

THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

June 24, 2012

Sermon Text: Psalms 91:9-16

"Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder; the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet. Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: i will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation."

Dear Children of God,

Last Sunday we made a brief study of that Most Evil Spirit and deadly Foe of our faith, the devil. We did so, so that we might have some much needed information about the true nature of our enemy, about the various ways in which he attacks us in his vile attempts to destroy our faith; and also how we are able, only by the Grace of God through faith created in our hearts by the Holy Spirit through the hearing of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to resist and overcome the most subtil and terrible attacks the devil would lay against us.

Because we are children of God, through faith in Christ Jesus, Our most gracious Father in heaven has promised to defend and sustain our faith through His Word in the fight against these evil attacks. In our sermon text for today, our Heavenly Father also promises to send forth His holy angels to guard and defend us as we walk through this veil of tears.

In recent years there has been a marked increase in the appetite of many people in our society for books, magazine articles, television programs, and movies that deal with the subject matter of angels. And America's authors, television and movie producers have responded with the World's best to satisfy that appetite. Unfortunately, while portending to be accurate, most of the material out there is nothing more than yet another cleverly veiled work of the devil himself. All of it aimed at eroding the faith-life of the Child of God.

And so today many people, including some Christians, whether through their willing acceptance of the World's viewpoint on the subject or simply through ignorance, really know very little about the true nature of this wonderful blessing God the Father promises to those who put their faith in the Son of God, Christ Jesus, for the forgiveness of their sins.

So, today I would like to direct your attention to this very special blessing your Father in heaven freely gives to you and to me, (not because of any merit or worthiness in us) but solely because of His love for us in Christ.

On the basis of God's Holy Word, then, let us examine:

1. The true nature of the good angels,
2. The true nature of their purpose and activities, and
3. What should be our response to this blessing.

As we stated last Sunday, all angels are created spirits. That is, they are part of God's creation as immaterial beings. They do not have flesh and blood, as you and I, neither do they have some sort of glorified body as some might believe, for as we are told in Luke 24:39: "A spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." Jesus here is clearly stating that being a spirit is the direct opposite of being any and all forms of flesh, whether in the state such as we humans now possess or that of the glorified body which the believer shall possess at the Last Day.

That Scripture does tell us of instances in which angels appeared with human bodies, indeed consuming food and drink, does not contradict these words of Jesus. For these human bodies in which the angels appeared, were but assumed bodies, by which the angels were made visible to man, and the eating and drinking done, not for nourishment, but rather to convince men of their real presence among them.

The good angels were, as all of God's creation, originally created positively good. The angels which did not fall into sin along with the devil and his angels, but rather remained good, have, by the gracious action of God, been confirmed in the good to which they had been created. This means that the good angels can no longer do evil and fall away from God, but rather now can only do good in their service to God.

As created spirit beings, the good angels are empowered by God with certain attributes. These include the possession of an intellect. For as we are told in Ephesians 3:10: the good angels know "... by the Church the manifold wisdom of God".

Scripture also tells us that the good angels possess great power. The Bible speaks of them in Psalms 103:20 as "His angels, that excel in strength" and in Second Thessalonians 1:7 as "His mighty angels".

The purpose of the good angels is, of course, to praise and serve God as His ministers in the world and in the Church. The angels were created for this purpose, not as though God needed their service, but because it pleased God to have it so.

The Bible relates the presence of angels at all the major events in the Kingdom of God. They were present at the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai, and they proclaimed the conception, birth and resurrection of the Son of God. They will also be present when our Lord and Savior returns to judge the Earth on that Last Great Day.

Because we are Children of God by faith in Christ, God also sends His angels to us believers to aid us in our daily life. In Hebrews 1:14, we are told that the angels are "... all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation."

That the angels have a deep abiding interest in everything which happens in Christ's Church is thus evident. However, not only do they admire and adore the mystery of our Redemption in Christ, but they also rejoice at the repentance of each and every individual sinner. We read in Luke 15:10: "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

Whether or not each of us has our own particular guardian angel, Scripture does not say. As we read in our sermon text, however, God..."shall give his angels charge..." over you. Thus, we can be assured that not only do we have one angel sent by God to protect us, but we do indeed have the services of a host of angels sent by God to help keep us in all our ways.

