and addicts.

Angels in all your hosts, strengthen our voices to glorify the Redeemer and to speak for the lonely and the voiceless. Guard our children, cradle the sorrowful. Shine, for God's sake, shine.

Now maybe this is too outlandish for some of you. Maybe this verges on superstition. But I do not care. I still believe in angels but if you do not, then for God's sake become one yourself. Become a healer and a proclaimer; become a warrior against hunger and hopelessness and evil. Be a light bearer in the darkness around us. Do that for Love's sake, and believe me, you will find yourself on the side of the angels. You will be messengers of God, bearers of glad tidings, lovers of God and protectors of God's people. And the angels will rejoice!

May it be so.