

**Angels Among Us “Do Not Be Afraid”  
Summerland United Church  
December 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022**

Luke 2: 1-20

**REFLECTION: The Simple and The Ordinary**

Over the month of December, during the 4 Sundays that lead up to Christmas we have been listening to the messages of angels. They appear numerous times in the stories about Jesus’s birth. The visit Zechariah and Elizabeth, the elderly parents of John the Baptist. They visit Mary and Joseph and the Shepherds in the fields.

And with each visit they say, ‘do not be afraid’. And the people respond with disbelief at first because they have every reason to be afraid. They are ordinary people, living their lives and just trying to get by. They cannot understand why angels would visit them and tell them God favors them, God loves them, because they’re nothing special.

They’ve done nothing special, they’re not important people with high status or power.

It is because they are ordinary that they are chosen. It is because they’ve done nothing special and have little status and no power that they are favored. It is because they are everyday people, just like you and me that God chooses them.

I don’t know about you, but for me, having heard this story year after year all my life, the people in this story feel famous. They have status and power because their story is famous. I mean, look around us, at everything we do every year to celebrate these people and their child. Like any famous person – they’re over there and we’re over here.

When we put these people on the pedestal of fame, when we believe, we can’t relate to these people then we lose the whole message of the story.

God, chose these people because they weren’t famous, they’re like you and me, just trying to live their lives. We are supposed to relate to them, recognize ourselves in them, see how their lives the challenges and the joys are just like our lives full of challenges and joys.

Each of the people in this Christmas story have hopes and dreams about what their lives will be, just like us. And just like us, things happen which drastically change the patterns of their lives. Maybe we can’t relate to those changes being heralded by visions of angels, but many of us have ended up with the unexpected entering our lives other ways.

So, its important that when we hear this story, hear these messages from the angels we remember that these are messages for people way over there. These isn't a story for someone else more important than ourselves.

When the angels say – do not be afraid. They're saying that to us, and that's a message I really need to hear these days. I am afraid. Covid, flus, climate change, political unrest, war, rising food costs, rising prices on everything. I am afraid.

The thing about fear is that it can be paralyzing. We look around us and see an overwhelming abundance of wrong and we become numb. There's so much to do, we don't know where to start and so we just don't begin at all.

If we care about one thing, we'll have to care about all the things and it's just too much for one person alone.

But here's the thing, we're not alone. We have each other and we have God. And though it might not look like it, and it might not be easy to see, God is and does continue to show up in this world. We might not have visions of heavenly hosts and glory shining all around when the angels are among us.

But they are here. They are in each one of us when we choose to not let fear paralyze us. When we make a decision, no matter how small that benefits our neighbors, our community, creation.

Do not be afraid, the angels say as they bring messages of hope and peace and joy and love to all the people. When the shepherds hear this, they go immediately to see this sign the angels speak of. A baby, born in a barn. Simple, ordinary, and miraculous.

They believe the angels when they're told they're not alone, that God is with them.

They might still have been afraid, but they found it within themselves to trust themselves and God. They made the choice to fly in the face of fear as the angels did to become angels among their people, telling everyone of this good news. They gathered at the stable, as we gather together. They looked at this tiny baby and knew a miracle had occurred. New life, new hope, new possibility. The name of the baby is Emmanuel, which means God is with us.

God is present here with us, within us and all around us, the simple and the ordinary. We might still be afraid, but we know we are not alone. We know that we can be messengers of hope and peace and joy and love, we can be the angels among us, because Emmanuel, Jesus is born.