

THINGS ANGELS SAY — NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE WITH GOD

INTRODUCTION:

Cultural References to angels are prolific. What are some images that come to mind when you think of angels?

From doing a simple image search for angels, you can see:

- Wings
- Feathers
- Long-flowing hair
- Buff guys and girls, with odd wings protruding from their shoulder blades
- Halos
- Baby angels (cherubs)
- Women angels
- Harps
- other???

What are some of your favorite angel stories (not from the Bible)? We love watching 'It's a Wonderful Life' which of course depicts the angel Clarence helping George Bailey.

Another story from many years back was 'Angels in the Outfield' – which I enjoyed because of how much I love baseball.

Others?

Do you have some specific questions about angels? I want to invite you to write them down, and I will study and research... and get Craig to answer your questions each week. (Ha!)

No, seriously, it would be cool to explore and see what we can learn together if you have any questions.

Many of our ideas and visual cues about angels are either extra-biblical or even anti-biblical. They come from some other source rather than the word of God. We will see lots of angel depictions, angel stories, angel decorations, etc. throughout the holidays, which I think is great. And I would like for us to pause and reflect that angels do in fact exist – they don't fit in the same category as Frosty, Rudolph, and "The Night Before Christmas".

The 'real deal' angels may not fit in all the ways we have seen them portrayed – but the Bible gives compelling imagery and specific instances aplenty for our consideration about angels.

The Bible speaks of angels throughout the generations, from the beginning in Genesis, to the end in Revelation. Here's a list of some things that are true about angels, according to the Bible:

- Created by God and Christ.
- Worship God and Christ.
- Are ministering spirits.
- Communicate the will of God and Christ.

Obey the will of God and Christ.
Execute the purposes and the judgments of God.
Celebrate the praises of God.
The law was given by the ministration of angels.
They are innumerable.
They announced the conception, birth, resurrection, ascension, and second coming of Christ.
They ministered to Christ.
They are subject to Christ.
They rejoice over every repentant sinner.
They have charge over the children of God.
They are NOT to be worshipped.
They are examples of meekness.
They are wise, mighty, and holy.

Last month we had our annual outreach with the Vienna Halloween parade. Years ago, we would actually enter a float into the parade. Each year the organizers would announce the parade theme, and we would attempt to connect with the theme while sharing the gospel. I don't remember what the theme was on this particular year, but our plan involved having several of us dressed up as Bible characters, and walking behind the float. I also don't remember why we thought that was a good idea. But anyway, my assignment was to be an angel. Now by the way, nowhere in the Bible is an angel referred to as female. When they appeared in human form, they were described as men. Anyway, my main memory of that is that I walked down Maple Avenue doing my best to smile, but unable to see anything! I didn't have contact lenses at the time, and even though I knew there probably aren't girl angels, I thought being a girl angel wearing glasses was just taking it over the line!

Angels are mighty! They have no physical defects. Their strength and ability is far above ours. And Jesus said this in Luke 20:35-36: "But in the age to come, those worthy of being raised from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage. And they will never die again. In this respect they will be like angels. They are children of God and children of the resurrection." Hallelujah!

It sounds like that in eternity, we will be hanging out with angels, and I don't think they will be the harp-holding, cherubic baby angels we see on greeting cards. They are more like X-Game participants, the ones that do the coolest stunts and most thrilling exploits.

So through this Advent season, which is a time to prepare our hearts for Jesus' coming, we are going to explore five messages from angels in the Bible.

1. Nothing is Impossible with God, -or- No Word from God will ever fail.
2. Do not Fear.
3. Get up and Go.
4. Good Tidings of Great Joy.
5. This Same Jesus.

The word 'angel' is most literally translated 'messenger'. A primary function for angels in the Bible was to deliver specific words from God. So in this series about 'Things Angels Say' – what we are really focused on is the fact that angels say what God tells them to say, and if it is a word from God, it will never fail! We can learn from the many stories in the Scripture to take heart and believe according to the Word of God.

Today's passage is in Luke 1, verses 31-37. Let us stand for the reading of God's word:

You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!”

