

Sermon #983: Homily (from Gen. 18:1-2, 16-22; 19:1-26; Luke 17:28-33; 2 Pet. 2:6-11)
9-30-12/Feast Day of St. Michael & All Angels/Bethany-Princeton MN

THE ANGELS IN THE HISTORY OF LOT'S FAMILY
TEACH ABOUT THE ANGELS AND YOU

Today is St. Jerome's Day, honoring one of the first great translators of the Bible. He once said: "*Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ.*" This focus on the Bible has a connection with celebrating God's gift of the angels. Only the Bible gives us authoritative information about them. Anything else is just speculation.

The Bible does not just *tell* about the angels; it *shows* them taking part in the actual history the Bible reports. Their part in the life of the Old Testament man Lot and his family teaches us about the angels' part in your life and in your family. As we learn the truths about angels, we'll hear from what's written down in Genesis, but especially from 2 Peter 2, which explains what this history means:

2 Peter 2:6-11. ⁶If God did not spare the ancient world, turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; ⁷and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked ⁸(for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds) -- ⁹then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, ¹⁰and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries, ¹¹whereas angels, who are greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord. Lord, this is Your Word and these are Your words. Sanctify us by the truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

1. Where Did These Angels Come From?

We first meet these angels in Genesis 18, when the Lord God appeared face to face with Abraham – actually it was the Angel of the Lord, Christ Himself before He became man -- telling him Sarah would have a son as promised, although she was very old. The Lord wasn't alone when He appeared to Abraham.

Because the angels live to glorify God, they glorify Christ and His work as the Savior. Jesus said: *“There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”* The angels love us. What they love in you most are your faith and your salvation. They show what we should love most in each other.

The angels show this in how obediently they participated in the history of our salvation, in the life of Christ. It might surprise you to know that this didn’t begin with Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem. It began in the Old Testament, including when God promised Abraham that the Savior would descend from him. Isaac is part of this salvation history. These two angels were sent from heaven to be part of the history of the salvation not of the Jews only, but people of all nations.

These two angels standing with the Lord were quietly rejoicing in the saving of many sinners through the true Promised Son, Jesus. They are rejoicing that *you* will be able to join them in the heavenly choir.

Come, let us join our cheerful songs	“Worthy the Lamb that died,”
With angels round the throne.	they cry,
Ten thousand thousand are their	“To be exalted thus.”
tongues,	“Worthy the Lamb,” our lips
But all their joys are one.	reply,/For He was slain for us.

**Let all creation join in one
To bless the sacred name
Of Him that sits upon the throne
And to adore the Lamb. (#66 v. 1, 2, 4)**

3. The Angels’ Humble Worship of God (Revealed In Abraham’s Presence)

In Isaiah 6 it is revealed that God allowed Isaiah to see His heavenly throne-room, where God is seen in His glory. The seraphim (six-winged angels) are there praising Him but using two wings to cover their faces and two wings to cover their feet. This shows that the main feature of the angels’ worship is *humility*, that they hide their eyes and their feet in His presence.

We also see that same humility as these two angels accompany the Lord, listen as He speaks, make no comments about Sarah's laughing but defer to the Lord, and even when God addresses these angels directly and asks them, "**Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do [to Sodom]?"** They only listen as He prepares to hear Abraham's prayers to spare Sodom for Lot's sake, and they wait for God's expressed command to go to Sodom to carry out His judgment.

There is great humility in how they wait upon the Lord, listen to His Word, and silently obey Him. This is how the angels worship Him. They aren't too big and important to hear the Word of God and keep it.

We need to be reminded of this. We have heaven on earth when Christ comes to us, face to face, in His Word and in His Supper. Yet we don't worship Him as we should, with purity and perfect humility like they do. The angels don't need to beg God for anything because they aren't sinners. We are in the position of begging God for help. But He puts us together with the angels in spite of our sins. By Jesus' blood we are pure in His sight, for Jesus' sake. Doesn't this grace make you praise Him as the angels do!

**Lord God, we all to Thee give praise,
Thank off'rings meet to Thee we raise
That Thou didst angel hosts create,
Around Thy glorious throne to wait.**

**They glow with light and heav'nly grace,
And constantly behold Thy face;
Obedience to Thy voice they yield,
And are with godly wisdom filled.**

**They never rest nor sleep, as we;
Their whole delight is but to be
Forever near Thee, gracious Lord,
Thy little flock to watch and guard. (#545 v. 1-3)**

4. We Need the Angels' Help Here On Earth (As Much As Lot Did)

In Sodom Lot was surrounded by wickedness. What was Lot thinking to choose it as his home, and then stay there, to raise his family there and expose his wife and daughters to such wickedness? 2 Peter is quite frank about it, calling it **“filthy conduct,”** calling the citizens of Sodom **“the wicked,”** and saying that Lot was **“seeing and hearing their lawless deeds from day to day.”** Lot couldn’t go anywhere, any day, without seeing things that flaunted God’s commands.

