

Title: The angel's new song
Text: Luke 2.8-20
Theme: The prayer/song of angels
Series: Advent 2025 #3
Aim: I aim to call my people to intentionally obey and worship God

Read Text:

Angels play a pretty significant part in the story of redemption. They are the opening act of God's creation on Day 1 in order to be witnesses and the cheering section of God's awesome display of power, creativity, complexity and coordination. They are involved with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Samson, Elijah, Isaiah, Daniel, Ezekiel and Zechariah. So, it is not surprising that Gabriel and other angels have a prominent role in the coming of Christ. Our Creator is their Creator. The Seraphim in Isaiah 6 worshiped the Son of God and it was about him that they say, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD God of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory!" They are and were in awe of his glory, splendor and power in heaven. How much more would they be in awe of his humbling of himself to become one of us. They saw his white-hot righteousness that caused the Seraphim to use their wings to cover their faces and to cover their feet. Seraphim are perfect, but they are created. Created, even though perfect could not stand unshielded, unprotected from the uncreated, infinite holiness and glory of God. Now, this white-hot, infinitely holy God has throttled, bridled, covered, disguised, humbled himself as a human, in fact he appears to be a helpless infant who cannot roll over and needs to be fed. The incarnation of Christ is amazing to us, because God has come to our world. To the angels it is more so, because they lived in the world he came from. We see what he became. They knew what he was.

Gabriel shows up to Zechariah, and then shows up to Mary. An angel appears to Joseph in a dream (quite possibly Gabriel) as well. Each time, the angel is making an announcement and giving instructions. There is no record in the Bible of angels playing harps. There are plenty of people in the Bible who play a harp, including David. The Apostle John talks about the 24 elders in heaven who fall down in worship before Christ, each of them holding a harp, but not angels. That ruins a lot of Christmas cards, paintings, and even a traditional Christmas Carol, sorry. Angels are intimidating, powerful and can be deadly. One of them killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night. These heavenly creatures are other worldly. They can kill, yet they cannot be killed. They are immortal although they appear to be someone you can touch and they can speak and can speak in your language.

Angels have a long history in this world and are evidence of another world beyond this one. Given the fact that they are so powerful, immortal, other worldly and indestructible, they are terrifying. When you stand in the presence of such raw power, even though it is harnessed, you feel really small and vulnerable. I love to watch videos of tornados. If I wasn't married and didn't have a responsible job where people depended on me, I would be so tempted to buy a juiced up pick-up truck and join a storm-chaser team and track down super-cells. When I was 18, I was driving down a country road in OH with some friends when a modest tornado formed

in a corn field next to us. We were terrified and excited. But even tornados are of this world. Angels are not. They are other-worldly and are a different classification in the created order. Therefore, they are fascinating and terrifying.

1. What Happened? (8-14)

A. The appearance (8-9)

Most of the time, when angels appear to people in the Bible, they just appear. If they walked up and knocked on the door, or slowly approached and waved from a distance, there may not be so many cardiac episodes, but just showing up just wigs people out. Maybe they do that sort of thing in heaven and everyone is used to it, but down here, we just always come out of our skin. Gabriel shows up to Zechariah and immediately tells him not be afraid. Same thing with Mary and now, the same thing with the shepherds. What is worse is that it is at night. Fear not!

B. The announcement (10-11)

“For behold, I bring you good news (gospel) of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”

This is unbelievable on 2 different levels. First the fact that these shepherds have been visited by a real live angel who is talking to them is off the charts crazy. Secondly, what the angel says is even more astounding. The Messiah (Christ) is God (the Lord). The Messiah is our Savior! He has come. He has been born. He has been born near you. He has been born for you. This is good news for you that will bring you and all other kinds of people great joy. That one statement is so loaded with truth that unpacking it would take hundreds of years and thousands of books. The angel who says this (possibly Gabriel) is referencing the Messianic promise in Isaiah 9.6. The angel is making a promise even as he is saying that God has just fulfilled one. God has come.

The shepherds are obviously stunned, but the only ones more surprised than they are, are the angels. The angels are created beings. They are not divine, but neither are they human. They are made by God to serve God, to worship God, to be messengers of God, even to fight, if need be. Jesus told Peter in the Garden of Gethsemane that if he called to his Father, that he would at once unleash 72,000 angels to come and destroy those who were arresting Jesus that night. These are awesome creatures. They are used to being in awe of the glory of God. The angelic beings called the seraphim are around the throne of God and day and night call out to one another, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory.” Isaiah’s vision of glory tells us that this has been going on since they were created. This has been their song for thousands of years. They worship in reverence and awe their white-hot righteous Creator. But now, their Creator has done something that amazes them. The Son of God has become a son of man. The Creator, wrapped in human flesh is now wrapped in swaddling cloths. The one who sat on the throne in glory is now lying in a manger in a primitive stable in an old village.

This angel was not simply doing his job. This angel was stunned at what was happening and at what he was saying. His Creator has come to the earth and has subjected himself to being a lowly human, which is a classification a little lower than angels. And why would he do this? The angel touches on that as well. The one who is born is Savior. I'm trying to tell you who this is! I am trying to tell you what I know him to be so that you can appreciate what is going on here. The eternal, infinite Sovereign, Majestic Deity as just been born of a woman. He is lying in a manger, hungry and needy because in his merciful and Sovereign plan, he has determined to save you. He has determined that you are worth saving. You are worth dying for. You are worth rescuing. You are worth redeeming. Savior, Messiah (Christos) and Lord. It is the only place in all 4 gospels where these 3 titles are used together.

