

Heaven Help the Harold Angels

Good evening, dear people of Bethel and internet friends. I am happy to be with you and to share in your Amens and greetings from afar to you I extend.

I am the Angel Monticello, but everyone just calls me Monty. I will be your guest preacher tonight, and this makes me quite jaunty since I have not preached since that Thursday called Maundy.

Pastor Dave made use of the secret sermon support system to help him proceed. It is called the Help Me Jesus Hotline and it is for pastors-in-need. After hearing his story of woe, to be his substitute I quickly agreed.

For I heard him preach earlier today at Christmas in a Barn. And he spun quite a yarn, there on that farm.

His sermon was, as the young people say, quite dope. It was heartfelt, engaging, and full of hope. And were you to ask me, Monty, can I skip it? I would most certainly say nope.

Now should you find that I rhyme the entire time, will this cause you to mope?

But before you make judgment on this little matter, remember that story about a jolly old elf who made such a clatter? Because many will nestle with their children this night and share of that jolly old elf and his reindeer who take flight.

So, to borrow a bit from that fabled tale, I will echo its style, if not its scale. But if it become something of a fail, I pray you will not begin to wail.

Still, while I am unsuspecting of what you may be expecting, I believe that the story I will tell will make a connecting, and hopefully even lead to some reflecting

For, I am merely your friendly neighborhood heavenly host, here to share with you a story, if not a toast, about the God who loves you most!

But first things first, it must be said, this Covid is the worst, and there are too many dead; especially when only the nurse can see our loved one in the hospital bed.

For many this night, loneliness, and sorrow hold sway. And Joy to the World is the last thing many want to say. Especially if their loved ones are just too far away.

But it is to this feeling that my story for you speaks. For it will not forget that sometimes life reeks. And sometimes our lives have more valleys than peaks.

Still, the story I will be telling, without sounding brash, is quite compelling. And if you are willing to go with me a bit and have yourself a comfortable sit, I believe it will speak to you no matter where you are dwelling.

The story begins in heaven of course in a time not remembered except by those at the source. When all was being made new, when the Lord alone blew life into existence with a gentle yet mighty force.

Heaven and earth, moon and stars, plants, animals', humans and us, the angels upon whom God would put so much trust.

To serve as God's special agents, protecting the people and revealing God's statements, especially to those, like Mary and the shepherds, both of whom on this night are much discussed.

Now, you have most likely heard of Gabriel and Michael the famous angels of Biblical renown. Both have had starring roles when they have come down.

But these two famous angels are not the stars of my story. No, another group of angels will get the glory, although at first you will think that they are kind of sorry.

My story is about a family of angels three, brothers who at first, we all would agree, seem as bereft of angelic behavior, and working on behalf of our Savior, as a Neanderthal hosting a high tea

Pickles, Cheetos, and Rupert are their names, and always arriving late was their game. They never got anywhere on time, they were always and incessantly behind, and one might have thought it would cause some shame since their surname of Harold was already quite plain.

But No, No, No the late angels never seemed concerned, they would spurn their turn and often adjourn before the chores and work were done, usually because there was something else for which they yearned.

And what these late angels yearned for best, of which one might say they were obsessed, and for which they would get sharply dressed, and rally with much zest, was singing, O singing, yes that was their quest.

But here is the thing about the Harold brothers three, not one of them, not Pickles, not Cheetos, nor Rupert could sing!

Oh, they tried, yes, they tried, and for that we give them credit, and while it is not kind, I cannot spare it, the ability to hit the right key they did not inherit.

It pains me so to share this reality, but in its finality, you could not deny its actuality.

It became a nuisance quickly, when their singing became so sickly, that the hairs on the back of your neck became prickly.

And when we had angel choir practice, it was a terrible sight. It was as if Pickles and Cheetos and Rupert came just to spite, all the rest of us who were singing with taste, who did not waste, our voices each practice night.

Pickles, Cheetos and Rupert would sing, loudly, proudly, but terribly off key. It was annoying at best, maddening at worst, we just wanted them to go the brothers three.

Which makes what happened next so odd, that this would be the choice of God, something so bizarre, something quite unnerving, that Pickles, Cheetos, and Rupert were serving.

