

**Angels: Sermon Preached at St John's, Devizes, Saturday 25th
December 2021 (Christmas Morning)**

Readings – Hebrews 4: 1–4, Isaiah 62: 6–12

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God

Most of us probably know all the people who were mentioned in the Gospel reading a moment ago, when the Rector stood in front of the altar and read from the big blue book. There are the angels; and there are the shepherds; and there is the Holy Family of Mary, Joseph, and the Baby Jesus. Let me say a little bit about each of them to help you think about what Christmas means and how you can ask God for help in your life.

Let's start with the angels. Some people laugh at the idea there are angels. But there is more going on in the world than is obvious from our senses, and many people who aren't even sure if they believe in God do believe in angels. This is a bit odd, as angels are God's messengers. If you believe in angels, you should believe in God. Trust your guardian angel to look after you; they will be with you to protect you for your whole life. Just try your best to stay out of trouble and not give the angel too much work!

If you find it hard to pray to God, you can ask your Guardian Angel to pray for you, and to teach you how to pray for yourself.

Now what about the Holy Family? We always expect the important people in the world to be rich, or powerful, or strong, or popular. But Jesus wasn't any of those things and neither were his parents. They were so unpopular, that when Mary found her baby was starting to come, they couldn't even get a room in a proper inn for the night. So they had to stay in a stable surrounded by the farm animals.

One of the angels told the shepherds that Baby Jesus was the Messiah. That's an odd word, isn't it? Does anyone know what it means? The Messiah was supposed to be a great king that holy men had been

prophesying for ages and ages would come to lead the Jewish people to freedom and kick out the Roman Empire who were occupying Judaea.

What sort of building would you expect a king to be born? In a fancy hospital these days, or maybe a palace, maybe? Certainly not a stable. Isn't that unusual?

And who were the first people to see Jesus. The shepherds – they weren't rich or powerful people either. They were considered a bit smelly, hanging around in the countryside with those sheep for months on end. Have you ever walked in a field that sheep are grazing in? If so, then you'll know what I mean.

The shepherds weren't considered very holy, either, because they couldn't get to the Temple very often to perform their religious duties. But God chose these shepherds, who weren't considered wise or holy and weren't rich, to be the first people to see Jesus.

Many of the people who make the biggest difference in the world are people not considered very important, or very clever, or very cool. So don't judge others by the standards that the rest of the world tells you to, but take everybody as you find them. And also don't judge yourself by the standards of the world, either. You have the capacity to do more good in the world than you could ever imagine, if you trust God and pray to Him to ask for help.

So that is my Christmas message to you all – don't make judgements about people because they're rich or poor, or beautiful or very plain, or any of the other things we can mistakenly think are important. Secondly, keep praying to God to ask him for help, every day, even if you don't come to church very often and might not be here until next Christmas. Finally, trust your Guardian Angel to look after you – it might even be one of the ones who sang to celebrate Jesus being born all those centuries ago.

And now to our wonderful counsellor, mighty God, everlasting Father, to Jesus Christ the Prince of Peace, and to the Holy Spirit who overshadowed Mary, be glory in the highest, until the end of all ages. Amen.