

# THE LION

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## *Message from the Rector*

*“Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts....”*

**Isaiah 6:3**

Angels. We see them everywhere: dangles hanging from rearview mirrors; pictures on a wall; imprinted on coffee mugs; figurines on children’s nightstands: they are at least as popular – and familiar – today as they have been at any time in human history, if not more so. But what do we actually know about them? Well, in spite of their popularity and familiarity, not much; however our own Christian tradition gives us a few clues, mostly about what they do rather than what they actually are.

For instance, when angels are mentioned in the Bible, it is often in their capacity as messengers from God, warning people about something or delivering some other type of divine message from heaven or something like that. And we can see this in both the Old and New Testaments. Remember that it was an angel who told Abraham that Sarah was going to have a child. And it was an angel who told Sarah’s handmaid, Hagar, not to worry because God had plans for her son, Ishmael, as well. And it was an angel—two of them, actually—who warned Lot to get out of town because God was about to destroy the city of Sodom where Lot had been living. And who can forget the story of Balaam and his talking donkey, when the angel warned Balaam *not* to curse the Israelites when Balak, the king of Moab, told him to (cf. Nm 22:22-35)? These are just a few of the many examples in the Old Testament of angels serving as messengers from God.

And the same thing is true in the New Testament as well, probably the most familiar being the account of the Archangel Gabriel, who came to the Blessed Virgin Mary in order to deliver to her the message that she was soon going to have a Son. And it was an angel who let St Joseph in on that secret as well. And it was a whole company of angels who announced that sacred birth to some shepherds who were out in the fields. And we shouldn’t overlook the fact that it was an angel who got the entire ball rolling when he announced to Zechariah that he was going to have a son, and that he was going to name him John. So in both the Old and New Testaments we can see examples of angels serving as messengers from God—which, by the way, is what the Greek word *angelos* means: it means “messenger.”

But angels don’t just serve as messengers from God; they also serve as his instruments of justice as well. For instance it was an angel with a flaming sword that guarded the Tree of Life after Adam and Eve got tossed out of the Garden of Eden way back in the very beginning. And it was an angel who poured down the ten plagues upon Egypt when Pharaoh refused to let God’s people go. And it was that same pair of angels who called down fire from heaven in order to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah as punishment for their wicked ways.

And again, in the New Testament we can see the very same thing, perhaps the best example being the seven angels in the Book of Revelation who are seen pouring out seven plagues upon the earth during what is generally called the “Great Tribulation.” As a matter of fact, the Book of Revelation is full scenes in which God’s angels meet out God’s justice for him. So that is another thing that angels do: they meet out God’s justice for him.

*Message from the Rector – continued*

But angels also serve as God's warriors as well, both defending God's people and fighting against his foes. For instance, it was a couple of angels—actually the same two who rained down fire from heaven—who defended Lot from the unruly mob in Sodom that day. And it was a whole host of angels who protected the prophet Elisha and his servant from an attack by the Syrian army. And it was the Archangel Michael who came to the aid of another angel when warfare in heaven delayed that angel from answering the prophet Daniel's prayers. And once again in the Book of Revelation we see God's angels engaged in combat as they fight the great cosmic battle between good and evil that has been raging since at least the beginning of human time. So that too is something that angels do: they are God's warriors, fighting both for him and for his people.

And finally – and perhaps most importantly – angels were created for worship. For instance, the vision that the prophet Isaiah saw of God's heavenly throne was a vision of angels engaged in heavenly worship. And once again, from the Book of Revelation, St John tells us that he saw the very same thing: the entire heavenly realm – which includes God's angels – all engaged in worship. As a matter of fact, it isn't just the angels who were primarily created for worship: *all* of creation was brought forth in order to bring honor and glory (i.e. worship) to our savior and king. In other words we, along with them, have been created for worship.

But I wonder just how often it is that we forget that. And how often do we forget that worship really *isn't* all about us, but is actually all about God instead? How often do we forget that fact?

Probably more often than not, actually. And I say that because of how cavalierly we all-too-often treat it. I mean, we walk into the church—assuming that we even come to church at all—no more ready to worship our Lord than the “man in the moon.” We are either late, or distracted, or chatty, or something like that, none of which puts us in spiritual posture for worship. As a matter of fact, all that does is show us just how *unprepared* for worship we really are—even though we are coming into the very presence of God. How can we *possibly* be cavalier about that? But all-too-often we are.

And because of that we also seem to forget just who our worship is for. I mean, how many times have we heard, “Well, I don't go to that church because I just don't get anything out of it”—as if *we* are the ones who are *supposed* to “get anything out of it.” Or how many times have we heard, “Well we are leaving our church because we just don't like the music,” or “It's boring,” or “The sermons just don't make me feel very good,” or, well, you fill in the blank – all of which, by the way, simply mean, “Worship is all about *me*.” No one ever says that, of course, but that is exactly what they mean – as if everything that is done in the church is supposed to center around *us* as instead of us bringing glory to God through our worship of *him*. That is the beauty of our Anglican style of worship: it centers around God and *not* around us, which is *exactly* the way it's supposed to be.

Now, is there anything wrong with us enjoying the service, or getting something out of it, or something like that? Of course not; we often get our “spiritual batteries” charged during worship. But getting *our* spiritual batteries charged simply *isn't* the point: the focus is supposed to be on *God*, *not* on us or how much *we* might or might not enjoy the service, or get anything out of it, or anything at all like that. Maybe that's a lesson that we all need to *relearn* from all those angels who are *right now* gathered around our Lord and his heavenly throne, worshiping him as they—and *we*—have been created to do: worship is all about God, *not* all about us. That is a lesson that we could *all* stand to relearn.

