

**Sunday 29 September 2024**

# **St Michael and All Angels**



**Sermon** © Pete Haslam.

**Liturgy and prayers of intercession** © 2000 The Archbishops' Council.

**Bible readings** © the publishers of the NRSV translation.

**Image** © Hampton Court Palace.

The liturgy assumes the service is Eucharistic. The prayers of consecration are included at the end.

The hymn can be accessed via a YouTube link. Please click on the links.

To see service transcripts from previous weeks, please visit the page,

<http://www.medlockhead.co.uk/resources/index.htm>

## Introduction and welcome

**HYMN 1** [Angel voices ever singing](#)

[\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

## The Welcome

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit

**All Amen.**

The Lord be with you

**All And also with you.**

## The Preparation

**All Almighty God,  
to whom all hearts are open,  
all desires known,  
and from whom no secrets are hidden:  
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts  
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,  
that we may perfectly love you,  
and worthily magnify your holy name;  
through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.**

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

The first commandment is this:

‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,

with all your soul, with all your mind,

and with all your strength.’

And the second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’

There is no other commandment greater than these.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

**All Amen. Lord, have mercy.**

We have come to Mount Zion,  
the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,  
to myriads of angels, to God, the judge of all,  
and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant.

**All** Almighty God, our heavenly Father,  
we have sinned against you  
and against our neighbour  
in thought and word and deed,  
through negligence, through weakness,  
through our own deliberate fault.  
We are truly sorry  
and repent of all our sins.  
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,  
who died for us,  
forgive us all that is past  
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life  
to the glory of your name.  
**Amen.**

Almighty God,  
who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon you,  
pardon and deliver you from all your sins,  
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,  
and keep you in life eternal;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**All** Amen.

## **The Gloria**

**All** Glory to God in the highest,  
and peace to his people on earth.  
Lord God, heavenly King,  
almighty God and Father,  
we worship you, we give you thanks,  
we praise you for your glory.  
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,  
Lord God, Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world:  
have mercy on us;  
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:  
receive our prayer.

**For you alone are the Holy One,  
you alone are the Lord,  
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,  
with the Holy Spirit,  
in the glory of God the Father.  
Amen.**

### **The Collect for St Michael and all Angels**

Everlasting God,  
you have ordained and constituted the ministries  
of angels and mortals in a wonderful order:  
grant that as your holy angels  
always serve you in heaven,  
so, at your command,  
they may help and defend us on earth;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.  
**All Amen.**

### **First reading**

A reading from the first book of Moses called Genesis

Jacob left Beer-sheba and went toward Haran. He came to a certain place and stayed there for the night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place. And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, the top of it reaching to heaven; and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And the Lord stood beside him and said, 'I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring; and your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and all the families of the earth shall be blessed in you and in your offspring. Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.'



Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said, '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.' *Genesis 28:10–17*

This is the Word of the Lord

**All Thanks be to God.**

## Second reading

A reading from the Revelation of St John the Divine

War broke out in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon. The dragon and his angels fought back, but they were defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. The great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, proclaiming, 'Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Messiah, for the accuser of our comrades has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. But they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they did not cling to life even in the face of death. Rejoice then, you heavens and those who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, for the devil has come down to you with great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!' *Revelation 12:7–12*

This is the Word of the Lord

**All Thanks be to God.**

**HYMN 2 Majesty, worship His majesty** ([click on this link to hear the hymn](#))

## Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John

**All Glory to you O Lord.**

When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, 'Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!' Nathanael asked him, 'Where did you get to know me?' Jesus answered, 'I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you.' Nathanael replied, 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!' Jesus

answered, 'Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these.' And he said to him, 'Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.'

*John 1:47-51*

This is the Gospel of the Lord

**All Praise to you O Christ.**

## Sermon

Today we celebrate the festival of St. Michael and all angels, known in some other countries and traditions as Michaelmas. Michael, the archangel, is mentioned in the books of Daniel, Jude, and Revelation, as well as other Bible-time writings that we do not consider to be part of our Bible. This feast day was originally assigned solely for St. Michael, but in Reformation times, was expanded to include a commemoration of all the angels. The lessons illustrate the biblical understanding of St. Michael as the captain of the heavenly armies, who leads us into victory on behalf of Christ. Today, let's take some time to look at the biblical function and appearance of angels.

