



Psalm 103: 20-21

New International Version of the Holy Bible

God's Holy Angels

“Praise the Lord, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word. Praise the Lord, all his heavenly hosts, you his servants who do his will.” Psalm 103:20-21

Since we believe in God the Father Almighty Maker of heaven and earth, we believe that our gracious God created everything. When the Bible says: **“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” Genesis 1:1** - this means that God created all creatures great and small (*those which we can see and all that we cannot see*). When we think of the wind, storms, and the myriad of undiscovered stars, we realize that the extent of God's invisible creation is endless. Luther's small Catechism says that the most important of all the invisible creatures are the holy angels. So our topic today will be: **GOD'S HOLY ANGELS.**

I. The nature of the Angels

People who have read the first chapter of Genesis carefully have discovered that among all the creatures listed, the holy angels are not mentioned. This has caused some to ask: *“Where did they come from and when were they created?”* Since Scripture in another place asserts that all things were made by God: **“For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.” Colossians 1:16** The Lord ended his work on the seventh day: **“By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing;**

so on the seventh day he rested from all his work.” Genesis 2:2 It is obvious that our gracious Lord created them sometime during the six days of creation.

1. They are invisible. The angels differ from us radically in that they are spirits, which means they do not have flesh and bones as we do. That’s precisely what makes them invisible. True, at times they took on human form and made themselves visible. Lot was visited by men who turned out to be angels in Genesis chapter 19. Zechariah, the father of John the Baptizer, saw the angel who informed him that he and Elizabeth would have a son who would prepare the way for Christ: **“Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense.” Luke 1:11** Mary saw and spoke to the angel who brought her the glorious news that Jesus, the Savior of the world, would be born of her: **“God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth . . .” Luke 1:26** However, these visible angels were exceptions. According to Holy Scripture the angels are holy spirits and generally they remain invisible. This explains why you and I can’t see the angels.

2. They are great in number. We don’t know exactly how many angels there are but our text says there is a host of them, which means a great many. We learn the same from other portions of Scripture. On that first Christmas morning, we are told, first one angel appeared to the shepherds with the good news of the Savior’s birth; but then there was a **MULTITUDE** of the heavenly host praising God by singing about glory to God and peace on earth. When the soldiers came to capture Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane Peter drew his sword hoping to protect his Lord. However, Jesus asked him to put away the sword and reminded him that if he wanted protection to simply ask his Father in heaven for twelve or more legions (*a legion is about six thousand*) of angels. So Jesus was talking about some 72 thousand angels for his protection against this small band of soldiers, scribes and Pharisees.

Right now this room is filled with angels. They are also in your home, where you go to school or work or play, where you drive your car, operate a machine, or fly on a plane. They are everywhere – so many that each one can have their own angel. Children get into fights at times because there is just one doll or one ball in the house. Adults become embarrassed or feel neglected at times because there is a shortage of homes, money, or some other commodity which they desire. There is never a shortage of angels. If you want one, all you need to do is ask God for one.

Millions of Christians since the time of Luther have prayed his Morning and Evening prayers. Both, you know, end with the words: *“For into Thy hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Thy holy angel be with me, that the wicked foe may have no power over me.”* Thousands of mothers still put their children to bed each night as they sing or pray:

Dear Father in heaven, Look down from above; Bless Daddy and Mommy and all whom I love. May angels guard over my sleeping, and when the morning is breaking, awake me. Amen

It’s because our Father hears these prayers and sends his angels as requested that children have many blessed nights and we go unhurt many a day even though surrounded by all manner of danger.

3. They are powerful and mighty. *“But what good can an invisible creature do?”* Have you ever seen the wind? Even though it is invisible you know what the wind can do. From the Holy Scriptures and our own experience we also know what the angels can do. They are not almighty as God is but they have strength and power which far surpass that of any other creature. Our text says: **THEY EXCELL IN STRENGTH.**

The Bible is filled with thrilling and fascinating angel stories and they are not fiction like the “*Super Man*” or “*Super Woman*” stories on television.

