The sound of angels

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 January 2000

Preacher: Rev Derek Lamont

[0:00] I'd like for a few minutes this morning to look, this afternoon to look at the angels that are talked about in this passage that we read in Luke chapter 2.

And we all know about the angels because they're on every Christmas card and things like that. They're all over the place. And they've kind of been forced into the story of Christmas or even maybe the myth of Christmas.
And a lot of people maybe wonder about the angels and what they have to say and why they're involved in the story. Well, the Bible made very clear that we've got to deal with the truth.
And if we believe in God at all, then we need to believe in angels. And we need to believe in what the Bible says about them. The Bible made clear that the angels are citizens of heaven. That they are spiritual beings in the same way that God is a spiritual being.
And it's important that we kind of demythologise and throw out all the rubbish that we think concerning angels about wings and stuff like that. And that we remember that God has revealed to us truths about spiritual things.
[1:10] Just because we can't see them doesn't make them any less real. But the angels are very much described in the Bible as real people who are citizens of heaven. Who have a very specific job are servants of God.

And who do God's will. And who worship God. And who speak with God. And who communicate between God and men. Usually and more often that happened before the Bible was written. Because now the Bible speaks to us about God's word and God's will for us. But they are very clearly people with a purpose. Who came for a reason.
And who came to do something. And who exist for a purpose in heaven. And we often as church people, as Christians, maybe marginalise angels altogether. We don't think they're important.
We leave them in the sidelines. Or we patronise angels. And we think we can pat them on the head. That they're nice little things. That add glitter and glitz to the stories about the Bible.
[2:10] And maybe add to the whole myth about the Bible. But it's interesting to note. And it's something that maybe isn't picked up in the Christmas story. That the angels, when they came to reveal the truth of the birth of Jesus to the shepherds.

The response of the shepherds. Very few people recognise or speak about the response of the shepherds. And because pictures and famous paintings have kind of depicted angels who were good looking, nice and serene and gentle.
And the shepherds welcomed them. But we find here in verse 9 that when the angel came, that the shepherds were so afraid. In other words, they were terrified by the angels that came to them.
They didn't welcome them. They didn't open their arms to them. Because they were terrified by what they saw. Because the angels came from heaven and they brought with them a sense of heaven.
They brought with them the atmosphere of God. And of the personality of God. And they were holy and strong and brilliant people who came before the shepherds that day.
[3:16] And the shepherds, they were men. They were strong men. They were men who were able to fight wild animals to protect their sheep. They weren't people who were easily frightened.

They were people who were downcast in society. They were used to being given a hard time. They were people with backbone. And yet we find these men, all of them together. They weren't on their own.
They were together. And yet they were terrified by what they saw. The terror of the angels. And I wonder as we come together today, on Christmas Day, what we think of God.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-10-06 06:51:42

Because their terror reflected what they recognized of God in these angels and in their faces. I wonder what we think of God. Do we have them so well wrapped up and so close and so small that we have no feelings of anything other than a kind of patronizing feeling towards God.
That we're doing God a favor by being in his house today. We're doing God, we're paying our lip service to God. Maybe just this time. Because he's a small God.
[4:24] And well, we can only give him so much time. I wonder, as I feel with myself, that we've never been so close to God to have been terrified by his presence.

By who he is. By his character. By his sheer size and enormity and glory. Because when we are so close to God, we find again and again in the Bible there is this response of terror.
Of fear. Because he leaves us, in a sense, exposed. He opens us up to what we're like inside. He gives us a feeling of our own smallness and of our own unworthiness.
The problem may often be that we are so big and God is so small that we're not terrified by him. That we are not in awe of him. So we can come casually with our hands in our pockets, chewing gum because God doesn't mean much to us.
Because he's an insignificant God that we don't need really to think about. But these shepherds were so close to God through the angels that they were terrified.
[5:29] And an interesting thing about the angels is that they knew God because they came from heaven. And they often came with messages to us, read it in the Bible, from God.

But they know God. They know about God, the angels. They know his character. They know what he's like. And they know especially what God is like in relationship to you and me.
In his relationship with people, the angels know about God. They know about the cost of his love for us. They know about the suffering that he goes through because of his love for humanity.
And there's two particular areas where the angels see God and his relationship with us most. There's two areas I want to look at briefly this morning.
And the first is an old chestnut. So is the second one, in fact. The first one is sin. The angels see how God reacts to the problem of sin within us and the problem of sin in this world.
[6:32] And you know, from the very start, they've known about sin, the angels. They've known about it because sin began in their ranks. We don't know about the origin of sin exactly.