Angels are depicted in many different ways in art, sculpture, poetry, prose, and movies. Most of these popular images are completely unbiblical. C.S. Lewis wrote: 'In the plastic arts these symbols [of angels] have steadily degenerated. Early angels carry in their face and gesture the peace and authority of Heaven. Later came the chubby infantile nudes of Raphael; finally the soft, slim, girlish, and consolatory angels of nineteenth century art, shapes so feminine that they avoid being voluptuous only by their total insipidity. In Scripture the visitation of an angel is always alarming; it has to begin by saying 'Fear not.' The Victorian angel sculptures all look as if it were going to say, 'There, there.'

And even more recently, television shows and movies seem to have a fascination with depictions of angels. Perhaps some of you watch *Touched by An Angel*. Or the popular television show 'Angel', which has nothing to do with angels; on the contrary, it tells the story of a vampire who battles demons and other evil powers. *Charlie's Angels*, the TV series and movie, had absolutely nothing to do with angels at all, unless you think that angels are just good-looking women. In *City of Angels* (Nicolas Cage, Meg Ryan), an angel falls in love with a woman and angels can decide to be human under certain circumstances. Michael (with John Travolta), written about our commemorated angel, portrays an overweight, crabby, chain-smoking, beer-drinking being that can do miracles. *It's A Wonderful Life* first

introduced us to Clarence, that loveable, chubby angel who informed us 'Whenever a bell rings, an angel gets his wings'. But none of these images really reflects the biblical witness about angels, so let's look at the biblical responsibilities of angels. What do angels do?

Firstly, angels bring messages from God. The very word used for angel in Greek and Hebrew means 'messenger'. Angels announce God's judgment, declare the promise of numerous babies-to-be, and proclaim good news to the people of God. An angel called to Abraham as he was about to sacrifice his only son Isaac, telling him to stop and let the boy live. An angel informed Zechariah that his old, barren wife Elizabeth would have a child. An angel appeared to Mary announcing the forthcoming birth of Jesus. An angel told Joseph not to leave Mary, because her child was from the Holy Spirit. On the first Christmas night, angels proclaimed Jesus' birth to mere shepherds out in the fields. An angel sent Peter and Cornelius to one another, so that Peter would accept Gentiles and Cornelius would be saved. An angel sent Ananias to Saul upon his conversion, to proclaim the good news to him. An angel gave the revelation to John on the island of Patmos. While we humans can bear God's message, we will never be angels in the same sense as these heavenly beings who deliver messages directly from God's mouth.

Secondly, angels carry out God's work on earth, including justice and comfort. In the Old Testament, this work often takes on a morbid tone. 2 Chronicles and 2 Kings describe an angel putting to death 185,000 men in the Assyrian camp. The Psalms describe the Angel of the Lord driving enemies away or chasing after them. Angels minister to Elijah while he's in the wilderness for forty days and nights. Angels also minister to Jesus as he's in the wilderness for forty days after his baptism and testing by the devil.

Angels carry out God's earthly work, whether it be judgment or comfort. For example, on Resurrection Day, an angel rolled the stone away effortlessly. In Acts 12:23, Herod did not give praise to God, so the angel of the Lord struck him down.

Thirdly, and on a related note, angels deliver the people of God from difficult situations. In the Exodus, the Angel of the Lord travelled in front of Israel's army, until the Egyptians caught up with them, then the angel stood behind the Hebrew people, to keep them safe from attack. When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were in the fiery furnace, King Nebuchadnezzar saw a fourth body in there that looked different, like the Son of Man. According to the text, this is the angel of God that kept them safe (Daniel 3:28). When Daniel was safe after spending the night in the den of lions, he chalked it up to an angel who shut the mouths of the lions (Daniel 6:22). In the Acts of the Apostle 5:19, 12:7-15, and elsewhere, the apostles are freed from prison chains by the angel of God .

Fourthly, angels praise God in heaven. Numerous prophets plus the book of Revelation include descriptions of angels who fall down at the throne of God in worship and praise. Visions and dreams of biblical writers are often full of angels bringing messages, warnings, and other messages. In dreams and visions, angels sometimes bring someone to a high place to overlook what is happening (Revelation), but, on the other hand, the devil does the same thing in the temptation of Jesus narrative.

