



Sunday
September 29th, 2024

Michaelmas

The Season of CREATION:

Heaven, must be there (ii)

Breaking Open the Word

St Michael and All Angels



St Peter's by the Lake
PAYNESVILLE

Anglican Diocese of
Gippsland



TO HOPE AND ACT WITH CREATION

SEASON OF CREATION 2024

The firstfruits of hope
(Rom 8:19-25)



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All matter of angels on the rood screen, Saint
David's Cathedral, Hobart

READINGS

Ezekiel 1.4-12
Psalm 138
Revelation 12.7-12a
John 1.45-51



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“

Come, and see.

”

John 1

O everlasting God,
who hast ordained and
constituted the services
of Angels and men in a
wonderful order;

Mercifully grant that, as
thy holy Angels alway do
thee service in heaven,

so by thy appointment
they may succour and
defend us on earth;

through Jesus Christ our
Lord.

INTRODUCTION

The sermon “Michael and All Angels” explores the significance of angels within the context of religious experience and humanity’s longing for a better existence. It reflects on philosophical interpretations of heaven and the role of angels as messengers of God, emphasising their involvement in grand celestial battles and personal moments of divine intervention.

The sermon highlights scriptural references from Ezekiel, Psalms, Revelation, and the Gospel of John to showcase angels as powerful beings who convey God’s will and, importantly, comfort our struggles. It emphasizes that they are always attentive to our prayers, serving as a source of reassurance in our times of need. It further shifts focus to human messengers, illustrating how ordinary individuals, such as Philip, Mary, and other biblical

figures, play pivotal roles in God’s plan through humility and obedience.

The sermon encourages listeners to remain open to God’s call and to be willing conduits of his love and grace. Additionally, it touches on the Anglican understanding of guardian angels, articulating a hopeful perspective on their role in guiding and protecting believers.

Conclusively, we invite everyone to recognise that being God’s messenger is a universal calling and encourage them to share the message of faith. This reiteration of the sermon’s encouragement inspires a sense of duty in the listeners, reflecting the simplicity and humility found in the lives of biblical exemplars.

Key Reflection Points

The sermon beautifully explores how angels serve as messengers of God, not just in grand celestial battles but in the intimate moments of divine intervention in our lives. Ezekiel’s vision of angels as powerful beings and the comfort expressed in Psalm 138 remind us that God is actively involved in our lives, attentive to our prayers. Reflect on how God uses both heavenly beings and ordinary people to communicate His love and guidance. Where in your life have you felt God’s presence or received a message through unexpected means?

The example of Philip, Mary, and other biblical figures highlights the importance of humility and openness to being God’s messenger. These individuals did not seek glory for themselves, but in their simplicity, they were willing to listen and respond to God’s call. Reflect on moments when you’ve been asked to be a messenger of God’s grace, even in small ways, and consider how humility can position you to be more receptive to God’s purposes.

The Anglican perspective on guardian angels offers a hopeful and comforting view of God’s protection over our lives. While the Church may not have an official doctrine, the belief in angels as guides and protectors resonates with many believers. Reflect on how the idea of angels watching over us can bring comfort in times of fear or uncertainty. How might this belief encourage you to trust in God’s presence, even when you cannot see the evidence of His work?

God of Creation, breathe into us, made of clay,
your gift of life so that we, made in your image
may be your eyes, ears, hands and voice.



The season of creation would only be complete if we were prepared to consider all creation, including the heavenly realm. For many, the allure or promise of a 'better place' is worth finding. Full of longing for a change, many people actively seek a better reality over where they may be. Many philosophers and even mental health care providers would see such a desire to be motivated by reflection on a pre-conceived understanding of the present situation. Religious experience may help shape our thoughts.

Some philosophers would deem religious knowledge like a sedative that lulls our minds into a state of acceptance or challenge. Indeed, during the philosophy of Engels, Karl Marx called religion the opiate of the people, a mind-altering and controlling benevolence on the broader community.

Nineteenth-century philosophy is fine and dandy in trying to understand the plight of all people. A look at literature much older and, to be blunt, more enduring and attractive, the idea that there is something else involved in the meaning of life, and no, not the answer is "42". Many understood seeking to explain all things as either experiential or imagined.

In 1971, responding to the Vietnam War, John Lennon penned an antithesis to the futile and destructive situations being engaged nightly on the news. "Imagine", he wrote, "there is no heaven." In this utopia in Lennon's lyrics, the necessary removal of hate, war, poverty, and discrimination would also require the removal of religion. Simply delivering a message that is still universally held to be a high notion of world peace and respect, the words still echo to this day.

Then, there was Price and Lynch, an exciting duo from the sand-groping city of the West, Perth. Putting several names into a hat, they drew out two words that sounded good together. Some of my previous music students illustrated the result as being angelic creatures, even though the name was wholly made up. Eurogliders, in the mid-1980s, were to electrify the music

world, literally, with the first significant hit from their third album, Heaven. "Heaven", sang Lynch, "must be there." Effectively, that is the entire song!

