

Christmas Eve
Luke 2: 16-20

Trinity Episcopal Church
Sonoma, California

The Rustle of Angel Wings

A Christmas Meditation by the Rev. Susan Allison-Hatch

I suppose each of us has a favorite part of this story we know so well. I love the angels. Appearing suddenly. Glowing with the glory of God. Assuaging the shepherds' fears. Bringing good news. Pointing the way to Bethlehem.

The angel says to the shepherds, "Do not be afraid."
Like a parent to child, "Do not be afraid – of the dark, of the light, of the night. Do not be afraid of the hard places in your lives. Do not be afraid of the times when you don't know the way, of the times when you wonder if you'll make it through the night, or the day, or the moment. "Do not be afraid," the angel says.

The angel then says, "To you is born this day in the city of David a savior, who is the messiah, the lord." To you, the shepherds, the lowliest of us all, a savior is born. To you in the dark moments of your life a savior comes. To you, the outcasts, the lowly, the empty, the hungry, a savior comes.

And then the angels point the way to Bethlehem, to the place where the shepherds can encounter the holy one of God, to the place where hope is brought to life, to the place where everything is changed, to the place where everything is made new.

That's the work of angels – to appear suddenly, to ease fears, to stir hopes, and to point the way to the holy, to point the way to the living God.

Angels – they're messengers really – messengers and mediators of the holy. They meet us when we least expect them. Often they come to us at our low points – those moments when we most alone, most afraid, most insecure.

Angels. They point to God in the here and now of life. They point to God in the messiness and dinginess of life. They point to God in the stables of our lives.

Angels – they take so many shapes and forms. Some folks encounter angels deep in the woods on a starlit night. Some folks find them on an empty beach. Some folks hear their voices in a Bach fugue. Some find them in a cell dividing. Some in a painting hanging on a wall.

And some find angels in the face or the voice of another.

Angels – they meet you, they stop you in your tracks, they speak to you, gather you into God's community, and sustain you along the way.

Angels – they point to the holy and they bring it out in us.

Look around, there are angels in our midst, pointing us in the direction of new birth and new life.

On this holy night, listen for the rustle of their wings. Watch for the glow of their light. Let it lead you to Bethlehem, to the place where God is being born anew. Let the angels lead you into a brush with the holy. Amen