What do angels look like? We don't have any really great descriptions in scripture, or any pictures left over from biblical appearances of angels. Today's visual representations of angels are often chubby babies or beautiful women. In the scriptures, there are examples of angels appearing in human form. Three angels show up at Abraham and Sarah's tent, announcing that they would have a son. They are not identified as angels until much later, so they must have blended in, taking on human form. When an angel appears to announce the forthcoming birth of Samson, his parents see 'a man' because they do not realize he is an angel until later (Judges 13:3-16). The writer of Hebrews says, 'Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.' (13:2) obviously, angels can appear in human form, looking just like the rest of society.

And although angels appear in human form at times, they are not human, and never have been. Angels are real, but angels are a different part of the structure of beings that God created. At the beginning of the book of Hebrews and in a quote from the Psalms, the created order is explained. In the book of Hebrews, the writer emphasizes that although angels are superior to humans, they are inferior to Jesus. Angels always point to God, reveal God, and reference God. They do not place themselves above God or Jesus. Although these supernatural beings called angels can come in the form of humans, angels in the scriptures can also be downright scary. Even if we discount the terrifying judgments of death carried out by the angels in the Old Testament, consider what happens when the angels come to deliver a message. In Luke, when the angel brings the message to Zechariah about their upcoming unexpected birth, the angel first says, 'Do not be afraid.' When the angel appears to Mary, he says, 'Do not be afraid.' When the angels announce the birth of the son of God to the lowly shepherds, out in the fields watching their flocks by night, they say, 'Do not be afraid.' Many more angelic appearances begin with the words 'Do not be afraid.' The heavenly creatures of the seraphim and cherubim, often seen as heavenly co-workers of the angels, are described in Isaiah 5 as winged, fiery serpents. In fact, Michael is often described as the captain of the heavenly armies. Hardly a pretty picture of a fluffy winged creature whose idea of



a good time is strumming a heavenly harp as he floats around the earth looking for people to help.

In conclusion Angels have many responsibilities and roles in heaven and on earth. Their physical appearance may resemble that of a human, but they are not human beings that have died and gone on, according to scripture. Angels are important, but they are still subject to the rule and power of Christ. In the book of Colossians, the author helps to define the place and significance of angels. (Col. 2:18-19). 'Do not let anyone disqualify you, insisting on self-abasement and worship of angels, dwelling on visions, puffed up without cause by a human way of thinking, and not holding fast to the head, from whom the whole body, nourished and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows with a growth that is from God' The most important thing about angels is that they do not exist for their own glory, but to glorify and to serve God. So whatever you may or may not have learned about angels this morning, remember that the most important role of angels is to be pointing, pointing, always pointing to God, their source of being. Amen.

## The Creed

Do you believe and trust in God the Father,  
the source of all being and life,  
the one for whom we exist?

**All We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Son,  
who took our human nature,  
died for us and rose again?

**All We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit,  
who gives life to the people of God  
and makes Christ known in the world?

**All We believe and trust in him.**

This is the faith of the Church.

**All This is our faith.**

**We believe and trust in one God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.  
Amen.**

## Prayers of intercession

In the power of the Spirit,  
and in union with Christ,  
let us pray to the Father.

Father in heaven,  
by his blood your Christ has ransomed us to you,  
and has made us a kingdom and priests to you our God.  
As the angels minister to you in heaven,  
strengthen your Church to serve you here on earth.

Lord, hear us,

**All Lord, graciously hear us.**

Father in heaven,  
when the angels greeted the birth of your Son  
they sang for joy 'Glory to God and peace on earth'.  
Bless with Christ's peace the nations of the world.

Lord, hear us,

**All Lord, graciously hear us.**

Father in heaven,  
your Son has promised to your children  
Protect by your mercy our neighbours, families and friends.

Lord, hear us,

**All Lord, graciously hear us.**

Father in heaven,  
you give your angels charge over those who trust in you  
to guard them in all their ways.

Be with those in trouble...,

rescue them and show them your salvation.

Lord, hear us,

**All Lord, graciously hear us.**

Father in heaven,  
your angel declares 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.'  
'Blessed indeed,' says the Spirit,  
'for they may rest from their labours,  
for they take with them the record of their deeds.'

Enfold in your love [... and] all who come in faith  
to your judgement seat in heaven.

Lord, hear us,

**All Lord, graciously hear us.**

Father in heaven,  
the angels sing by day and night around your throne:  
'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty.'  
With Michael, prince of the angels, who contends by our side,  
with Gabriel, your herald, who brings glad tidings,  
with Raphael, the protector, who ministers your healing,  
and with the whole company of heaven,  
we worship you, we give you glory,  
we sing your praise and exalt you for ever.

