

*Read also Luke 1:5-25. Check out the service at [www.fpcd.org](http://www.fpcd.org).*

Today's topic is angels. If you had to find a picture of an angel, what would he or she look like? Like a man in a white suit with a briefcase? A beautiful princess with wings and a halo? A foggy mist? An ethereal light? What do angels look like? Where are they when they are not acting as "God's Secret Agents?"<sup>1</sup>

Jimmy and Logan's skit was written by Karen Carson, whose imagination is quite vivid. She imagines angels as human beings which we "extend hospitality to, unaware that they are truly angels." (see Hebrews 13:2)

The New Testament references angels almost two hundred times and the Old Testament over a hundred, so we should know something about them. Perhaps you could go home this afternoon and do a Bible word search and read up on them. You would be encouraged.

Who are angels? John Calvin writes: "Angels are the dispensers and administrators of the divine beneficence toward us. They regard our safety, undertake our defense, direct our ways, and exercise a constant solicitude that no evil befall us." (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol. 1)

That means they give us excessive attentiveness. Sounds good!

Angels serve both God and human beings. Psalm 91:11 says, "For God will order his angels to protect you wherever you go."

The Bible contains many stories of just that—like when Elisha and his servant were surrounded by the army of Aram, but God gave Elisha and his servant a vision of thousands of angel warriors on chariots protecting them (2 Kings 6:8-17). And you remember Peter being in jail and scheduled for trial when an angel came and poked him in the side saying, *let's get out of here!* His chains fell off, the locked gate creaked open, and they made their way down the street to a house where his friends were praying earnestly for him. He thought he was having a dream until Rhoda, the house servant, wouldn't let him in—she thought he was a ghost because how would he ever get out of jail? (Acts 12:5-17)

Do you pray earnestly for your loved ones who are in need? You might discover some positive results.

Angels are quite exciting! They help in times of danger and also times of need.

Hagar and her son Ishmael were hopelessly wandering in the desert and an angel of God helped them find water. (Gen 21:17-19) The children of Israel ate the "food of angels" in the desert. (Ps 78:25)

Angels are a real expression of "the God who sees you." (Genesis 16:13)

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<sup>1</sup> Billy Graham's descriptive for angels.

Captain Eddie Rickenbacker was a WWI hero. Years later, in 1942, he flew a special mission to the Pacific, when a faulty navigation instrument caused his plane to veer off course. As they ran out of fuel, seven men were forced to ditch, spending 24 days adrift at sea in rafts. They ran out of food in three days. One of the men had a Bible and they immediately set up morning and evening prayers. One day they read Matthew 6:31-34, “So don't worry . . . ‘What will we eat? What will we drink? . . . For your Heavenly Father knows you need these things.’”

Lt. James Whittaker recounts in his book *We Thought We Heard the Angels Sing* (1943), “I didn't have the least notion that this open-air hallelujah meeting was going to do any good...” Finally he determined, “I would believe when I saw the food and drink. I was destined to see something startlingly like proof the following night...”

Flight engineer Johnny Bartek wrote in his book that on the eighth day, after reading Matthew 6:31-34 again from the Bible they saw a seagull. He writes “...but as we went on we all began to believe in the Bible and God and prayer... We prayed and prayed for the seagull to land so we could catch him... After reading the passage, about twenty minutes later, that's when the seagull landed on Eddie Rickenbacker's head...”

Rickenbacker caught it and they used it for food and fish bait, with a fishhook made from a bent key ring.

Whittaker continues, “We said the Lord's prayer again. . . . While we rolled over the crests and into the troughs I was thinking that this was God's chance to make a believer of Jim Whittaker. . . . Something was tugging insistently at my consciousness. I looked over to the left. A cloud was darkening by the second. . . . It was rain – and moving toward us!”

These miraculous rainstorms continued randomly until they were rescued.

Angels not only rescue and help us, they also bring people to faith.