So that this might be accomplished, God has given the angels the power to interact with the physical world in which we live. And so it is that we find in Genesis 19:16 where angels sent by God take Lot and his family by the hand to lead them out of the city of Sodom before the Lord brought down the terrible destruction it's inhabitants had wrought by their disobedience.

How many times have we been close to serious accident and bodily injury or death and yet, for what appears to us to be no special reason, we escape unscathed? It is because of the Father's boundless love for you in Christ that you escape. Give Him ALL the praise for your continued health and safety. For your Father in Heaven has promised to send his angels to bear you up lest you dash your foot against a stone.

Does this mean we can lead our lives in risky behavior, taking no thought for our safety-- even to the point of conducting ourselves in such a manner as to deliberately place our bodies in unnecessary danger?

Of course not, for then are we tempting God. In doing so we commit sin, and show ourselves fallen from the faith.

Does this mean as a Christian you should not expect to have illness, loss of material wealth, loss of loved ones, injury to one's own body and eventually death of one's own physical body? No! For all these are the result of sin in the world and in our own sinful flesh. For even though sinful man is become a new creature in Christ, we yet have the old sinful nature, the Old Adam, which still clings to us. We must drown him in daily contrition and true repentance of our sins.

Indeed, our heavenly Father, because of His love for us in Christ, deals with us in a most patient and loving way. For while He will sometimes allow us to be faced with trials and seemingly overwhelming tribulations, this is not allowed as punishment, but rather as a loving father chastises his children to bring us back when we have strayed from the right path to which we have been born again in Christ.

Yes, you may be most assured that as a Child of God, your gracious Heavenly Father will not allow loss, illness or injury to come upon you lest it will ultimately serve to strengthen your faith and give testimony, first to the Church and then to the unbelieving world, of His Truth and Righteous power and that you are indeed His child.

For as gold is purified and steel strengthen in fire, so too our faith is tested, strengthened and purified by the trials of this life; if we will but turn to Him and His Word of Truth in praise and thanksgiving and do naught but seek to do His Holy will in every situation of our lives.

We read in Romans 8:28

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

You, and me, and every child of God through faith in Christ are "the called according to His purpose"! God has promised to work everything that happens in our lives, the good and the bad, together for our good. Isn't that a most wonderful truth?

Because we are children of God through Faith in Christ Jesus, God has promised that by His power and protection; by the very command to His angels to serve His Children, we shall be able to overcome even the fiercest attacks of the devil. As our text says:

"Thou shalt tread upon the lion and the adder; the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet".

Because Christ has freely given the world the forgiveness of its sins through His innocent suffering and death upon the cross in our stead.... because of such love of Christ for him, the believer loves Him and so, of the believer in Christ, our Heavenly Father says:

"...therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation.

Here we have God's solemn promise to be with us and to deliver us in time of trouble. Furthermore, because of His love for us in Christ, He will honour us with eternal life. In heaven we shall be filled with an everlasting peace and enjoy the perfect presence of the Lord. For we shall see Him face to face and we shall partake of all the wonderful blessings which are ours through Christ.

So, whether it be loss of material wealth, bodily sickness, or the loss of a loved one to mental illness or death; what does it mean compared to the glories in heaven which await all who by Grace alone, through faith alone, claim the full righteousness of Christ-crucified for themselves?

"And take they our lives, goods, fame, child and wife; Let these all be gone! They yet have nothing won! The Kingdom ours remaineth!"

As a child of God, then, with the angels there to help you in the work of your calling and with the sure hope of heaven firmly in your grasp, you have no reason to fear anything, not even death.

For the believer shall not see death until God has accomplished all in the believer's life according to His Holy will and purpose.

Then all the sickness, the difficulties and the suffering of this life shall be left behind and we who are clothed in the righteousness of Christ shall be finally received into glory with Him.

In prayer, songs of praise and in heart-felt thanksgiving to God for the free gift of the forgiveness of all our sins and for eternal life, for the temporal blessings which God has given us and for the presence and service of His angels in our lives, let us diligently be about the work we have been given to do. Let us serve one another in love and using the various talents we have been given by God, serve Him and His Bride the Church by spreading the Gospel message to others.

This is our reasonable service to Him who has loved us so dearly.
Amen.

And now may the peace of God, which surpasses all human understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.