When the King of Syria warred against Samaria, Elisha with the help of God always revealed the strategy of this wicked king to the king of Samaria. Finally the king of Syria sent his whole army to capture Elisha. One morning when Elisha and his servant arose, they found themselves surrounded by the enemy. The servant exclaimed: **“Oh, my lord, what shall we do?” 2 Kings 6:15** Elisha answered: **“Don’t be afraid . . . Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” 2 Kings 6:16** The servant couldn’t see anyone on their side. Elisha prayed that the Lord would open the eyes of the servant so that he could see the situation as it was in reality. When the invisible angels became visible, the servant saw the whole mountain filled with angels and their chariots all around him and Elisha. The angels then proceeded to smite all the soldiers with blindness. In 2 Kings Chapter 6, Elisha took the blind soldiers by the hand and led the whole army to his own king in Samaria.

So even though the angels are invisible spirits, Scripture assures us that there is never a shortage in number nor is there any lack of power for them to carry out our Lord’s commands. No wonder we Christians sing: *“Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of Creation.”*

II. The Work of the Angels

Since God created the angels so magnificently and in such great number we can rightly conclude that they must serve some good and great purpose. This brings us to the second part of our sermon, namely, the work of the holy angels.

1. They carry out God's commands. *"The angels carry out God's commands,"* says Luther's Small Catechism. That's precisely what they do according to our text: **"Praise the Lord, all his heavenly hosts, you his servants who do his will."** **Psalm 103:21** The angels don't run loose nor wild, neither do they make independent decisions. They follow our Lord's instructions. When he sends them they go, whether that is to destroy a wicked city like Sodom or to lead a small child over a swaying bridge.

2. They serve the believers. Their special assignment is to serve those who believe in Christ. **"Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?"** **Hebrews 1:14**
Do you want some examples?

* When the people of Israel were in the Babylonian Captivity Daniel was one of the few who continued praying to God in spite of the king's decree that such prayers cease. As a result Daniel was thrown into a den filled with hungry lions. To the amazement of all who hated Daniel, the lions just roared and walked around him in circles. Even though he was in the den all night, he was unhurt. How come? The Lord had sent an angel who held shut the mouth of every lion. **"My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me. . . "** **Daniel 6:22**

* When Ahab, the wicked king of Israel, was determined to kill the prophet Elijah, the prophet fled south to Beersheba which is desert. As he slept there under a juniper tree, an angel touched him and asked him to arise and eat. To his amazement, right next to him, the angel had placed hot homemade bread and a jar of fresh water. **All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat."** **1 Kings 19:5**

* Do you remember how the angels served St. Peter, one of the great prophets of the New Testament? Shortly before Easter the same wicked king who had beheaded the apostle James had Peter thrown into prison because he preached salvation through faith in one whom he called Christ Jesus. As though he were one of the worst criminals in the Roman kingdom, this wicked king not only locked the prison door but he also assigned sixteen of his best soldiers to guard him. In chains, Peter was forced to sleep between two of the soldiers. But during the night an angel appeared and asked Peter to rise and put on his shoes. The chains fell off his hands and unmolested they walked past the soldiers. When they came to the great iron gate which led into the street, it opened automatically. When Peter was outside of the gate he said: **“Now I know without a doubt that the Lord sent his angel and rescued me from Herod’s clutches . . .”**

Acts 12:11 How often have the angels quietly served you but, like Peter, you didn’t realize their presence until it was over and you had time to think?

Serving us – God’s people today – is one of the angels’ great assignments. The psalmist promises: **“The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them.” Psalm 34:7** If you fear the Lord, then this promise applies to you. Like the angels surrounded Elisha, so they pitch a camp around you so that none of your enemies can even come close to you without their consent.

The Word of the Lord assures us: **“As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds his people both now and forevermore.” Psalm 125:2** When you have seen Jerusalem you can understand more fully what the psalmist is saying. No matter what direction you look when in Jerusalem, on every side you see mountains.

This made the city almost unconquerable. Even the Roman army in the year 70 under Titus felt it wise to surround the city and starve it out rather than attempt to storm the city. As these mountains surround Jerusalem so the Lord surrounds you with his army of holy angels.

Maybe you have memorized that beautiful promise: **"For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone." Psalm 91:11-12** No wonder that the psalmist can say: **". . . then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent." Psalm 91:10**

When a mother saw her small child roll off the porch for the third time in an hour without getting hurt, she exclaimed: *"I don't see why most babies don't completely wreck themselves before they grow up."* Some say it is because they have soft bones, but let's not forget that the angels are at work 24 hours a day, especially guarding and protecting these little ones.