You want to hear a little inside story from the Bible? This speaks of life from an angel's perspective. READ Daniel 10:1-19

<sup>NLT</sup> In the third year of the reign of King Cyrus of Persia, Daniel had another vision. He understood that the vision concerned events certain to happen in the future -- times of war and great hardship. <sup>2</sup> When this vision came to me, I, Daniel, had been in mourning for three whole weeks. <sup>3</sup> All that time I had eaten no rich food. No meat or wine crossed my lips, and I used no fragrant lotions until those three weeks had passed. <sup>4</sup> On April 23, as I was standing on the bank of the great Tigris River, <sup>5</sup> I looked up and saw a man dressed in linen clothing, with a belt of pure gold around his waist. <sup>6</sup> His body looked like a precious gem. His face flashed like lightning, and his eyes flamed like torches. His arms and feet shone like polished bronze, and his voice roared like a vast multitude of people. <sup>7</sup> Only I, Daniel, saw this vision. The men with me saw nothing, but they were suddenly terrified and ran away to hide. <sup>8</sup> So I was left there all alone to see this amazing vision. My strength left me, my face grew deathly pale, and I felt very weak. <sup>9</sup> Then I heard the man speak, and when I heard the sound of his voice, I fainted and lay there with my face to the ground.

<sup>10</sup> Just then a hand touched me and lifted me, still trembling, to my hands and knees. <sup>11</sup> And the man said to me, "Daniel, you are very precious to God, so listen carefully to what I have to say to you. Stand up, for I have been sent to you." When he said this to me, I stood up, still trembling. <sup>12</sup> Then he said, "Don't be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day you began to pray for understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your request has been heard in heaven. I have come in answer to your prayer. <sup>13</sup> But for twenty-one days the spirit prince of the kingdom of Persia blocked my way. Then Michael, one of the archangels, came to help me, and I left him there with the spirit prince of the kingdom of Persia. <sup>14</sup> Now I am here to explain what will happen to your people in the future, for this vision concerns a time yet to come." <sup>15</sup> While he was speaking to me, I looked down at the ground, unable to say a word. <sup>16</sup> Then the one who looked like a man touched my lips, and I opened my mouth and began to speak. I said to the one standing in front of me, "I am filled with anguish because of the vision I have seen, my lord, and I am very weak. <sup>17</sup> How can someone like me, your servant, talk to you, my lord? My strength is gone, and I can hardly breathe." <sup>18</sup> Then the one who looked like a man touched me again, and I felt my strength returning. <sup>19</sup> "Don't be afraid," he said, "for you are very precious to God. Peace! Be encouraged! Be strong!" As he spoke these words to me, I suddenly felt stronger and said to him, "Please speak to me, my lord, for you have strengthened me."

While angels aren't necessarily visible, like in the previous story, here an angel appears like a "precious gem, face like lightning," an overwhelming presence which touched Daniel and lifted him up to his hands and knees.

Did you hear it?

Number one message: "You are very precious to God."

Number two message: "From the very first day you began to pray, your request has been heard in heaven."

Number three message: "I have come because of your prayer."

So this angel is an agent of rescue; and agent of defense; a go-between sent from heaven.

When I first went to Fuller Seminary in 2005, it was a little frightening. I was away from home, out of my comfort zone, and hadn't gone to school for years. I prayed a lot! Mostly my prayers were for help to learn Hebrew and systematics—challenges I never imagined taking. I had a young friend and one day she came to me. She needed to tell me something but she was scared that I would think she was crazy. The thought would not rest. She said, "I was working out on the treadmill when this message came to me for you. I felt it was an angel bringing a message from God." The message was very similar:

To my dear daughter, You, your life, and your faith are a gift to the world. Thank you for searching and learning and growing in an effort to know me more fully. I am very proud of you. I love you, Abba

That message helped me to carry on and not quit. I was the one who questioned what I was doing, but God had heard my requests and seen my efforts.

Another time in the middle of the night I was awakened. The next day I had a Greek midterm and I had taken a practice test and failed miserably. I was worried about conjugating verbs. I could not get it. There was a light shining on my dresser on my practice sheet. I picked it up and the words came to me—*look, it's not that hard. Look for the pattern.* I flipped on the lamp and took a look. It became clear. It really wasn't that hard. I studied for a few minutes and went back to bed.

The next day I aced the test.

We are not abandoned; God hears and sees and He sends us help.

Are you open to his help? Do you believe God has your best interest at heart? Or do you dismiss even the possibility?

Here's what the angel said to Daniel: *for twenty-one days the spirit prince of the kingdom of Persia blocked me. Then the archangel Michael came to help me, and he took over the battle, so I could come speak to you.*

What was his message? *Everything's going to be all right. Take courage. Be strong. I'm going to fight against that enemy of yours, and then I am going to fight against the next spiritual force that comes against you and God's kingdom.*

This is the angel's word to you, FPCD, "Don't be afraid, for you are very precious to God. Peace! Be encouraged! Be strong!"

"For he orders his angels to protect you wherever you go."

AMEN