It’s amazing to think of the angels coming from heaven where all is holy and beautiful to Sodom and Gomorrah where the ugliness of sin was at its worst. But this is what they do for us. We don’t always see how ugly and corrupt our world is. There’s so much evil that we stop being shocked and offended, living in a world where people flaunt God’s commandments. The vice those people wanted to engage in is named after them, *“sodomy,”* it’s still with us. You can see the approval of this sin of homosexuality on election signs posted on front lawns in our neighborhoods, it is spoken of openly as *“the new normal.”* Just as we see in the men of Sodom, rather than repent of it and be forgiven, people still try to bully into submission those who speak of it as an evil to be turned away from.

You too are surrounded on every side by evil. You’re tempted to give in, or give up. You’re tempted to despair. Your trying to say no to temptations and live a godly life, your intention to call sin a sin, or if you don’t watch the shows or read the books others do if it would introduce sinful lust, won’t be encouraged or praised. You’ll feel as alone as Lot, whom 2 Peter calls **“righteous”** – because in spite of this he kept his faith – and it says he didn’t approve this evil but was **“oppressed”** by the sin around him and **“tortured his soul from day to day.”**

Feeling this way has a good purpose. God is reminding you that you need His help. You’re living in a cesspool of wickedness and need the helping hand of heaven. How many dangers the angels ward off without our knowing it! Some of the greatest are the dangers to your soul, things that defile and corrupt your

mind and will, and your children's. God is calling you to resist the evil. He is encouraging you to call upon Him in the day of trouble, to pray *"let Your holy angel be with me, that the wicked foe may have no power over me,"* to say from the heart, *"Deliver us from evil!"* He also calls you to trust that He *has been* protecting you with the angels' help, and will continue to do so in greater ways than you know.

**The foul old dragon and dread foe
With envy, hate, and wrath doth glow;
It always is his aim and pride
Thy Christian people to divide.**

**As he hath troubled earth of old
He keeps e'en now his deathly hold,
Chafes madly to annihilate
All virtue, honor, Church, and State.**

**Therefore, no halt nor rest he knows;
A roaring lion round he goes,
Or lies in wait with baneful snare
To drive the Christians to despair. (#545 v. 4-6)**

5. *As They Rescued Lot, They Will Be Our Guardian Angels Too*

The Bible promises that angels will be with you to guard and protect you. Hebrews 1 says: *Are [the angels] not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?"* This reveals that angels don't protect just anybody, but only you who believe in Jesus Christ. Psalm 91 says: *"Because you have made the LORD, even the Most High, your dwelling place ... He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways."* Angels don't guard unbelievers – though they benefit from what angels do for Christians.

The rescue of Lot from Sodom shows this. Jesus Himself testifies to its historic truth in speaking of **"the day that Lot went out of Sodom."** The angels went to Sodom not only to destroy the wicked, but to rescue **"righteous Lot,"** because he did have faith. Now, Lot's faith wasn't wonderful. He let his daughters

be engaged to two men of Sodom who were obviously unbelievers. They could have benefited from the angels' rescue of Lot, but chose not to, thought it was all a joke. But what guardian angels do is no joke.

When the time came, **“the angels urged Lot to hurry, saying, ‘Arise, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be consumed in the punishment of the city.’ And while he lingered, the men [angels] took hold of his hand, his wife’s hand, and the hands of his two daughters, the LORD being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city.”** In 2 Peter it says this means that **“the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations.”** Part of this is that He delivers us from evil also through angels.

Take comfort from this. There was a lot wrong with Lot’s faith, but it was good enough -- for Christ’s sake -- because his faith was in the promised Savior. The angels were there to rescue him for *Christ’s* sake and by *His* command.

This is what the angels do for you and your family. Because you have faith in Jesus, because your little one is baptized, you have the angels’ protection. They do not help you because your faith is so good. It will never be good enough. They help you because your faith is in Jesus. This is God’s promise!

