

Reflection for Memorial Angel Tree Service, December 10, 2017
- Rev. Douglas Rollwage

Have you ever noticed that when angels appear in the Christmas stories, they almost always begin by saying, “Fear not?”

I’ve long thought that they do so, because, unlike the paintings of wispy winged creatures in nighties, or chubby little babies with haloes and curly golden hair, maybe angels are actually scary. They appear from out of nowhere, when people were least expecting them, and, as in the case of the shepherds, terrify folks out of their wits. “Fear not,” say the angels, as we are shaking like leaves, or falling in a faint, or trying to find a place to hide.

But maybe that’s not why they say, “Fear not.” Maybe they say that, because they know something we don’t know, or something we don’t fully realize. Maybe they say that, because it is the most important part of the message God has sent them to bring. Listen for a moment to the words spoken to the shepherds; the angel doesn’t say, “Fear not, I won’t hurt you.” No, the angel says, “Fear not, and here’s why...” Listen:

Then the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.”

“Fear not,” says the angel, “for there is born TO YOU a Saviour. TO YOU. A Saviour. You need never be afraid. Of anything. Ever again.”

Because, you see, the angels know Jesus. The angels have been with Jesus, ever since he called the angels into being, ever since they were created with a word. The angels have been with Jesus, and they know, that when Jesus is with you, you need never be afraid. Of anything. Ever again.

The Jesus whom the angels worship and adore was, indeed, born to us, our Saviour. And this Jesus, born in Bethlehem, raised in Nazareth, teaching and healing and feeding and helping throughout the Holy Land, gathered his fear-filled, wondering disciples together for a quiet meal in a Jerusalem upper room, and said to them, and says to us, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give

to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be... afraid.”

“Fear not,” says the Saviour, our Saviour; “Fear not, for I am with you. You need never be afraid. Of anything. Ever again.”

What is it we fear?

- Do we fear for our loved ones? God loves them too. Fear not.
- Do we fear sickness? In Christ, we find healing and help. Fear not.
- Loneliness? We are never alone, for Christ is with us, his Spirit within us. Fear not.
- Debilitation? God has known us and loved us from before we were born, before we even knew ourselves, and his love for us never ends. Fear not.
- Do we fear Death? There is nothing – nothing - in life or death that can separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord. Nothing. Nothing. Fear not.

“Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.”

For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour.

To you. For you. A Saviour.

That’s what they know, the Angels. That’s why they say, “Fear Not.”

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

Fear not. Fear not. Amen.