

Luke 1: 5-19; 24-38

Have you ever had a strange sense of invisible hands holding you up or helping you out?

Have you ever felt a warm **radiant** presence that set your heart at **peace**?

Have you ever experienced a vision of something awe-filled, and indescribable?

Or heard silent words of wisdom spoken to your heart at just the right moment?

Has someone out of the blue helped you or blessed you, never to be seen or heard from again?

If anything like this has happened to you, chances are it was an angelic visitation. You just may have entertained angels unaware. The telltale signs leave us with a sense of **peace** or an image of **radiance** or a feeling **awe** a tingling of **mystery**.

Now did everyone notice that you spoke all the angel messages in the gospel lesson today? You were the angel messengers. Hold that thought.

Our gospel lessons introduce us to the angel Gabriel. Gabriel is one of the three angels explicitly named in the scriptures. The Greek root of our word angel means ‘messenger’ and Gabriel from Hebrew means ‘strength of God’. So, Gabriel might be viewed as the messenger with the strength of God, or one who brings a message with the strength and power of God. Whichever, Gabriel is the first angel mentioned by name in the New Testament and is sometimes referred to as the Angel of the Incarnation.

Gabriel brings a message that begins the strange story of two conceptions: first there is the conception of John the Baptist and six months later the conception of Jesus of Nazareth. One conception takes away an old woman’s disgrace. The other initiates a young woman’s disgrace. One conception occurs to one too old. The others occur to one too young. According to Luke one conception requires divine assistance. The other conception requires divine intervention. Both conceptions and subsequent births require a wake-up call. Both require the angel ***Gabriel*** to appear and enlist the main characters.

However the archangel Gabriel isn’t enough. A whole host of angels is required to get the shepherds to wake up and become the first witnesses of **God**’s grace come in human form. Luke’s birth stories require angels to wake us up and move the plot along.

Now, we Protestants sometimes have problems with this kind of thinking. We have more or less rationalized angels away. Maybe we don’t like the wings or the

feathers or the confusion over whether angels are male or female. Maybe it is all just too anthropomorphic or too sentimental. Whatever the reason, we have vacuumed out the cosmos so to speak, leaving just God, Christ and the Holy Spirit all alone in the spiritual realm. We have created a huge empty space between us and the divine.

So let's take another look at angels this second Sunday of Advent.

From the sanctuary at Erskine and American United Church we have the Angel of the Resurrection by Tiffany; an absolute masterpiece. As we know, in this sanctuary, we are surrounded by lots of angels in our stained glass windows.

We have looked at them before. Does anyone remember how many are up there?

**Six** angels in the Chancel window

**Five** angels in the south transept window

**Five** angels in the north transept window

**One** full-length angel in the south side window

These **seventeen** angel images in our windows remind us that **God's** dream for our lives is communicated through angels. In fact most of our angels carry message banners to get the message across, to help us understand. Remember Advent calls us to wake up to **God** in our midst. That is to recognize the angelic wakeup calls in our lives. Because Advent doesn't come without angels. According to Luke, Christmas wouldn't have come at all without angels.

You see, the spiritual realm is **not** some vast, empty space, somewhere far away. Rather the spiritual realm is right here, within us and between us, and all around us, just teeming with messages of *hope, peace, joy* and *love*. It is filled with moments and opportunities of grace and blessing. The spiritual realm is simply within and all around connecting us with **God** and one another. The gift of **God's peace** is just hanging in the air, when we understand angels as moments or opportunities of connecting with the mystery in the midst of life.

The **radiant peace of Christ** that passes all understanding is just a brush, a breath, a wakeup call away. Angels bring or are or represent the transmission of these messages, these connections that bless us.

Angels bring us **peace** in the midst of turmoil. They bring us **courage** in the face of challenges. They bring us the **radiant peace of Christ** that carries us through tough times to new beginnings, new birth.

Angels populate our Church's stain glass windows, because **God's** dream just doesn't develop without angel actions. Advent doesn't happen without angels.

**Peace and radiance** don't come without angels.

Christmas doesn't come without angels.

With *Zechariah and Mary*, we are enlisted, by angels to bring **God's** blessings into our world, to transform our humanity and the humanity of those around us. So let us open up our awareness in order to open up to the gifts of Advent. Let's wake up to the mysterious messages, connections and blessings in our midst: Because Christmas doesn't come without angels.

### ***Application for Advent***

Remember that you spoke all the angel messages in the gospel lesson today.

So let's take this to the next level.

Be **radiant** this Christmas.

Become an angel of **peace** to some struggling soul. Amen.

### **Meditative Prayer**

Follow your breathing inward.

Go to that prayerful place deep within.

Rest in the peace of Advent.

Call to mind a time when you entertained angels unaware.

Feel it, see it, hear it.

Offer God your thanksgiving.

Call to mind a friend or family member who spoke a message

that transformed you, forgave you,

uplifted you, energized you,

guided you, accepted you,

or put you back on your feet again.

Feel it, see it, hear it.

Offer God your appreciation.

Call to mind a situation where you can bring

an angel message of transformation

to someone in tough times right now.

It might be forgiveness, acceptance,

guidance, or simply up lifting.

Feel it, see it, hear it.

Be radiant in that encounter.

Now, decide to make that connection this week and be an ***angel of peace***.

Return to this sanctuary as we pray together saying Our Father....