But we do know that the first evidence of sin and rebellion against God came from within the ranks of heaven. Came from one of the most powerful angels.
The archangel who became Satan or Beelzebub. And he, with many demonic angels as they became, rebelled against God and then fell from heaven.
So sin came from within the ranks of the angels. And they knew about sin. And they've seen that the devil came into God's perfect world and spoiled his perfect world.
Spoiled the perfection and spoiled the beauty. And they know that sin affects every single atom in this world. They know that all the physical universe and every human being and every heart is affected by this disease of sin, this rebellion against God.
[7:39] And they know God's reaction to this. And it's interesting, the reaction to God's reaction to sin. Because in Revelation chapter 8, Revelation's the book that almost pulls back the picture into the spiritual world.

And it tells us some very important things about God and about sin and about salvation. And it tells us in picture form, which makes it very interesting to read.
In chapter 8, verse 1, we're reading in Revelation about seals being opened. And certain things happening in the world because of these seals being opened in picture language.
And the last seal is the seventh seal. And when this seal is broken and God works when that seal is opened, he works in judgment.
And he pours out judgment. He pours out his wrath and his anger on the world from when the world began to the world ends. And you know the reaction, the response of the angels to that seal being opened.
[8:42] And I find it one of the most amazing verses in the whole Bible is there was silence in heaven for half an hour. When God opened this seal, which speaks about his anger, his wrath, his judgment against sin, the angels were silent for half an hour before he did it.

There was a real knowledge, you see, within them that God acts against sin. And they were silent because it was so awful. They knew that God and sin are on a collision course.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-10-06 06:51:42

And they knew that God would always win. But they knew there'd be a great cost when God works against sin. And they were silenced by it. No, they didn't trivialize it. The whole of heaven remains silent for half an hour before he opened these seals where he would pour out his wrath.
And they know that he pours out his wrath because he's a just and a perfect and a loving God. And they were silenced by this. They were silenced in awe of what God was going to do.
And they were silenced because they knew the consequences of what God would do when he acts against sin. And they were silenced by the horror of what God was going to do.
[9:58] And so we must have come to terms today with the fact of all the horror that is happening in this world. All the evil that we know is happening in this world.

All the satanic work and all Satan's efforts to destroy things in life. And all the misery of tragedy and the misery of our own death and of our own mortality.
We must come to terms with all these evil things. With all these black things. All these horrible things. And recognize that they are all part of God's judgment. All part of God's judgment against sin.
Now sin isn't some kind of big lump or big mass that God judges. Sin is seen in your heart and in mine. And it's judged in our lives and in our souls.
Not in some kind of big impersonal lump. But it's a personal thing. And it's a rebellion against God.
And the silence of the angels was because they recognized that God would work and deal with sin.
[11:04] You see it's solemn and serious the gospel message. It's a serious thing. Because before there's good news there must be bad news to be dealt with.

And the bad news is that we as people are all under God's curse. And all under God's wrath. Because we're sinners. And I wonder if we realize that.
I wonder if we know that as we come into God's house to a nice bright church and sing nice bright songs. Do we recognize? Or do we make light of sin in the way the angels didn't?
The angels were silenced for half an hour before God revealed His anger against sin. Do we make light of sin? Do we laugh? Do we mock?
Do we joke about our own sinfulness? Do we curse the very thought of it? Do we curse the preacher who speaks about it? Do we disbelieve it? Do we find it has nothing to do with us?
[12:01] Are we unmoved by the truth of God's word which tells us of our danger and of the terribleness of being under God's wrath? Because we're imperfect.

Because we're sinners. sinners. Yet the angels were silenced. They are silenced if we will not be. If we will not wipe the smirk off our face.
The angels do on our behalf. Because they recognize how serious this matter is. They were silenced by it. And I wonder this morning as we gather in worship what we are listening to.
What our ears are listening to. Are we listening to the noise of Christmas and the noise of this time of year? It is very loud. Listening to the tired carols and all the repeats on television and all the ringing tills in the shops which are grabbing all our money.
Listening to the chink of glasses and the laughter at the parties and the festive message which we hear again and again all years. Eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die. That great message, that great word that keeps on and on and on.
[13:11] And it's so loud that it drowns out everything else. The noise of Christmas. Is that what our ears are tuned into? Is that what we're listening to? Or is it the silence of the truth?