Many years ago the late Bishop Norman Stewart preached a sermon at a diocesan synod in which he reminded the assembled clergy and delegates of the very first question in the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*: “What is the chief end of man?” that catechism question asks. “Man's chief end,” the answer goes, “is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.” That truly is what worship is really all about: it is about bringing glory to God and enjoying him forever. That is what we, and God's angels, have been created to do. May we all be found faithful in doing just that. And as we are, may the blessing of his peace rest in our hearts forever. Amen.

## *St. Mark's ReMarkable Treasures Sale*

*January 25, 2020*

### **From the Anglican Church Women**

Mark your calendars! It's just around the corner! Saturday, January 25, 2020, marks the date of our *sixth* Annual Treasures Sale held at our church. This is the *only* fundraiser that the Anglican Church Women (ACW) of our parish undertakes on a yearly basis. Did you know that every woman in this parish is automatically a member of the ACW? We are now calling out for everyone's help!

#### ***Here is the timeline:***

Beginning right now, gather items in good working order to donate. We will be accepting clothing, jewelry, appliances, kitchen items, lamps, furniture, gadgets, tools, glassware, you get it...anything you would buy yourself would be suitable to donate. Talk to family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers to encourage donations and participation on that day also.

**Sunday, January 19** – We need four (4) men to help set up tables and chairs after the 10:00 a.m. service. Thank you men of our parish!

**Wednesday, January 22** – Drop off donations at the church from 10:00 to 11:30 a.m. **only**.

**Thursday, January 23** – Drop off donations at the church from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon **only**.

Please note: Wednesday 10:00 to 11:30 and Thursday 8:00 to 12:00 noon are the **only** days we can accept donations. Many hands will be needed to accept donations, sort items, and arrange goods. If you cannot deliver your items on those days, all is not lost as we have volunteers to pick things up from you! Contact Ann or Priscilla for alternate arrangements. Repeat: **no** donations can be accepted after Thursday, 12:00 noon.

**Friday, January 24** – All hands on deck. We need as many volunteers as we can get to re-sort, tag, price, and organize/refine donations on tables.

**Saturday, January 25** – 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. are the hours of the sale, and we will need a full crew to work the crowds and make this a **HUGE** success. We will then pack up what is left for the people from Habitat Restore and/or VNA to pick up, and then we will have wine and cheese to celebrate what we are sure will be a great success!

Please mark your calendars and begin stashing those goods to bring to St. Mark's. We will provide sign-up sheets closer to the work dates. If you have a large item that needs picking up, let Ann or Priscilla know.

**N.B. Men of the parish** – we are going to need your help too – picking things up for those who can't get them to the church on time (there's a song about that...), helping people unload and cart in all the goodies on Wednesday and Thursday, parking lot help early on Saturday and security and loading help on Saturday also. We have a job for everyone who is willing to help!

Remember, the success of this major fundraiser depends on everyone's collective effort.

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## *Annual Meeting – January 2020*

The annual meeting of the parish will be held at 9:00 a.m. on Sunday, January 26. At that meeting our membership will elect two individuals to fill Vestry vacancies, as well as two individuals to serve as lay-delegates to the annual diocesan synod to be held in Mills River, North Carolina, August 3-7. Vestry terms are three years, and lay-delegates are elected annually. It is imperative that we elect our delegates at the annual meeting in order to avoid both last minute rush and cost. If you are interested in serving in either capacity, please see any member of the Vestry or talk with Fr. Mike.

## *For I Am Not Ashamed of the Gospel*

*Reflections of a Parishioner*

Jay G. Philpott

Servanthood

Jesus' idea of greatness, in my view, was to be a servant.

Tell that to our Hollywood elites, to our insufferable political pundits telling us what to think, to our so-called masters of the universe in academia and the US Congress. Choose your own culprits, for there are scores of candidates, who believe I am number one and I'm going to grab everything I can. As the cynic would say, life is unfair and justice is rare in this sin sick world; it's every man for himself!

At grace for meals, I was taught to recite, "Bless us, O Lord, these gifts to our use (i.e., the food and the beverage), and us to thy service, for Christ's sake, Amen."

Elsewhere in scripture and in our Book of Common Prayer, we are told that "thy service is perfect freedom."

What's going on here? Isn't a servant on the lowest rung of our class system? Aren't we harangued day and night about getting all the formal education we can in order to get a better job and more wages and more creature comforts? To get ahead of the Joneses?

The Lord's point, despite its counter-culturalness, is so very true, but you have to ponder it, to think about it and put it into regular practice. Aren't we truly at our happiest when we can serve a brother or a sister in some way, to bless them or to lighten their load? In Sunday School I was taught "joy" is Jesus, Others, then Yourself. Ponder that nothing is really yours until you give it away; the scripture which says what do you have that you were not given. See, David Haas's *The Servant Song*. You may Google the lyrics. He talks about us being pilgrims on a journey; how we are blessed when we give and how we shine when we have the grace to accept and receive from others also. In John 13, we find the foot washing scripture, perhaps the greatest source supporting Jesus's views on servanthood.

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## *Upcoming Holy Days*

October/November/December Holy Days

October 18 (noon) – Feast of St Luke the Evangelist  
October 28 (noon) – Feast of St Simon and St Jude, Apostles  
November 1 (noon) – Feast of All Saints (obligation)  
November 28 (10:00 a.m.) – Thanksgiving Day  
November 30 (10:00 a.m.) – Feast of St Andrew the Apostle  
December 21 (10:00 a.m.) – Feast of St Thomas the Apostle  
December 24 (5:00 p.m.) – Christmas Eve  
December 25 (10:00 a.m.) – Christmas Day  
December 26 (noon) – Feast of St Stephen, Deacon and Martyr  
December 27 (noon) – Feast of St John the Evangelist  
December 28 (10:00 a.m.) – Feast of the Holy Innocents

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