

MISSION SUNDAY SERMON

Church of St. Stephen & St. Bede Winnipeg, Manitoba

Sunday, September 25, 2016

GUEST SPEAKER: Bishop Larry Robertson, Diocese of the Yukon

St Michael and All Angels:

“Since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles” Heb. 12:1

Sheila and I have spent over 40 years north of the 60th parallel. All of that time was ministering with the Inuit and then First Nation people. It has been a blessing for me. We have spent many Christmas’s planning Nativity plays. Getting people to play parts was often difficult. But one part that there seems to be not shortages of was Angels. Dressed in surplus and wings made of wire coat hangers decorated with those silver glittery streamers, and those same silvers streamers encircled the head for halos. The children and many adults like the idea of being Angels.

We celebrate the Feast of St Michael and All Angels. Each of the readings speak of Angels. I want to tell you a little of Angels in the North and how important I think they are to our work for God where ever we serve him.

If you ask most Inuit if they believe in angels, especially the elders they will say of course, looking at you with a puzzled expression that seems to say, that was a silly question.

They will tell you that they are God’s workers who intervene in the world on God’s behalf. They will also tell you that usually they work unseen doing the Creator’s bidding. Usually unseen, but not always.

When asked I will freely admit that I believe in angels. A story I told my children about angels was that God would use Sunbeams that appears as a storm was clearing to send his angels to earth help someone. Once after a strong storm one of my children came in and said that there must be a lot of trouble somewhere because God was sure sending lots of Angels to help.

I want to share with you 3 short stories of the north where I believe Angels Intervened, on behalf of the Creator to aide and assist someone.

- 1) We were living in Baker Lake at the time and I was out hunting caribou with a friend. We were each driving a snow mobile and kaomotik or sled. I had dropped my sled to go and assist my friend in skinning and dressing the Caribou he had shot. While we were dressing the caribou the wind picked up suddenly as it can in Baker. I went back to get my kaomtjik to help with hauling the meat and by the time it was connected to the kaomotik the storm was in full force. I could hardly see a thing. It was as if the land had disappeared.

I was not worried as the town was only a short distance away. I started off and for some reason My friend was not where I had left him. I started off home and after a short

while I came to a building. What caused me to worry was that I was not where I should be and I did not know where I was. I was lost on the tundra in a blizzard, a whiteout. I started to circle figuring I would come to a land mark I would recognize. After about an hour of traveling what I thought was in a circle I came to a road I recognized. Now I was worried. I was at least 5 miles from where I started. I know if I went one way I would head out into tundra where the road would end. If I went the other I would come to the main road and safety. I started one way and the snowmobile just would not go that way. It was as if something was pushing me the other way. The wind seemed to say no. I started off in the other direction And soon came to see signs that showed me I was heading toward the town and home. I believe that it was a Angel that prevented my going the wrong way.

- 2) The second story took place in Tuktoyaktuk on the shores of the Beaufort Sea. I had flown up the day before to conduct to funeral of an elderly women. In the morning I was walking to the hotel where I was hoping to get some breakfast. A pickup came along side of me and said Minihita get in. (Minihita is the word for minister.) With out questioning I got in and we turned around and went to the furthest point looking out to the Beaufort Sea. There we saw a polar bear heading out on the ice. It was already a long way off. We then went to the edge of the frozen sea in town. We got out and saw where the bear tracks come up from the sea and into the town. It went between 2 house with caribou meat on the porch, and easy meal. The bear should have stopped right there, but did not. The bear went by them as if they were not there and went right to the front of the house where the Son of the elder that died lived. It seemed to circle in front of the door and then went back the way it came past the houses with meat, and went off into the sea where we saw it go.

One of the men told of a legend that when someone is having a hard time over a death that person would come back as an animal and tell the person that it was ok. The Son was having a hard time. "Was this the Elderly women they ask?" I replied that I thought the elder was safe in the arms of Jesus. But our loving creator is not above sending a angel in a form that we would understand, the form of a bear and send it to the son to say that his mother was OK. I can see no other logical explanation.

- 3) The 3rd story happen to our family while we were living in Fort Simpson. One Friday evening, the weather was miserable and the bridge to the community was out. Nobody was coming or leaving. About 10pm there was a knock on the door and a young man stood there. He told a story of all his gear being stolen and he had nothing. We brought him in and fed him and told him he could sleep in the living room. I gave him a sleeping bag and told him he could take it with him when he left. Just before retiring he told us he had a medical issue effecting his brain and that his medicine was also taken and he hoped he would be OK and not be violent. This made me nervous as we has 2 young children at the time. We committed the fellow to God in prayer and somehow went to sleep.

When I got up in the morning the young man was gone, the sleeping bag was gone and a note simply said thank you. The road was closed, the weather was cold and wet and the fellow had no medication. I was worried and went looking for him. I checked the bridge, the store, the nursing station, and the RCMP. Nobody knew anything about the

young man. They did not recall seeing him. After a couple of hours looking for him with the help of the RCMP it was like he was never there. After telling the story to one person he looked at me and said “and you let him sleep in your house near the children”. One of the RCMP asked me seriously if I was sure he had actually come. He came alright. I believe we entertained an angel unawares.

Angels are real my friends. The Creator sends them to us to test us, to guide us, to intercede on our behalf and to protect us. Let us give thanks for the messengers from above, and let us expect their visits. I believe that as we commit and tune our spirits to the Lord above, we may just catch a glimpse of an angel doing God’s work giving God the glory. May the Lord Bless you.