

The Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity

St Michael and all Angels

29th September 2024

In the name of the + Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

All Amen.

Grace, mercy and peace
from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

All And also with you.

We have come to Mount Zion,
the city of the living God,
the heavenly Jerusalem,
to myriads of angels,
to God, the judge of all,
and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant

Amen

Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith. *Hebrews 12.22-24*

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory.
Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Woe is me, for I am lost;
I am a person of unclean lips.

Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Our guilt is taken away,
and our sin is forgiven.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Almighty God, who in Jesus Christ has given us
a kingdom that cannot be destroyed,
forgive us our sins, +
open our eyes to God's truth,
strengthen us to do God's will
and give us the joy of his kingdom,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.



Kyrie Confession

Absolution

Everlasting God,
 you have ordained and constituted the ministries of angels
 and mortals in a wonderful order:
 grant that as your holy angels always serve you in heaven,
 so, at your command,
 they may help and defend us on earth;
 through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
 who is alive and reigns with you,
 in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
 one God, now and for ever.
 Amen.

HYMN

1 Ye holy angels bright,
 who wait at God's right hand,
 or through the realms of light
 fly at your Lord's command,
 assist our song,
 for else the theme
 too high doth seem
 for mortal tongue.

2 Ye blessèd souls at rest,
 who ran this earthly race,
 and now, from sin released,
 behold the Saviour's face,
 his praises sound,
 as in his sight
 with sweet delight
 ye do abound.

3 Ye saints, who toil below,
 adore your heavenly King,
 and onward as ye go
 some joyful anthem sing;
 take what he gives
 and praise him still,
 through good and ill,
 who ever lives.

4 My soul, bear thou thy part,
 triumph in God above,
 and with a well-tuned heart
 sing thou the songs of love;
 let all thy days
 till life shall end,
 whate'er he send,
 be filled with praise.

A Reading from The Old Testament
Genesis 28 10-16

Jacob's Dream at Bethel

10 Jacob left Beer-sheba and went toward Haran. 11 He came to a certain place and stayed there for the night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place.



12 And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, the top of it reaching to heaven; and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. 13 And the Lord stood beside him and said, "I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring; 14 and your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and all the families of the earth shall be blessed in you and in your offspring. 15 Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

16 Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said, “Surely the Lord is in this place—and I did not know it!” 17 And he was afraid, and said, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.”

This is the word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

**The psalm
Psalm 103. 19-22**

19 The LORD has established his throne in the heavens,
and his kingdom rules over all.

20 Bless the LORD, O you his angels,
you mighty ones who do his bidding,
obedient to his spoken word.

21 Bless the LORD, all his hosts,
his ministers that do his will.

22 Bless the LORD, all his works,
in all places of his dominion.

Bless the LORD, O my soul.

**A Reading from The New Testament
Hebrews 1. 5-end**

The Son Is Superior to Angels

5 For to which of the angels did God ever say,
“You are my Son; today I have begotten you”?

Or again,

“I will be his Father, and he will be my Son”?

6 And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says,
“Let all God’s angels worship him.”

7 Of the angels he says,

“He makes his angels winds, and his servants flames of fire.”

8 But of the Son he says,

“Your throne, O God, is forever and ever,
and the righteous sceptre is the sceptre of your kingdom.

9 You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness;
therefore God, your God, has anointed you
with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.”

10 And,

“In the beginning, Lord, you founded the earth,
and the heavens are the work of your hands;

11 they will perish, but you remain;
they will all wear out like clothing;

12 like a cloak you will roll them up,
and like clothing they will be changed.

But you are the same,
and your years will never end.”

13 But to which of the angels has he ever said,

“Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet”?

14 Are not all angels spirits in the divine service, sent to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?

This is the word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

HYMN

1 Thou art the Way: to thee alone
from sin and death we flee;
and he who would the Father seek,
must seek him, Lord, by thee.

2 Thou art the Truth: thy Word alone
true wisdom can impart;
thou only canst inform the mind,
and purify the heart.

3 Thou art the Life: the rending tomb
proclaims thy conquering arm,
and those who put their trust in thee
nor death nor hell shall harm.

4 Thou art the Way, the Truth, the Life:
grant us that Way to know,
that Truth to keep, that Life to win,
whose joys eternal flow.

Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia, alleluia.
Bless the Lord, all you his hosts,
you ministers of his who do his will.
Alleluia.

The Gospel

The holy Gospel is written in the 1st Chapter of the Gospel according to John beginning at the 43rd verse.