**All Amen.**

Merciful Father,

**All accept these prayers  
for the sake of your Son,  
our Saviour Jesus Christ.  
Amen.**

## **The Peace**

Hear again the song of the angels: 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace.'

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

**All And also with you**

**HYMN 3 All hail the power of Jesus' name** ([click on this link to hear the hymn](#))

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below

**HYMN 4 I cannot tell** (why he whom angels worship) ([click to hear the hymn](#))

## The Dismissal

God keep you in the fellowship of his saints;  
Christ protect you by the ministry of His angels;  
the Spirit make you holy in God's service;  
and the blessing of God the Almighty:  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,  
be with you now and remain with you always.

**All Amen.**

**HYMN 4 Holy, holy, holy**

[\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

**All In the name of Christ.  
Amen.**

## The Liturgy of the Sacrament

### Eucharistic Prayer (prayer E)

The Lord be with you

**All and also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**All We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**All It is right to give thanks and praise.**

It is indeed right and good,  
our duty and our salvation,  
always and everywhere to give you thanks,  
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God,  
through your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.  
You reveal your wise purpose  
for the salvation of the human race  
by assigning to the angels and archangels  
the ministry of your steadfast love and protection.  
While they contemplate your glory,  
standing before you and singing your praise,  
they keep a faithful vigil for us,  
guarding us along the way that leads to life,  
and guiding us towards the kingdom of your light.  
In joyful gladness we unite our voices with theirs  
and sing the ageless hymn of your praise:

**All Holy, holy, holy Lord,  
God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
Hosanna in the highest.  
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Hosanna in the highest.**

We praise and bless you, loving Father,  
through Jesus Christ, our Lord;  
and as we obey his command,  
send your Holy Spirit,  
that broken bread and wine outpoured  
may be for us the body and blood of your dear Son.



On the night before he died he had supper with his friends  
and, taking bread, he praised you.

He broke the bread, gave it to them and said:  
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;  
do this in remembrance of me.

When supper was ended he took the cup of wine.  
Again he praised you, gave it to them and said:  
Drink this, all of you;  
this is my blood of the new covenant,  
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.  
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

So, Father, we remember all that Jesus did,  
in him we plead with confidence his sacrifice made once for all upon the cross.

Bringing before you the bread of life and cup of salvation,  
we proclaim his death and resurrection  
until he comes in glory.

Great is the mystery of faith:

**All Christ has died.**  
**Christ is risen.**  
**Christ will come again.**

Lord of all life,  
help us to work together for that day  
when your kingdom comes  
and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth.

Look with favour on your people,  
gather us in your loving arms  
and bring us with St Michael and all the saints  
to feast at your table in heaven.

Through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
all honour and glory are yours, O loving Father,  
for ever and ever.

**All Amen.**

## **The Lord's Prayer**

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

**All**     **Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and for ever. Amen.**

## **Breaking of the Bread**

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

**All**     **Though we are many, we are one body,  
because we all share in one bread.**

**All**     **Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world,  
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world,  
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world,  
grant us peace.**

Draw near with faith.

Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ  
which he gave for you,  
and his blood which he shed for you.

Eat and drink in remembrance that he died for you,  
and feed on him in your hearts  
by faith with thanksgiving.

**All** We do not presume  
to come to this your table, merciful Lord,  
trusting in our own righteousness,  
but in your manifold and great mercies.  
We are not worthy  
so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table.  
But you are the same Lord  
whose nature is always to have mercy.  
Grant us therefore, gracious Lord,  
so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ  
and to drink his blood,  
that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body  
and our souls washed through his most precious blood,  
and that we may evermore dwell in him,  
and he in us. Amen.

Communion is distributed.

### **Prayer after Communion**

Lord of heaven,  
in this eucharist you have brought us near  
to an innumerable company of angels  
and to the spirits of the saints made perfect:  
as in this food of our earthly pilgrimage  
we have shared their fellowship,  
so may we come to share their joy in heaven;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**All** Amen

**All** Almighty God,  
we thank you for feeding us  
with the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.  
Through him we offer you our souls and bodies  
to be a living sacrifice.  
Send us out in the power of your Spirit  
to live and work  
to your praise and glory.  
Amen.