Mary asked the angel, “But how can this happen? I am a virgin.”

The angel replied, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God.

What’s more, your relative Elizabeth has become pregnant in her old age! People used to say she was barren, but she has conceived a son and is now in her sixth month. For the word of God will never fail.”

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Another translation of v. 37 is: For nothing is impossible with God.

THE WORD OF GOD WILL NEVER FAIL! These messages proclaimed by angels are from God – they are not something that an angel thought up. Angels didn’t randomly pick whom to go give messages to. They didn’t accidentally get the wrong Zechariah, Mary or Joseph, or get lost in the sky over a group of shepherds – they were sent directly from heaven to earth, supernaturally empowered to deliver God’s word in the language of their hearers.

Now why is it important to accept this message from the angel?

You see – our intellect doesn’t do so well when we try to figure out a virgin birth. This is in the realm of ‘IMPOSSIBLE’. But it is very crucial to accept the word from the angel – “...the baby to be born will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God.” Our faith, according to Romans, is in believing that Jesus is the Son of God, and that God has raised him from the dead. He came to us in an impossible way to do the impossible task of redeeming us through his death, burial and resurrection. Without the virgin birth, we don’t have a sinless savior, we don’t have a spotless lamb sacrificed for our sins upon the cross, we don’t have a perfect redeemer, risen victorious from the dead, and ascended to the Father’s right hand. One impossibility had to shattered to make all other impossibilities come true. Jesus’ miraculous birth opened the door for the rest of the Gospel to be written.

In a similar statement, Jesus proclaimed this same message. The wording shifts from “Nothing is impossible with God,” to “With God, all things are possible.” (Matthew 9:26)

The story appears in the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. A young man comes to Jesus to ask how to be saved. The Bible describes him as having three qualities that our worldly culture admires: he was young, he was rich, and he was a ‘ruler’ – he was a Boss. He came to Jesus – in Mark it says he ran up to him and fell on his knees – asking what he must do to be saved. Sounds like a sincere question. Jesus answered by affirming that there is no one good but God, and then he listed the commandments. The young man said, “I have done these since I was a child. What do I lack?” And Jesus said, “Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

The scripture says that when the young man heard this, he became very sad, because he was very wealthy. And Jesus then made this famous statement: “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of

God! Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” Those who heard Jesus were stunned – they asked: “Who then can be saved?”

How hard it is. Jeremiah proclaimed: “O Sovereign LORD! You made the heavens and earth by your strong hand and powerful arm. Nothing is too hard for you!” Jesus watched this young man’s struggle to surrender his life, and said, “How hard it is.” What is hard for you right now? What is beyond difficult – what is impossible?

We can’t be foolhardy about this. For example, it is impossible for me to pick up this building and fly around in the sky with it. And for the record, God has not sent an angel to me telling me to pick up this building and fly it around in the sky. There are plenty of imaginary scenarios that are impossible – that’s not what we’re talking about here.

What are things going on in your life, in your family, in your workplace, in your community – that you know are contrary to God’s will? When you pray “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven,” – you know that such and such situation needs to change – but it looks too hard. It feels impossible. That friend will never surrender their life to Jesus. That sickness can’t be healed. That barrenness, or inability to bear fruit, will never be changed. This church will never grow. My friends will never come to church. What would you add to this list?

What did the angel say? NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE WITH GOD! Say it together: NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE WITH GOD!

What did Jeremiah say? NOTHING IS TOO DIFFICULT FOR GOD! Say it together: NOTHING IS TOO DIFFICULT FOR GOD!

And here it is: What did Jesus say?! – WITH GOD ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE. BOOM. Say it together: WITH GOD ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE! -----BOOM!

I want to invite you to make this declaration in a tangible way. We have some cards up at the altar, with these words on them: NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR GOD. Let us take a few minutes, take a card and write on the back of it whatever has come to mind during this message. You may kneel here to pray or take it back to your seat – but let us give space for you to respond to this message, apply it for yourself. We will then close by holding these up together and believing God to shatter the impossibilities and show his Mighty strength on our behalf.