The silence that the angels recognized. The silence of the truth that we're so keen to drown out by working and living at a thousand miles an hour.
We can't stand the silence of the truth. But today there is the silence of the truth that is very, very loud. Today there's the ridiculous bombs that are dropping on Grozny and killing innocent women and children in the name of imperialism turned on its head.
There's all the fighting and wars in Bosnia. There's the famines. There's the corruption in governments. There's the hospitals full of sick people. Christmas is a nightmare for millions of people throughout this world.
And yet we listen to the noise of Christmas and fill ourselves with the festivities caring not a jot for what is happening in this world. The silence of the truth which seems to be heard but which remains something we dull from our conscience because it, well, we don't think about that at Christmas time.
[14:25] Who does he think it is bringing up these things at this time of year for family and friends and good times? But the truth that silenced the angels is that we're in a world that is under God's

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-10-06 06:51:42

wrath.

A world of bad things. A world where Satan is doing his work and a world where thousands and millions are going to a lost eternity unless they hear that this is not the full picture.
And we thank God this morning as we gather together that this, what the silence of the angels recognized in God's judgment against sin in the world and against individual sin because we all sin and we all die that that is not the full picture.
That we don't remain under his curse or we needn't remain under his curse in any shape or form.
Because the other thing the angels know about God and his relationship to us is salvation.
There's sin but the other side is that there is salvation and we thank God for this day and for this message that the angels brought to the shepherds because the angels know God and they were silenced because they knew the cost, they knew the suffering within God's own soul at having to pour out his wrath upon his own people that he loves and that he has made and that Satan destroyed in his own image.
[15:54] They know that he is love they know there's this great part of his character not just part of his character but that he is to him belongs love. They know his pain over sin and his desire to save and they know about his extravagant salvation for us.

John 3.16 The angels have that blazing into their minds for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.
They rejoice and praise God for this great salvation. And they rejoice because it takes us way beyond the realms of justice.
It's far more than justice. It takes us way beyond the realms of equity. It's far more than what we deserve. It's far more than what we could ask for because it's a free gift and it comes all from God. Salvation. And the silence of the angels in Revelation which accompanied God's judgment silence for half an hour is beautifully matched by the sound of the angels when his salvation is revealed.
[17:17] Verse 10 Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. And then verse 14 where there's this great army of angels appear in the heavenly scene and we can only imagine in our minds what it's like.

Computer graphics and TV graphics can begin to bring these things to our mind as reality but far greater than anything that could be created by us. We find that the angelic choir come down and that they sing glory to God in the highest and on earth peace good will to all men.
That is the sound of the angels that accompanies this message of salvation because remember the angels are first and foremost messengers. They come with a message.
They come with something to tell people and this is what they tell them good news that the silence that they have had to endure over his judgments is broken by the glory of God the Son becoming a little baby and God the Son growing up and God the Son dying bleeding on a cross and God the Son being resurrected three days later on the first day of the week defeating death and paying the price of God's wrath.
Messengers and that message is a message of love to you and to me. Whatever brought you out to church today the message has been revealed and it's revealed for you and it's as relevant today as the sunrise that came on this morning.
[18:57] It's as relevant with every new day because every new day we remain as people who are lost remain powerless over our own destiny and powerless over our own eventual demise unless we let God take over our lives.

And it's the sweetest sound in the universe the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The message is that Christ is the saviour today a saviour has been born in the city of David.
This is God's answer God's provision God's answer to our sin Jesus Christ his own son becomes the perfect substitute for us and he takes all of God's wrath for all who will trust in him.
The wrath is due to us the wrath that would be poured out in our own death and then our eternal death is paid by Jesus. He takes it.
He's not only the perfect substitute but he's the suitable substitute because he becomes a person. That's why the incarnation is important. It's not so that we can have a baby on the front of a Christmas car it's because he becomes a person.
[20:13] He's born like you and me. He's born as a needy little child and he grows up and learns obedience of his father so he's a perfect substitute because he's a man he's a person he's a human being he has flesh and blood so that he meets God's justice God can accept him as a substitute

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-10-06 06:51:42

because he's fit because he's a human being he wasn't an angel with clothes he wasn't God just with a covering he was a man he was a person and he's a willing substitute he does it willingly with love dying in our place voluntarily because he knew you would be here today this morning to hear the message of salvation does it with love and he offers us through his own death everything and his death on Calvary negates all sin and its power and its effects and one day the final story will be that sin will be removed altogether and those who remain in sin also he's the saviour but he's the messiah too he is the the anointed one he is the