Many have looked for hidden meanings, such as the city of sand being a barren place and there being no sign of the perfection of Eden, so longing for heaven was a place to escape, whether living or dying. This is a good thing, but the reality was a bit different. The sand represented dissatisfaction with residing in a post-Sir Charles Court in Western Australia. "Heaven, must be there...I'm going to find a better place!"

There are various understandings of heaven, earth, the fall, the people of God with or without wings, standing with people in furnaces, as they did with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, an alternate reading for today's Old Testament. There was the angel who wrestled Jacob all night; the angels who went into Sodom and Gomorrah to find out if any hospitality or righteous people were living there; Sarai and Abram who hosted three angels with the news that the eighty-year-old will have her son next year, proving that nothing is impossible for God, Rachel, Elizabeth, Mary, and even Zechariah all benefited from the ministry of angels. Angels are the messengers of God.

They help us understand the simplicity of the teaching of Jesus, "The kingdom of heaven is like..." We are told it is pretty much what Lennon and Eurogliders suggested. A. It's a better place.

Today, we celebrate the Feast of Michael and All Angels, a liturgical calendar day honouring the ministry of angels. The readings from Ezekiel, Psalms, Revelation, and John provide us with a rich tapestry of images and insights into the role of these celestial beings. Beyond the visions of heavenly hosts, we are reminded that the word 'angel' means 'messenger.' This feast invites us to ponder how God uses angelic and human messengers to communicate his will, presence, and love to the world. Let's look at the angels in action in today's selected readings.



In Ezekiel 1:4-12, we are presented with a breathtaking vision of angelic beings—cherubim—who move with the speed of lightning and carry the very presence of God. These beings, with their awe-inspiring power, are not mere servants but messengers of the highest order, conveying the glory of God. Their power is beyond our comprehension, and their role in revealing God's triumph over darkness and chaos is awe-inspiring. Wow!

Angels, however, are not confined to heavenly battles or divine manifestations. Psalm 138 offers a more personal perspective, as the psalmist proclaims that God's angels hear our prayers and intervene on our behalf. This role of angels as messengers and intercessors underscores God's proximity to us, assuring us that we are never alone in our struggles. Their presence is a source of comfort and reassurance in our times of need, a reminder of God's constant care for us.

Revelation names Michael as God's warrior. Most of the archangels of God, if you like, the senior angels, are easy to identify by the "El" at the end of their name, meaning, roughly, "of God." Michael likes God; Gabriel is the man of God; Uriel is the fire of God; Raphael is the healer of God, and so the names go on.

The Gospel reading from John 1:45-51

shifts our focus to a different kind of messenger: a human one. Here, we see Philip inviting Nathanael to 'come and see' Jesus, the Messiah. Nathanael's scepticism is turned into faith when he encounters Jesus and recognises Him as the Son of God. Philip, a human messenger, acts as a catalyst, bringing Nathanael to the truth. This story inspires us to be open to God's call and share his love and grace message with others.

This idea of being a messenger of God is not confined to angels or apostles. Throughout Scripture, we see God calling ordinary people to carry his message. Mary, the mother of Jesus, was a young woman of humble background who responded with faith and obedience to the angel Gabriel's message. Rachel and Sarai (later Sarah) were called into God's plan despite their doubts and fears. Each of these women, in their own way, became messengers of God's promise and purpose through their willingness to listen and respond.

The common thread in all these stories—whether angelic or human messengers—is profound humility and simplicity. Angels, despite their grandeur, serve without seeking glory for themselves. Mary, Rachel, and Sarai did not consider themselves worthy or capable, yet they were willing to be used by God. Their humility and simplicity allowed God's power to

manifest in their lives, inspiring us to do the same. "Through God, all things are possible."

For Mary, the simple answer is, "Let it be done to me according to your Word." Simple obedience is required when God uses us as messengers or the Divine word is made known through the words of the angels sent to us. The child placed amid the twelve apostles last week reminds us that in welcoming the least in the kingdom, we are welcoming Jesus. The Word of God may come from the least expected and unlikely source. We must respond humbly and allow God's power to work through us.

To quote another song, humility and openness may be challenging "when we are perfect in every way." God's message can come to us in unexpected ways and at unpredictable times. We may not feel capable or worthy, but God equips those He calls. We can be messengers of God's love, grace, and truth daily. "Come and see", said Philip. We are called to be attentive to God's voice and to respond, just as Philip, Mary, and countless others have done.

As Anglicans, our tradition holds a nuanced view of angels and their roles. While we affirm the existence of angels as messengers and servants of God, we do not have an official doctrine on guardian angels akin to that of the

Roman Catholic Church. However, many Anglicans find comfort in believing that God's angels watch over us, guiding and protecting us in ways we may never fully comprehend.