Glory be to thee, O Lord

43 The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." 44 Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. 45 Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth." 46 Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see."

47 When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, "Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!" 48 Nathanael asked him, "Where did you get to know me?" Jesus answered, "I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you." 49 Nathanael replied, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" 50 Jesus answered, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these." 51 And he said to him, "Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

This is the Gospel of the Lord

Praise be to thee, O Christ

Reflection

On Friday 29th September the Church commemorates St Michael and All Angels. There is a church in my Parish so dedicated and I did not want to miss the opportunity to observe this especially as this year it falls on a Sunday.

You may wonder how can an angel be called a saint? The church does it to show respect and honour. Our thinking is rather vague perhaps, or are we indifferent, disbelieving. They are great subjects for the kitsch industry – angels everywhere. The word angel simply means messenger. In the Bible there are 300+ allusions from Genesis to Revelation, what can we learn from this?

Angels were created by God at the beginning of creation perhaps even before the creation of the universe and our earth. They are too numerous to count. They are not omnipresent, omnipotent, or omniscient, and not to be worshipped. Some are called Cherubim and Seraphim. They are spiritual beings not physical, not mortal and subject to death, they do not marry or reproduce. They are subject to Christ.

They were created to glorify and worship God. Angels report to God. They rejoice in God's work of creation and salvation. They perform the will of God. They help humans. They ministered to Jesus.

They are wise and intelligent; take an interest in the affairs of men, they 'fly' in the sense that they are not subject to same physical laws. They have a will, express emotions such as joy (over sinners) and longing to 'look into' the things of salvation). They observe God's people with interest. They will join all believers in the heavenly kingdom. Most remained faithful to God. They announced the birth of Jesus.

Angels are always in God's presence and logically that means that they are present everywhere because God is everywhere. This means our creation is holy and permeated by them. Angels are messengers in the unusual sense that they bring with them the person who sent them, God himself.

So you can see how early in early Hebrew thought there was the belief that there existed a rich background of supernatural beings attendant on God; they ascend and descend the heavenly ladder and are distinct from God.

Over time humans attempted to understand from scripture what this 'other' creation may be. The concept grew that there was a hierarchy of angels, nine in fact. You can find this depicted in art should you be interested; God in glory surrounded by the Seraphim, Cherubim, and Thrones, beneath them Virtue, Powers and Dominions, and below them, Principalities, Archangels and Angels. It is this lower level who are believed to be most closely involved with humankind.

As time went on, in Daniel and the Apocryphal writings, names are given to individual angels— here we get Michael and Gabriel in Dan. 8.16 and 10.13, and Raphael in Tobit 3.17

In the Old Testament they are fearsome, mighty beings. The impression an angel gave is one of superhuman bigness and the first thing they say is always 'don't be afraid'. They are mighty but they do not want to destroy us.

In the New Testament angels continue to appear; Gabriel to Mary, the heavenly host to the shepherds, the countless hosts Jesus refers to at his arrest in the garden, they will accompany the Jesus at his return, and our angel stands in the presence of God, a reference to the idea of angels as mentioned by Jesus. From this we can see how the Church largely adopted the belief in angels and used it to express the experience of the unseen spirit world of guardian beings sent to minister to us the heirs of salvation (Heb 1.14).

Angels represent a distinct line of cosmic evolution that is unrelated to the human species; that is a human cannot develop into an angel. Human beings do not become angels at death, yet this is a common thought especially regarding children. Such an idea comes from what we might term 'folk religion' an understanding that has no foundation other than the ideas of humankind. It is not a belief based on the revealing of God in scripture although it serves as a powerful, if unfounded, comfort for many people.

Two thoughts from the above. Firstly, that we might open our minds to the possibility of their presence and action on our behalf. There are mysteries here but is not all of God a mystery?

Secondly, it is quite possible that some of the incidents recorded in the scriptures for example, Peter being released from prison, or Elisha being fed in the wilderness, may simply have been godly people

moved by the Spirit of God to act. After all the word *angeloi*, simply means – messenger. In that sense we are ‘angels’ – because we can act in the same way as angels. How?

Angels are always messengers of salvation We are angels in that sense. When we bring a faith-filled action or word to another, then we become *angeloi*, God’s ambassadors and messengers for our neighbours.

Angels bring help in times of need. Our God is long- suffering and rich in loving kindness and angels mediate this to us in our need – and when we are able to help others we are again, God’s *angeloi*.

Angels often appear to give a commission, a task to do. They waited on Jesus after his temptation but there was work for Jesus to do. When we encourage each other in the work of God we are *angeloi*.