When you are tempted to doubt that God will deliver you from evil, when you see dangers and encroaching wickedness surrounding you, your family or our country as being too great or insurmountable, take time to learn that **“if God delivered righteous Lot ... then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations,”** through angels as He did for Lot. The history of Lot is proof not only that God answered Abraham’s prayer and kept His promise for Lot, He’ll do it for you. He sends His angels to guard those who believe in Christ. Period.

**But watchful is the angel band
That follows Christ on ev’ry hand
To guard His people where they go
And break the counsel of the foe.** *(continued)*

From Daniel this may well be seen
When he sat in the lion's den,
And likewise angels rescued Lot
That the ungodly harmed him not.

When, too, those faithful three were cast
Into the fiery furnace blast,
No pow'r had fiercest flames to harm
Against the rescuing angel's arm.

And thus our God, still at this day,
From harm and many an evil way
Keeps us by His dear angel guard,
Placed over us as watch and ward.

(#545 v. 7-10)

6. *The Angels Take Believing Souls – Even Those of Weak Faith – to the Heavenly City*

The angels are always the Christian's companions, even in the hour of death. A Christian never dies alone. We know this from Luke 16, in Jesus' words about the death of the poor man Lazarus. *"The beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom,"* Jesus said. The holy angels make a Christian's departure as glorious as Elijah's journey to heaven in a chariot!

We see this in Lot's rescue by the angels. They came to take him out of the city marked for fiery destruction. They brought him to a little city to live in safety – as we will be rescued from the fire of hell to live in heaven, safe from all our enemies. How they did this is striking: They **"took hold of his hand, his wife's hand, and the hands of his two daughters, the LORD being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city."** The angels took Lot by the hand and without any difficulty set him and his family members in safety.

This is how the angels take a believing Christian to heaven. They take you by the hand and set you down in the heavenly city, the heavenly Jerusalem. That's how easy it is. But it isn't only at the moment of death. All your life, the angels are powerfully taking you by the hand and setting you beyond all the dangers that would keep you from safely reaching your destination.

We should not overlook Lot's weak faith even as he was being rescued so powerfully. He's reluctant all the way. They grab his hand, it says, "**while he lingered.**" Once outside the city, he begs to not go all the way to the mountains but be allowed to stay in "**this little city.**" But notice the angels' response. They rescue him in spite of his weak faith, for even weak faith is saving faith. They don't say one word against him; as the 2 Peter reading says, "**angels do not bring a reviling accusation against**" believers, no matter how little their faith.

**They joy when but one sinner turns;
Their zeal for Jesus ever burns;
They serve His people day and night
To bring us to the realms of light.**

**The little ones, awake, asleep,
Yea, ev'ry child of His, they keep;
O'er all His kingdom, far and near,
They give their kind and loving care.**

**When death approaches, then they come
To soothe mid pain and guide us home;
When from our flesh departs our soul,
They bear us to the heavenly goal.** (#545 v. 11-13)

7. Homily: The angels serve us one last time on Judgment Day

The angels were used by God to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, a terribly sad event because those unbelievers' time of grace ran out. Both 2 Peter and Jesus Himself (in Luke 17) use this history as a warning against ungodly living and being unprepared to meet the Lord. Equally sad is when Lot's wife does not heed the words of the angel to not look back and is turned into a pillar of salt. Jesus says, "**Remember Lot's wife,**" as a warning not to be too attached to possessions.

The angels actually destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah at God's command. The angel told Lot and his daughters to "**hurry**" to the safe city, because "**I cannot do anything until you arrive there.**" Just as those angels were a terror to the

unbelieving people of Sodom, and whose warning was something Lot's wife didn't want to hear, they will be a terrible sight for unbelievers on the last day. Jesus said He *"will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness ... The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth"* (Mt 13:41, 49).

But also, just as Lot and his daughters forever after would remember the angels only with fondness for rescuing them not only with great might but with great patience, the angels will be a beautiful, comforting sight to every Christian. Jesus said He *"will send His angels, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven"* (Mt 24:31). They will bring us to our Bridegroom, to enjoy His love that they share with us.

What a happy day for all the saints and all the angels. The angels no longer will be required to protect us, and we no longer will need their protection. We will join their everlasting worship of Christ in His kingdom that has no end.

**For this, now and eternally,
Our praise shall rise, O God, to Thee,
Whom all the angel hosts adore
With joy now and forevermore.**

**Give us, O Lord, the grace and power
To serve Thee well each day and hour;
Grant us the zeal and fervent love
To serve as angels serve above.**

**We also pray Thee to defend
By them unto the latter end,
Thy fold, that little flock, O Lord,
That holds in honor Thy blest Word.**

(#545 v. 14-16)