The Collect for the Feast of St. Michael and All Angels reflects this trust: "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." This prayer speaks of our hope that angels, as God's messengers and servants, are active in our lives, even if we cannot see or understand their presence.

Today, we Michael and remember to be God's is not limited beings. In are invited to and share God's message of love and grace with the world. May we, like Mary, Rachel, and Sarai, be open to God's call, ready to be used for His purposes, and confident that we are never alone, watched over by His angels and guided by His Spirit. May we also have the courage to extend the most essential message entrusted to us: "Come and see."



celebrate All Angels; that the call messenger to heavenly our way, we listen, respond,

Key Words in today's Gospel

Key Greek Words in John 1:45-51

Verse 45 ἤρηκαμεν (Heurēkamen), translated as "we have found". This can emphasize the active seeking Philip had been doing.

νόμος (nomos), translated as "Law". It's important to consider what people at that time understood the "Law" to represent.

προφῆταις (prophētais), translated as "prophets". Understanding the role of prophets in the Jewish tradition can provide further context.

Verse 46 Ναζαρέτ (Nazaret), translated as "Nazareth". The cultural and historical context of Nazareth is important.

ἔρχου (erchou), translated as "come and see". Consider the theme of invitation in this call.

Verse 47 Ἰσραηλῆτης (Israēlītēs), translated as "Israelite". Understanding the implications of being a true Israelite would make this more meaningful.

ἀλήθειας (aletheias), translated as "truth". This term has deeper dimensions in Greek.

Verse 50 ἰψου (Ipsou), translated as "greater things" can be interpreted in various ways.

πιστεύεις (pisteueis) translated as "believe". Exploring the Greek understanding of belief may give this word a more profound meaning.

Verse 51 ἀμήν ἀμήν (amen amen), which is truly, truly / verily, verily - explore this emphasis.

ἀνοίγων (anoigōgon), opening, referring to heaven - the implications of heaven opening or being open.

GROUP DISCUSSION

Question 1

What do you think John Lennon meant when he wrote, 'Imagine there is no heaven'? As mentioned in the sermon, how does this relate to seeking a better place?

The sermon discusses many people's longing for a better reality, which echoes Lennon's idea of peace without religion.

How do you seek a 'better place' in your life, and how can you find peace in the present moment?

Question 2

How do the roles of angels, as depicted in Ezekiel 1:4-12 and Psalm 138, impact our understanding of God's presence in our lives?

The sermon highlights how angels serve as mighty messengers and intercessors, assuring us of God's support.

Can you recall when you felt God's presence in your life? How can this influence your everyday actions?

Question 3

What can we learn from the stories of Philip and Nathanael in John 1:45-51 about sharing our faith with others?

The sermon describes Philip as a messenger inviting Nathanael to encounter Jesus.

How can you be a messenger of love and encouragement to your friends or family daily?

Question 4

In what ways do humility and simplicity play a role in how we respond to God's call in our lives, according to the sermon?



The sermon emphasises that angels and humans are called to serve humbly.

Could you reflect on a situation where humility led to a positive outcome? How can you practice humility in challenging situations?

Question 5

What is your understanding of guardian angels, and how does the Anglican perspective on angels differ from other beliefs?

The sermon mentions that Anglicans have a nuanced view of angels, emphasising God's guidance and protection without a strict doctrine on guardian angels.

Do you find comfort in the idea of guardian angels? How can this belief influence how you navigate difficulties in life?

End notes and further reading

(A JOINT MESSAGE FOR THE PROTECTION OF CREATION, The Holy See, 2021)

Pope Francis, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, Archbishop of Canterbury Release Joint Statement on Care for Creation – Millennial.

<https://millennialjournal.com/2021/09/09/pope-francis-ecumenical-patriarch-bartholomew-archbishop-of-canterbury-release-joint-statement-on-care-for-creation/>

Sacra Pagina, **The Gospel of Mark** John Donaghue, Daniel Carrington

Andrew's Version: <https://substack.com/@abmcg/p-148619515>

from The Worship Cloud (SPCK): N.T. Wright Early Christian Letters for Everyone

and Jane Williams, Lectionary Reflections -- Year B



Brabarlung Totem
This is produced on
Gunaikurnai Land, and our
respects are paid to the First
Nations people everywhere.



One with the Earth

This five-day devotional will be taking a deeper dive into the sermon from this weekend. It will explore the profound themes of angels as messengers of God, human messengers responding to divine calls, and the call to humility and simplicity in our walk of faith.