C. The sign (12)

The angel tells these shepherds what to look for. Look for a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths lying in a manger. The sign is not to make them believe, as much as it is an indication that they have found what the angel has said. When you find a baby boy wrapped in swaddling cloths in a manger, you will have found him. That's the idea. Where would you find a manger? In a barn or a stable. Bethlehem was a little town. It would not have been too difficult to spread out and search the stables that night, especially since these were shepherds who were likely familiar with all of them. In fact, the stable may have been used by or even belonged to one of them. So, now they knew what they were looking for.

D. Another appearance another sign (13-14)

And if this wasn't causing their mental tachometer to red-line, suddenly a multitude of the heavenly host showed up. Again, many of the pictures portraying this have the angels up in the sky. Luke doesn't say that. It is possible, but whenever an angel showed up in past, he did it on the ground, in person. I cannot prove this, but my guess is that all of a sudden, the shepherds found themselves surrounded by myriads of angels who were praising God. What a confirmation! Go back to v.9. The appearance of 1 angel was accompanied by the glory of the Lord shining around them. These shepherds are surrounded by light. Literally the light has come! Now, what is more amazing than one angel showing up and giving you a message from God? An entire army of angels! Whatever just happened in Bethlehem was so important that an army of angels were just sent to confirm the announcement. If one angel resulted in the glory of the Lord shining around the shepherds, then I'm thinking that now this little band of shepherds are now completely surrounded by the angels. The stunning appearance was matched by the deafening song!

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased."

The sudden, cardiac-arresting appearance of this army of angels only underscores the significance of what the first angel said. Yes! This is huge!! Something really big has just taken place. What the angels said fits with the entire scene. The night has just been turned into day. The darkness has been shattered by light. Heaven has come to earth. The angel and now angels

are here and they are talking with people. And what they say connects heaven to earth. The glorious God who does all things for his good and perfect plan has come to earth and this is going to bring peace among those with whom he is pleased. Heaven did more than touch the earth that night, God invaded earth with his Son because Jesus is the true King and he came in order to take back that which belonged to him. Look closely at what the multitude of angels said, declared, pronounced, perhaps (likely) sang: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is well pleased."

There are 3 contrasts/connections: glory/peace, God/people, heaven/earth.

The glory that God displays and enjoys in heaven has come to people on earth and the result for them is peace. The angels are a picture of that. Heavens army has come to earth and they have come in glory to announce peace. Angels and people, heaven and earth, glory and commoners, night turned into day. This little scene previews glory, where heaven comes to earth, where mortal becomes immortal, where there is no night and no need for a light because the glory of God is the light.

2. **What Happened Next?** (15-20)

A. **The shepherds were accountable for what they had seen and heard** (15)

Shepherds were some of the most overlooked, marginalized, despised, and least influential people in the world. Yet, God sent his most awesome messengers to them and for them. And they were not slow to respond. They realized that God had told them for a reason and they were accountable for it. But their response is not one of obligation, but of joy. They wanted to see Christ. They believed what they had been told. They were convinced that they needed to go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened. They knew the Lord was behind all of this. The Lord had made this known to them. And...

B. **The shepherds responded in faith.** (16-20)

They went, they found, they told others what they had experienced and they worshiped and were full of joy. An angel appeared to Mary and then to Joseph months before. On this night, the angels appeared to shepherds who showed up, kind of like angels at the stable. Like the angels they went in faith and obedience on the mission they were given and said what they had been told. In so doing they fulfilled their part in God's plan.

3. **3 Takeaways**

A. **The angels are a pattern for believers.**

They do what they are told even though they do not know how it all fits together. They deliver the message they are given. They are sent on a mission to declare God's Word and they do it. At the same time, they are curious and amazed how it is all going to work. (1 Peter 1.12) The

angels long to look into the plan of God for our salvation. They exercised faith. And, we see even here how the Shepherds followed their example. They went to Bethlehem. They said exactly what they had been told, and they were amazed. The result? God's plan, God's Word and God's Son were all made known. This is our mission, our purpose, our calling and our satisfaction.

B. The angels are a picture of worship.

In Isaiah 6, Isaiah tells us what the Seraphim say, day and night in response to God's holiness. They are overwhelmed by it and never become used to it. But what these angels say is different than what the Seraphim said. This God they know and worship has come to earth and they have even more reasons to praise him and they do. Their song in 2.14 reflects their amazement at the incarnation of Christ. Then, later in Revelation 5, the angels sing another song. They declare "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing! In response to who God is (holy) they worship. But their understanding of God (theology) grows as they witness the incarnation and so their worship of God develops as well. But God did more than just come to earth, he did the unthinkable. He died. He was slain. He allowed himself to be killed as a sacrificial lamb so that the sins of every human who would trust in him would be forgiven and restored to God. Holy is God. Humble is Christ! Worthy is the Lamb! He is worth everything that we could give such as: power, wealth, wisdom, might, honor, glory and blessing! He is worth all of that.

And just like the angels in Luke 2 set the pattern for the shepherds, the angels who sing Worthy is the Lamb in Revelation are then joined by every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them saying, "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever! (Revelation 5.13)

C. The angels are a preview of our future.

Heaven and earth are going to be one. In the new creation, heaven comes to earth. The New Jerusalem comes to earth and is the place where God lives with his people and enjoys them forever. In that city there will be no temple because the entire thing is a temple. There will be no sun because the glory of the Lord will be our light, which means there will be no night.