

- ✘ The Book of Job is a book that talks about the issues we will never understand: the power of God, how does evil come into the world, why do people suffer, our own desires to instruct God on how he should run the world
  - ✓ But lost inside today's reading from Job is a small phrase that has been picked up and used in the Eucharistic prayer we've been using since Pentecost.
    - And this phrase is usually lost in the bigger themes of the Eucharist: "dying you destroyed our death; rising you restored our life; Lord, Jesus, come in glory."
  - ✓ Here are the two phrases:
    - In Job: God asks Job about who he thinks is in charge: "...who laid the [earth's] cornerstone {God asks Job} when the morning stars sang together and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy?"
    - In Eucharistic Prayer 3: "...And so as the morning stars sing your praises, we join the heavenly beings and all creation as we shout for joy: Holy, holy, Lord, God of Power and might..."
- ✘ We hear this phrase casually slipped in about heavenly beings, about angels in heaven, and we can think about fat little cherubs, if we think about angels at all, and it's easy to dismiss the subject as a holdover of pre-scientific era thinking.
- ✘ What do you think about heavenly beings...specifically angels?
  - ✓ [WA Post poll: 50% of all Americans believe in angels]
  - ✓ Surrounded as well by representations of angels in popular culture:
    - John Travolta as Archangel Michael swilling beer in Michael...although there's nothing about Michael drinking Pabst Blue Ribbon beer for breakfast in the Bible
    - Clarence, in It's a Wonderful Life, who talks George Bailey off the bridge...although there's nothing about a human being earning their wings in the Bible.
- ✘ The theology of angels developed over time in the Hebrew Testament, but by the time of Jesus, angels had two roles:
- ✘ The word "angel" in both Greek and Hebrew means "messenger" and that is often their role in the New Testament:
  - the angels bring God's message to humans:
    - Angel Gabriel to Mary at the Annunciation (Luke 1.11)
    - Angel of the Lord speaking to Joseph in a dream (Mt 1.20)
    - Angel of the Lord speaking to the shepherds (Lk 2.9)
    - Angels speaking to the women at the tomb of Jesus

- ✘ But angels also have another role, as guardians, and protectors and helpers
  - ✓ Life of Jesus:
    - Angels came and waited on Jesus after he was tempted by the devil in the desert (Mt 4.11)
    - As Jesus was praying in the Garden, “an angel from heaven came down and gave him strength.” (Lk 22.43)
  - ✓ In the life of the disciples
    - After the high priest arrested the apostles and threw them in jail, “an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors [and] brought them out...” (Act 5.22)
    - After King Herod threw Peter in jail, where he was bound in chains was sleeping between two soldiers. ...Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared, and he tapped peter on the side and woke him, saying, “Get up quickly.” And the chains fell off his wrists....[and Peter followed the angel out of the jail.]
      - “Peter did not realize that what was happening with the angel was real; he thought he was seeing a vision...[but when he reached the outside, Peter said, “Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hands of Herod...”(acts 12.6-11)
- ✘ From these stories, the idea developed over time that each of us has been assigned an angel to guide and guard us
  - ✓ This was further developed in the birth of the monastic tradition
    - St Benedict (the father of Anglican Church’s spirituality) was the first driving force behind this devotion
      - Not only were our angels here to guard and help;
        - ◆ “...our actions are reported to the Lord day and night by the angels who are appointed to watch over us daily...”(RB 7 & 19)
    - St. Basil Great (+378) taught that "each and every member of the faithful has a Guardian Angel to protect, guard and guide them through life"(292).
    - Reginald of Canterbury: (d. 1109)
      - Angel of God, my guardian dear, to whom God’s love commits me here; ever this day be at my side, to light and guard, to rule and guide.
- ✘ Much controversy in the rise of the Reformation about the role of angels
  - ✓ Luther was OK with guardian angels, but he did not approve of angels having a role in intercessory prayers.
  - ✓ John Calvin insisted on the reality of angels,

- He did state that God uses angels to protect those who God has undertaken to guard
  - but expressed great skepticism that guardian angels existed
  - He feared that some felt that angels are ministers and dispensers of all good things that happen to us
- ✗ What do we as Episcopalians and Anglicans think of angels (especially as those those who “light and guard, rule and guide”):
  - ✓ 122: Evening Prayer: “We pray that “your holy angels may lead us in paths of peace and goodwill.”
  - ✓ 124: EP: “Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep.
  - ✓ 133: Compline: Visit this place, O Lord, and drive far from it all snares of the enemy; let your holy angels dwell with us to preserve us in peace...”.
  - ✓ 251: Collect for the Feast of St Michal and All Angels: “as your holy angels always serve and worship you in heaven, so by your appointment they may help and defend us here on earth;
- ✗ What do I gather from all this.
  - ✓ Angels are nearer than we think
    - Guardian angels: Flying up a valley in Scotland with very low-lying clouds and seeing a three strand electrical power transmission line pop out in the fog
    - Messengers: The writer of Hebrews writes to the Christians of his day and says that as they welcomed strangers, they had welcomed angels without knowing it.
    - I don’t know if I have met many angelic messengers, but I certainly have met many strangers whose messages changed my life.
      - And a common factor in all these visits was that they found me in a moment when I was able to follow what St. Benedict teaches about hospitality: where we create a free space around us that excludes all the distractions of life and lets others in—and lets God in:
        - ◆ Free space of a weekend away with Deacons that I was able to hear Fr. Dale Johnson talk about the Seeds of Hope
        - ◆ Created a free space as I was handing out food at a food bank that allowed a mom and two kids to talk about their lives as a homeless family
        - ◆ Free space in a meeting with the Commission on Ministry when the archdeacon of the diocese invited me to become a deacon

- ✘ Oftentimes I'm so busy or in such a hurry that I don't have time to listen how God may be trying to speak to me through his angels.
  - ✓ If I were more worried about keeping the food bank line moving along with vigor rather than talking to a mom with two kids, I wonder if I would have been moved to do anything about finding a shelter for homeless families.
- ✘ Sure, God speaks through my reading of the Daily Office and through the still small voice of the Holy Spirit,
  - ✓ But God also speaks through people (and through heavenly messengers who look like people).
  - ✓ And I remind myself daily to "pay attention" because if I don't I may miss out on God's purposes for my life.