The time had come, it had been foretold, for the Lord to deal with Sin's stranglehold over the world the Lord lovingly created, over the humans who are so often devastated

For the will and purpose of the God who animates, motivates, and celebrates you is to be the God who liberates, extricates, and emancipates you too

Because Sin, Evil, Fear, each is a liar, they fabricate their power, but never stop for an hour, they simply want to destroy and so they conspire

They conspire to tell you that you are not enough, even though God has made you quite tough, and with his strength you can call their bluff

They conspire to make you look upon one another, not as a sister and not as a brother, but as an other with whom you do not want to bother

They conspire through natural disaster and disease, to cause despair, anguish, hopelessness, and greed

They conspire in all ways, some large, but most small, to cause us to forget that the dividing wall had to fall, above all, because of the God upon whom we call, was about to do a grace and mercy overhaul

To make sure it was done as it needed to be the Lord of Love came down, born as a baby. A baby who would one day grow to be the Messiah, the Savior, our blessed deity!

And this, my new friends, is where my story gets a bit wonky, not unlike that story in Numbers about the talking donkey.

For what I am about to share makes about as much sense; but as I commence, and in my own defense, the difference between our ways and God's ways is immense

As word spread about what the Lord had planned, how He was going to earth as the Son of Man, many surmised, and others speculated, that the Angel Tabernacle Choir was about to be activated

That they would be nominated and consecrated was a given; they were the most dedicated and anticipated singers in all of heaven

But then something happened that was quite agitating, aggravating, and yes even nauseating; something no one saw coming, even those who would be participating.

For it was the night before Christmas, when all through God's house, word began to spread that caused us to grouse

God's instructions were hung by the gates with great care, and all the angel chorus would soon show up there

When what to my wondering eyes did appear, but the most unbelievable thing that I would ever hear

The Word from on high came down that night and it was a shock; because that night, and not for the first time, the Lord had chosen nothing less than a laughingstock

Written right there, in God's own hand; Pickles, Cheetos, and Rupert would be the Heavenly Band

To be honest, I was stunned and could not believe, did God need a reprieve, or was God simply naïve?

But then Gabriel came and assured it was true, Pickles, Cheetos and Rupert were going to play the holy air crew

To tell the Shepherds, that was their task; to give them the good news of great joy, that the Savior was born, what more could any Angel ask

So, we gathered to watch from above how the brothers would do with this labor of love, we muttered that they were going mess up huge, and I know it makes me sound like a Scrooge, but nothing had prepared me for what I became a part of

For that night something happened, that forever my heart gladdened, and helped me to know that with God we best grow, when we simply trust Him as Captain

For that night, in that field, after Gabriel gave his most famous spiel, those brothers three began to sing, “Glory to the newborn king! Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled.”

The most beautiful singing it was, which made me wonder, how did they learn to sing with such thunder? And tone, and depth, and strength, and might? What was it that I had witnessed that night?

Then Michael, who was off that night, saw me deep in thought and asked if I was alright

I queried him, “Pray tell, how is it that they sang so well?”

He replied to me, “It is rather simple you see. They were created for this and one cannot easily dismiss nor be remiss when it comes to someone, or someone’s finding their bliss.”

But they were so bad before, I said. And Michael gently rubbed my head.

“They were not created to sing beautifully for us. The Angel Tabernacle choir makes the heavenly fuss. No, Pickles, Cheetos, and Rupert sing for them, they were created to offer humans a most beautiful hymn. Does that suffice or do we have more to discuss?”

And in that moment, I finally received, what I hope we all will come to believe. That the purpose of Jesus being born this day, is not only to defeat sin and wipe our tears away.

Tonight, is about knowing and being known by God, so much so that we are regularly awed by what we can do and what we can be when we see beyond how we and others are flawed.

God chooses those to bear his Word who simply are willing and not easily deterred. You do not have to be the greatest speaker (see Moses) or the biggest (see David) or even the oldest (see Joseph).

No, God came near to save us from Sin and to turn us loose to seek our purpose in Him. No matter if you are heavy or thin, make a lot of money, or have not much more than your grin.

God can use anyone willing to be a vessel, and this is the message I have for you tonight dear Bethel.

How might God use you, here or abroad, it may seem crazy to some, it will not be if it is of the Lord.

Just remember the story that I just told, of Pickles, Cheetos, and Rupert, the Harold brothers, from of old

They are well known this time of year, their singing has brought us great joy; and you may know their song indeed by ear, now that you know their story

Pickles, Cheetos, and Rupert, you most likely did not know, but the Harold Angels, I bet you have heard of them though

Hark! The Harold Angels Sing is a yearly reminder for us to bring, all of ourselves, our hopes, and our dreams to the work of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, our King

And even though 2020 has been so naughty, naughty, know there is always one who remains who sows grace and hope even when it seems spotty

And I pray that Jesus be born anew each day, in your hearts, your minds, your struggles, your play

So now I take leave, my friends, with a whistle, and my sermon's ending is now official!

But let me say as I leave you tonight, "Merry Christmas to all, and God's Got This Alright!"