

## **A Sermon by Lyn Jenkins for Michaelmas**

### **Genesis 28: 10-17**

Once upon a time there was a little girl. This little girl believed in fairies and elves and pixies and goblins and all sorts of other little people. She loved to read stories about them, especially the fairies who did good things.

But as that little girl grew up she began to realise that fairies and elves and pixies and goblins were not real. They belonged to the world of make-believe.

So along with Father Christmas and nursery rhymes ‘once upon a time’ became a fond memory.

In this scientific and technological age there is no room for make-believe. There is no room for believing anything which cannot be proved – or is there?

Are we foolish to restrict reality to what we can measure and observe and understand?

What about God? Where does God fit into this modern age?

Well, I’ll leave that for another time.

No, I’m not ducking the question.

For, I know that for me God is more real than anything I can touch or see or hear.

But what about that little girl? As she grew up she began to learn more and more about Jesus. The Bible has no stories of fairies, but lots about angels and lots about God and Jesus. The more she read her Bible and said her prayers, the more real Jesus became. He became her best friend and still is to this day.

That little girl is now an old lady; the days of fairies are long gone, but she has never stopped believing in angels.

And I know that that is true for that little girl is me.

#### Angels

There are far too many references to angels in the Bible to dismiss them out of hand.

The Bible presents angels as celestial beings. But little detail is given. And only two are actually named – Michael & Gabriel – unless we include that lovely story of Tobias and the angel Raphael found in the Apocryphal book of Tobit.

Many people relegate angels to the category of fairy tales while others take them very seriously, producing sophisticated ranks of angels --- cherubim & seraphim, principalities, powers, – etc and of course there are the fallen angels, those who rebelled against God and were thrown out of heaven; the chief of these being Satan.

But let's forget Satan this evening.

Archangel Michael sorts him out.

Let's think about the good ones.

For we have many instances in the Bible in which God uses angels to communicate with his people

God communicates with his people in different ways.

200 years ago he sent Jesus to proclaim the Good News.

Often he speaks to us directly though his Spirit --- but human beings are so often busy doing their own thing. And they need a nudge for they do not hear the Lord when he tries to talk to them.

Maybe a beautiful landscape, a glorious sunset, a simple flower may attract us and make us aware of the Presence of the Lord.

And what about music?

Listening to our favourite composer we can often be lost in wonder, love and praise.

– and there are special holy places – places where maybe prayers have been prayed through out time, places maybe where the Blessed sacrament is present.

Angels appear in various forms and guises. To Jacob they appeared in a dream – a dream in which Jacob had a glimpse of heaven. The dream was so vivid, so real that it made a profound impression on Jacob. He firmly believed God spoke to him in that dream. He was absolutely convinced something special had happened. He had what we may call a spiritual experience --- an experience which had a profound influence in him.

He knew – he just knew that he had been in the presence of God. *Surely the Lord is in this place – and I did not know it. And he was afraid and said, 'How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.*

For him it was a life changing experience --- he still had a lot to learn, but from that moment he dedicated his life to God.

Special moments, spiritual moments.

Special places, spiritual places.

God is everywhere – he is with us at every moment of our lives – but most of the time we are not aware of him – we are too busy doing our own thing.

But ----- we, too, can have these special moments. Maybe when we stop still and attempt to listen to the Lord; maybe when we visit some special Holy Place; maybe when we least expect it. But when it happens, we know.

Many of us here may have examples of some special time when God felt so close that they were transported for a while to another dimension.

One special place for me is the Crypt in Worcester Cathedral.

There are times when we know without a shadow of a doubt that we are in the Presence of the Lord.

We are filled with an inner joy and peace – that indescribable joy that Peter talks about in his letter.

And at that moment nothing else seems to matter – we are transported into the spiritual realm.

It may not last long in earthly terms, but in spiritual terms it will remain with us for ever.

But I'm digressing.

Back to angels.

It seems that God also speaks to people through angels.

They are God's messengers.

Now personally I do not know of any time when an angel has spoken to me – although as is said in the book of Hebrew, we may have entertained angels unawares.

But because I have never knowingly met an angel, does not give me reason to dismiss them, to relegate them to fairyland.

For I have heard many stories, apart from those in the Bible, where people have claimed to have met them.

Why should I disbelieve them?

And of course, angels are continually worshipping God in his heavenly kingdom.

In a moment we, here on earth, will be joining them as we sing Holy Holy Holy – those words from Isaiah.

Yes, I believe in angels and I hope one day I will sing with them in heaven, unceasingly giving glory to God in the highest.