So, we can see that the idea of angels can apply both to other beings and to us being a help to our neighbour, standing by them in need, and passing on a task to them – these are our angelic deeds. Our existence is a purposed gift from God to humankind. Our life is a form of angelic service to the world.

I cannot finish without placing angels in context, by which I mean in context with Jesus the Christ. Here is a statement which may seem strange at first thought.

Not angels but humankind are the apex, the summit of creation. The human though of a lower order than angels has the prospect of a far higher development than angels. The New Testament makes clear that our faith in Jesus makes us part of him – we are in Christ who is far above all.

Jesus assumed a human form not an angelic one. He became human and he remains so, his humanity is in heaven now. He did not ‘borrow’ it and then lay it aside.

Jesus introduced a new era in world history. The old order was replaced by a new one. St Paul in letters to Ephesians and Colossians proceeds at length to stress the superiority of Jesus Christ to any heavenly potentate. He writes that on the cross he discarded the cosmic powers and authorities like a garment. In his death and resurrection defeated all the powers.

God set Jesus ‘far above all government and authority all power and dominion and any title of sovereignty that can be named not only in this age but in the age to come’. He put everything in subjection beneath his feet. All angels are beneath Jesus, good and bad. All powers in this vast realm are subordinate to him, some may embrace evil tendencies, but they are disarmed and captive. Jesus becomes in effect our only angel in the true sense of the word. One who brings the message of salvation and helps us and intercedes for us.

Put all of this together and we can begin to see and appreciate in greater measure what our salvation means and brings to us. We have the Holy Spirit of Jesus within us always – a companion, teacher, friend who stays by our side on the way, a guide who shows us the way. We have angels who in the economy of God are also with us in ways beyond our imagining. The writer to the Hebrews describes them as ministers to the heirs of salvation. Salvation, the gospel, is a mystery to them and one in which they long to look.

Thinking ‘very down to earth’ this means you and I are *angeloi* (messenger) to each other and to the world.

Intercessions

Father in heaven, by his blood your Christ has ransomed us to you,
and has made us a kingdom and priests to you our God.

As the angels minister to you in heaven,
strengthen your Church to serve you here on earth.

Lord, hear us, Lord, graciously hear us.

Father in heaven,
when the angels greeted the birth of your Son
they sang for joy 'Glory to God and peace on earth'.
Bless with Christ's peace the nations of the world.
Lord, hear us, Lord, graciously hear us.

Father in heaven,
your Son has promised to your children
the care of the guardian angels who look upon your face.
Protect by your mercy our neighbours, families and friends.
Lord, hear us, Lord, graciously hear us.

Father in heaven,
you give your angels charge over those who trust in you
to guard them in all their ways.
Be with those in trouble...,
rescue them and show them your salvation.
Lord, hear us, Lord, graciously hear us.

Father in heaven,
your angel declares 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.'
'Blessed indeed,' says the Spirit,
'for they may rest from their labours,
for they take with them the record of their deeds.'
Enfold in your love all who come in faith
to your judgement seat in heaven.
Lord, hear us, Lord, graciously hear us.

Father in heaven,
the angels sing by day and night around your throne:
'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty.'
With Michael, prince of the angels, who contends by our side,
with Gabriel, your herald, who brings glad tidings,
with Raphael, the protector, who ministers your healing,
and with the whole company of heaven,
we worship you, we give you glory,
we sing your praise and exalt you for ever.
Amen.

Being made one by the power of the Spirit,
as our Saviour taught us, so we pray

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation

but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours now and for ever.
Amen.

God keep you in the fellowship of his saints;
Christ protect you by the ministry of the angels;
the Spirit make you holy in God's service;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.
Amen

HYMN

1. Angel voices ever singing
round Thy throne of light,
angel harps, forever ringing,
rest not day nor night;
thousands only live to bless Thee
and confess thee Lord of might.

2. Thou who art beyond the farthest
mortal eye can scan,
can it be that Thou regardest
songs of sinful man?
Can we feel that Thou art near us
and wilt hear us? Yea, we can.

3. For, we know Thy love rejoices
o'er each work of Thine;
Thou didst ears and hands and voices
for Thy praise combine;
craftsman's art and music's measure
for Thy pleasure didst design.

4. In thy house, great God, we offer
Of thine own to thee;
And for thine acceptance proffer
All unworthily
Hearts and minds and hands and voices
In our choicest psalmody.

5. Honour, glory, might, and merit
Thine shall ever be,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
blessed Trinity:
of the best that Thou hast given
earth and heaven render Thee