Christ that is the anointed by God to do this work anointed by God to tell the truth to stand in our place to rule over us as master and he is Lord he is God in the flesh that's who Jesus is not a prophet not a nice person not a good man not a teacher but God in the flesh God the son comes in the flesh the creator who will rule over us either in loving submission or in power at the last day he expects us because he is Lord because he made you because he knows every single thing about you he expects you to respond to him he expects you because this message has been brought for you and revealed for you and for me and I ask are you a believer in the Lord Jesus do you trust in what he has done is he your saviour do you submit to his lordship who will pay the wages of your sin which is eternal death who will pay it will you pay it yourself or will you allow
Jesus Christ to take the punishment and the payment on the cross at Calvary who will pay will you face the second death yourself or has Christ taken it for you that is who he is Christ the Lord a saviour and this the angel says is good news of great joy we are guilty in the Christian church maybe of being very sombre and dull and having smiles going the wrong way but this the gospel message is good news of great joy it's unparalleled it's good it's very good news there's never been news like it there never will be news like it again there is nothing to parallel the news of Jesus Christ who came to deal with the problems of life and the problems of death the problems of our own search for eternity for living forever all these things it's good news it's inexpressible we don't have words thanks be to God for his indescribable gift
I don't know how to describe how great it is except that the angels came down and said this is good news of great joy and if you're a Christian here then you ought to have come today and I hope you have with your own individual song of praise I hope you've come with a song of praise I hope you can join in in the worship and in the singing because you have a song of praise to sing I hope your love has not grown cold and that you're not grateful but you're bitter and angry at God I hope that's not the case I hope you're not backslidden so that you care less about your soul and you couldn't really give a rap about praising God and you don't recognise the good news anymore it's not good news to you anymore it's like yesterday's paper you've heard it all before it's old hat I hope that's not the case if you're a Christian today I hope you can sing along with the praise and bring to God your worship acceptable your worship of praise your individual song don't listen to what anyone else is singing sing yourself for what he has done because it's good news of great joy for you if you're a Christian if Christ is your saviour I hope and I do pray that all can by the end of this join in in that individual praise that the angels must have sounded fantastic with as they praised God this is good news of great joy we have good news let us live that and show it good news of great joy joy deep in here that people who aren't Christians don't know about and can't have because it's the joy of peace with God and of spiritual life for there was death before and that good news is for all people verse 10 it's good news of great joy which shall be to all people the message came to shepherds didn't come to kings didn't come to politicians it didn't come to the big shots of this world it came to shepherds who were downtrodden who were despised very much because quite often they couldn't get away to religious feasts and all that kind of thing because of their work and they worked with animals but the message came to shepherds the good news they were holy they were good men because they recognised the truth of the message and that same announcement comes to ordinary people like me and like you today it comes to ordinary people we're ordinary people here and the announcement is for you that salvation and the love of God is for you and that Christ expects your response to that salvation offer because it's an awful thought to think that the terrible silence of the angels is over your condition without Jesus Christ if you remain going out of the door again without Jesus Christ then the angels are silent for half an hour because they know of your condition and they take it seriously even if you wouldn't there's nothing like the joy of falling on your knees at the foot of Calvary and taking Jesus Christ to be your own saviour and experiencing the divine love nothing like it nothing like it in this whole universe no experience no pleasurable joy no pleasurable sin that will ever match that experience of losing the burden of your sin at the foot of Calvary and

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-10-06 06:51:42

having the meaning of life confirmed through Christ at the foot of the cross and I hope that you will know
[27:31] Jesus Christ if you don't already and that this message will be lifted from the realms of mythology and of glitter and tinsel and Christmas trees and brought to life by the living spirit of God because it's his message for today for all people Amen let us pray Gracious God we do ask and pray for your Holy Spirit to be with us in our worship and that we would accept the truth of God's word for ourselves and be challenged by it and respond to it in the response of faith we ask for you to come and give us this gift because we don't have it of ourselves and can't work it out in our own strength we pray for God and for God's blessing to be into every soul today and that God's love would be poured out to hearts that up till now has maybe never experienced the love of Christ and that people would be brought from darkness to light from death to life and from hopelessness to hope we pray your blessing on all that happens today we pray for the service in our dross and later on this evening here and in South Lodge may your spirit go before us give Kenny strength and power to preach and may we all be made aware that it is Christ who strengthens and it is Christ's message that is brought to us may we all be under its authority and under its power and rejoice at the good news that is ours through Christ Jesus our Lord

Amen

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-10-06 06:51:42