

Matthew 18:1-11

“*Their angels?*” That’s what it says. “*These little ones*” each have their own angel. Then it’s true. Children do have a guardian angel. This is a gift given in baptism where every gift is given. A strong, holy angel of God is assigned to guard, in both body and soul, each and every little one. The Psalmist agrees wholeheartedly...” He *shall give His angels charge over you to guard you in all your ways.*” And thus, we are taught to pray every day: “*Let Your holy angel be with me that the wicked foe may have no power over me.*”

So we need to treat these little ones with loving care. “*See to it,*” warns our Lord, “*that you do not despise these little ones, for I tell you that in heaven their angels always gaze upon the face of My Father.*” Mess with these little ones and we mess with God’s powerful angel guarding them. Show love to these little ones and we show love to God.

So at what age can we start to despise them? When are they not *little ones* anymore? In other words, when does their body/soul guard angel leave them so we can mess with them? When they start school? At the age of confirmation? Surely at least by adulthood, because the way we mess with some adults around here...well, if they had a guardian angel, we wouldn’t dare treat them like that.

Hmmm, we’d better back-track our thinking process here. “Unless you become like a child, a little one, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” These words of our text belong to Jesus. And He’s not kidding around. We must all be *these little ones*. But how?

One of the sweetest sounds we hear in church is the crying of a baby. We’d better not despise it. Rather, we’d better imitate it. A crying baby is in need. Adults don’t cry in church because they can fend for themselves. But little ones cry because their needs have to be met by someone else; by the one who cares for them. So here it is... Unless we become crying babies, we will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

But that’s beneath us. We’re perfectly capable. We don’t need a caregiver. We don’t need a guardian angel. Come to think of it, we really don’t even need God. We did at one time. And we will when our time here is up. But we’re not children anymore. We’re capable and resourceful.

Friends, we must repent of such a wicked attitude; of such sinful pride. Unless we become beggarly children...little ones, who can only receive what is given to them...we will remain outside the kingdom of heaven. This is what Jesus is saying here. Not that we are to be childish, but we must become like children. We must be nothing. Ones who are given to; who have a crying need continuously.

This is who you were when you were baptized. You only received. God did everything, and gave everything to you: the forgiveness of your sins, life, salvation. He gave you His Holy Spirit. And He assigned an angel to you...a powerful guardian angel to watch over you in body and soul so the evil foe may have no power over you.

If we think that we can move forward and away from all that because we're older now, then we are not *these little ones* who are in God's kingdom, and then we are on the wide path that leads to destruction, and not on the narrow path that leads to eternal life.

You see, the wide path is so wide because this is what most people think – that they are self-sufficient. But you are on the narrow path when you are and remain God's little one who always cries out in need for His gifts, His strength, His presence in your life.

You show this not by literally crying and sobbing out loud in the pew. Oh you can if you want. But by coming faithfully to where he cares for your needs. Here in His house. Here at His table. Faithful in sucking on the pure milk of His Word.

And your angel is assigned to help you in this. He certainly guards your body from harm, but even more necessary, he guards you from the evil foe. He does this by leading you to the living Word of God and to prayer, which is our only weapon against the devil.

This is a powerful prayer... "*Let Your holy angel be with me that the evil foe may have no power over me.*" It's powerful because we who pray it do so in weakness and humility. The wicked foe is so much stronger than you. And he has his sights set on you. He hates you with a passion. He is going to hell, and he wants to take you and me with him.

But he is a defeated foe. Jesus overcame the devil by His bloody sufferings and death and His resurrection. There on the cross, Jesus crushed the head of him who is your mortal enemy. He has no power over you...unless you give him the power. A lion behind a cage has no power over a little child, unless that little child gives him the power by crawling inside his cage.

And so, friend, your Heavenly Father has assigned an angel to guard you from the roaring lion, your evil foe. He keeps you from walking into the lion's cage. When you come here to the Lord's house, on the Lord's day, to hear the Lord's words, and to receive the Lord's body and blood, it is your angel who is leading you here. Here where you are safe from the evil foe, guarded by the Word of God and prayer.

Your angel is always gazing upon the face of the Father. He's the perfect sheepdog, always looking to the Shepherd as he watches the sheep. Your angel sees love in the Father's face, love for you. He sees mercy and pity in His face toward you. He sees the cross of Jesus always before the face of the Heavenly Father. Your angel rejoices in what Jesus did for you.

Your angel is powerful. Powerful against the evil foe, but gentle toward you. For you are one of *these little ones* who is loved by God; who is forgiven; who belongs to the kingdom of heaven. And so gladly we pray together, "*Let Your holy angel be with me that the evil foe may have no power over me.*" Amen.