A boy was climbing a tree to get the eggs from a bird's nest. The limbs were beginning to sway as he climbed higher and higher, but he needed only three or four more inches. Just as he reached the eggs the limb twisted and the boy came crashing through the limbs grabbing and screaming until he hit bottom. Fortunately he walked away unhurt except for a few scratches on his hands. He was saved by the invisible angels who guided his fall and brought him to rest on the ground.

By this time I can imagine some of you saying: *"Yes, that's wonderful! But when I fell out of a tree I did get hurt" . . . "A tractor ran over my foot." Or - "Just last week my child broke her arm." "I was stung by a wasp and had to go to the hospital." . . . "Where were the holy angels?!"*

Maybe the angels let you get hurt to keep you out of greater danger or to change the direction of your life. Maybe they let you suffer so that

someone else seeing your patience and faith in the midst of your suffering might be led to glorify God with you. Maybe you forgot to ask for an angel on that day and the Lord wanted to lead you to a greater appreciation of what they are daily doing for you. One thing is sure – the angels are always around every Christian seeing to it that nothing which is really evil can ever befall them.

3. They praise the Lord. What are the angels doing when not serving us? They have a wonderful time singing and praising the Lord. Our text exhorts them: **“Praise the Lord, you his angels . . . Praise the Lord, all his heavenly hosts, you his servants who do his will.”**
Psalm 103: 20-21

Singing and praising their God seems to be one of the angel’s favorite activities.

When the Christ Child was born in Bethlehem and the angel appeared to the Shepherds with the good news of their salvation, St. Luke informs us that suddenly the sky was filled with angels singing: **“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.”** **Luke 2: 14**

St. John in the book of Revelation tells us how deeply moved he was in the spirit when in a special vision he saw the angels about the eternal throne singing and saying: **“Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!”** **Revelations 7:12**

4. They carry every Christian to heaven. Finally, here is the best news of all. The holy angels won’t quit serving you until they have delivered your body and soul into heaven. When you die they will carry the real you – your soul – right to heaven. On the day of the final judgment they will come to pick up your body to unite it again with your soul.

There was a poor man by the name of Lazarus who lay near the door of a rich man begging. When he died, the inspired Scriptures tell us that an angel carried him up into heaven. The angels have done the same for the souls of my father and mother, your fathers, and mothers, and all others who died believing in Jesus Christ as their Savior. Some of our airlines boast that they have twelve flights daily between Dallas and Austin or Houston. I don't know how many earth to heaven flights the angels have each day. They are ready to fly anytime a Christian dies. You don't even need a ticket. The ride is free for all believers just as salvation is free. What a joyous ride that's going to be.

The body, as we know from experience, is left behind and is buried but not to stay there forever. Scripture tells us when the final trumpet sounds and Christ appears in all his glory all the holy angels will come with him. What a scene. What an experience! What a day for all believers! Yes, the angels will be blowing their trumpets – maybe a billion trombones. But that's not the real reason for their return.

A man, said Christ, went out to sow his wheat. During the night the enemy came and sowed tares or weeds amongst the wheat. Later when the laborers saw all the tares among the wheat they asked whether they should go pull them out. The farmer replied: **“Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned, then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.” Matthew 13:30** When the disciples asked for an explanation our Savior replied: **“The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.” Matthew 13:37-39**

5. “The reapers are the angels.” They shall cast the unbelievers into the furnace of fire and carry the bodies of all the believers into heaven, there to be united with their souls forever. That’s why the holy angels are coming on the great day.

There was an elderly grandma away from home on a visit and she became quite sick. Her son and doctor suggested that she fly home on a plane. However, very soon it became obvious that this was no longer feasible. When about to die, semi-conscious - this saintly grandma who had trusted Christ as Savior all her life said calmly: *“I don’t want to fly a plane. I want to fly an angel.”* A few moments later she died. The great glory of it is that in our time you and I will have the same victorious pleasure. Then we will truly shout with the psalmist: **“Praise the Lord, all his works everywhere in his dominion. Praise the Lord, O my soul.”**
Psalm 103:22