Day 1 Ezekiel 1:4-12

In today's reading, we are introduced to the angelic beings known as cherubim, who embody God's glory and swift presence. These beings remind us that angels are potent intermediaries between the divine and humanity. Their movement, described as swift as lightning, showcases their authority and role in conveying God's will. Considering this passage, we are invited to reflect on how often we overlook divine messages daily, even as God communicates through angels and fellow humans. The comforting presence of angels assures us of God's immense care and support during our struggles. They are not just messengers; they remind us that we are never alone. As we navigate life's trials, let us be aware of the angelic beings around us, aiding us in our journey toward understanding God's purpose for our lives.

- What messages from God have you experienced in your life?
- How can you be more attentive to how angels influence you? - In what ways do you find comfort in the belief that angels are with you?
- Reflect on times you've sensed God's presence in your life.
- Pray for openness to recognise divine messages through everyday encounters.

Day 2 John 1:45-51

This passage introduces us to Philip, a human messenger inviting Nathanael to meet Jesus. Philip's invitation highlights the essential nature of being a messenger of God—sharing the love and grace found in Christ. Just as angels abound in God's service, we are called to share God's message with others. Philip's eagerness to introduce Nathanael to Jesus is an excellent reminder of our role in faith: to be bold witnesses for Christ and extend invitations to experience His love. Our daily interactions with others present countless opportunities to share God's truth. In moments of conversation or simple acts of kindness, we can reflect Jesus to those around us. Like Philip, may we not hesitate to invite those we encounter to "come and see" what a relationship with Jesus can offer, demonstrating the transformative power of faith in our lives.

- How can you be bolder in sharing your faith with others?
- Who is someone you feel called to invite on a journey of faith?
- What does being a messenger of God look like in your daily life?
- Pray for opportunities to witness your faith to others.
- Ask for wisdom on how to approach potential conversations about Jesus.

Day 3 Psalms 138

The psalmist proclaims in Psalm 138 that God's angels hear our prayers and actively intervene for us. This beautiful notion unveils the intimate connection we can have with our Creator. Angels, as God's messengers, assure us that we cannot navigate life's challenges alone. The presence of angels underscores God's love and dedication as they help carry our burdens and communicate our most resounding cries for help to the heavens. Recognising the role of angels in our lives invites us to adopt an attitude of gratitude. When faced with adversity, how often do we pause to thank God for the unseen aids sent our way? As we grow aware of the angelic assistance available, let us nurture a spirit of thankfulness, acknowledging God's provision in the unseen realms and allowing this awareness to inspire our faithfulness in prayer.

- When have you felt God's presence profoundly during challenging times?
- How can an awareness of angelic support enhance your prayer life?
- Do you allow others to see how God has worked through you?
- Thank God for His angelic support and presence in your life.
- Pray for greater awareness of the spiritual battles and support around you.

Day 4 Revelation 12:7-9

The war in heaven described in Revelation presents the archangels, such as Michael, engaged in a fierce battle against the forces of evil. This image challenges us to recognise that the spiritual world is at work even when hidden from sight. Angels are continually battling to uphold God's purpose and protect those who hold fast to their faith. Understanding this spiritual warfare can encourage us to stand firm and confident in our beliefs, knowing that divine assistance is working on our behalf. We must remain vigilant as we create space for God to use us as His messengers. The battle requires awareness and action; we cannot remain passive in our faith. Instead, as we rely on God's strength through His messengers, we can deepen our commitment to prayer, intercession, and sharing His love with our communities. May we embody the spirit of the angels by being fearless and protecting each other's faith journeys.

- How can you safeguard your heart and mind in this spiritual battle?
- How can you rely on prayer as a source of strength and guidance?
- What actions can you take to support others in their faith journeys?
- Pray for strength to combat negativity and evil influences in your life.
- Ask for courage to be an active participant in God's mission.

Day 5 Matthew 18:10

Jesus' instruction about the angels watching over children encourages us to reflect on the omnipresence of God's care, extending even to the most vulnerable among us. In our role as bearers of God's message, we must develop sensitivity not just to our needs but the needs of others. This call to nurture and protect also highlights the importance of humility and compassion in our daily encounters. Like the angels, we are uniquely responsible for defending and uplifting those around us. As we conclude this devotional, ponder how you can act as an angel to someone in need. It could be through words of encouragement, offering a helping hand, or simply being present in someone else's life. Our prayers and actions can become the bridge of love and grace God uses to express His heart to the world. Let us go forth with the knowledge that, as God's messengers, we possess the power to instigate change in the lives of those we touch.

- How can you demonstrate God's love to a friend or family member this week?
- Are there 'little ones' in your life who need your support?
- In what ways can you be a voice of encouragement or truth for someone struggling?
- Pray for the ability to see and meet the needs of those around you.
- Ask for insight on how you can serve as a messenger of God's love.

Prepared by Rev'd Dennis Webster, Rector of the Anglican Parish of Paynesville, Diocese of Gippsland for personal or small group use.

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