

Abundant Living Ministries

Encouraging Christian Living since 1978

December 2021

Have you ever seen an angel? As we approach Christmas, we often hear and tell of the angel who appeared to the shepherds, announcing the birth of Jesus. The Bible does not describe the appearance of this angel. In fact, the scriptural account is pretty brief: ***And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.*** (Luke 2:13, 14) Yes, brief... but WHAT GOOD NEWS!

The appearance of the ONE angel was frightening. ***And suddenly there was with the angel a MULTITUDE of the heavenly host.*** I can't even imagine the overwhelming awe they felt!

The Bible describes angels as "ministering spirits," although typically scripture doesn't give much description of what they look like. In fact, on a number of occasions, the person did not even realize that the angel WAS an angel until after the encounter was finished. When Peter (who was in prison) got abruptly awakened by a poke in the ribs ("struck on the side," scripture says), and then led out to the street... only when outside the prison did he recognize, "Now I know without a doubt that the Lord has sent his ANGEL and rescued me..." (You can read this absolutely amazing story in Acts 12.)

Psalms 91 tells us of one of the **assignments** given to angels, *Because you have made the Lord, who is my refuge, even the Most High, your dwelling place, No evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling; For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone. You shall tread upon the lion and the cobra, the young lion and the serpent you shall trample underfoot.* (Psalm 91:9-13) **Now, THAT is protection!!**

So, yes, we DO have "guardian angels" although it's quite probable that we often do not recognize them, at the time, as angels. Too often, people describe "coincidences," and some refer to "lucky breaks." We fail to thank the LORD for HIS protection every day of our lives.

Many of our readers look forward to Sharon's annual Christmas story, always published in this December edition of our newsletter. She began about 25 years ago, writing a heartwarming Christmas story for the children. It became an annual tradition. Sharon decided to take a break this year. In its place, we are printing the story (which begins on the next page) of an angelic appearance which occurred about 100 years ago. The angel (in the form of an Ecuadorian mountain lady) ministered encouragement and blessing... but was not recognized at the moment as an angel. (Oh Lord, may our eyes be opened to see the many times YOUR ANGELS protect and encourage us!)

You may wish to purchase ***Christmas Tales That Warm the Heart***. Offered in two volumes, both contain 12 of Sharon's annual stories. They are available on Amazon or directly from our office. The details are on the back page of this letter.



I want to thank all of you who gave financially through the *ExtraGive* program on Friday, November 19. I am writing this letter before the event, so I can't tell you the results but I will update you in January's newsletter.

And, as we approach the close of another year, THANK YOU ALL who pray for us and who give finances so that we six, here at ALM, can continue helping others. YOU ARE A HUGE BLESSING!!!

Have a MEANINGFUL celebration of Christ's birth!
John (for Sharon and the rest at ALM)



I too, saw an Angel

*This is an excerpt from a heart-warming story which first appeared in the Wheaton College BULLETIN of December 1959. It was later included in the volume of Christmas meditations entitled **Wiser Than They Thought**, published by Scripture Press Publications.*

Mrs. Edman and I were young missionaries in the Andean highlands of the lovely little republic of Ecuador in western South America. After our marriage in the capital city of Quito, we were given our first assignment to a city whose environs had thousands of Quichua-speaking Indians. We lived on the outskirts of that city where we could reach both the Spanish-speaking citizens on the streets and in the market-places, and also the shy, suspicious Indians who passed our doorway on the way to market.

Our assignment was a difficult one. The people were quite unfriendly, and some were fanatical in their bitter opposition to our presence in their city. On occasion small crowds would gather to hurl insults, punctuated by stones both large and small. Now and then school children would parade in the dusty street before our home and repeat what they had been taught to say against us. The Indians from the countryside were especially timid about having any friendly contact with us because of intimidation by some of the townspeople. As a result it was often difficult to get the bare necessities of life—fruits and vegetables, or charcoal for the kitchen stove.

Added to these physical factors was an inward sense of human loneliness. There was never fear, but one was aware that there were very few who in the remotest sense were the least friendly. Spiritual opposition rested heavily on our hearts in the desire to reach the Indians who indeed “sat in darkness and in the shadow of death.”

Let me describe the little home we rented. Perhaps a brief sketch of its environs will help. Across the front of the lot was the usual high iron fence with its large gate of grillwork. Then there was a small garden with flowers and a little fountain. Then came the house about a half story higher than the garden. Behind the narrow porch were the *sala* (our living room)



and two bedrooms. The kitchen and the little dining room were in the rear behind a little open-air patio.

Whenever we were not in the front part of the house, we kept the gate locked with an iron chain and a great padlock. There was constant danger that some bare-footed stranger would tiptoe into an unoccupied room and depart with more than that with which he had entered. The gate had to be locked securely at night, of course, and the same was true when we had our meals.

One noon as we were eating we heard a rattling on the gate as though someone were asking for admission. I excused myself from the table and went to the porch. Then I saw an Indian woman standing outside the gate. She had reached one hand inside through the bars and was knocking on the chain with the padlock. Quickly I went down to inquire what she might want. She was no one I had ever seen before, and the small bundle she carried on her shoulder did not indicate that she had any vegetables to offer for sale.

As I approached the inside of the gate, she began to speak softly, in the mixture of Spanish and Quichua that was typical of the Indians who lived fairly close to the town. Pointing to a Gospel verse we had put on the porch she inquired, “Are you the people who have come to tell us about the living God?”

Her questions startled me. No one had ever made that query before. Therefore with surprise I answered, “*Mamita* (little mother, the customary term for a woman of her years), yes we are.”

Then she raised the hand that was still inside the locked gate, and began to pray. I can still see that hand and arm with its beads, in typical Indian style. She wore the large heavy hat of the mountain woman. She had a small bundle and the typical blue shawl over her shoulders. She wore the white homespun waist with its primitive embroidery, and her dress was *balleta* (coarse woolen cloth) with a brightly colored homemade belt. Of course she was barefooted.

She prayed for the blessing of God upon the inhabitants of this home. She asked that we have courage for the service committed to us, that we have joy in doing God’s bidding, and prayed that many would hear and obey the words of the Gospel. Then she pronounced a blessing from God upon me.

The prayer concluded, she withdrew her hand. Then she smiled at me through the gate with a final, "*Dios le bendiga* (God bless you)." Her eyes fairly shone as she spoke those words, and then she bowed and turned to her left.

I was so astonished by all of this that for part of a minute I stood speechless and motionless. Quickly I remembered that it was the heat of the day, and that she should come in to eat with us. All the while I had held the key in my hand. In a matter of seconds I had unlocked the gate and stepped out to call her back. She could not have gone five or ten yards.

But she was not there! Where could she have gone so quickly? It was at least fifty yards from our gate to the corner of the street, and there was no gate along that stretch of wall, either on our side of the street or across the way.

I ran to the corner with the persuasion that if it had been possible for her to have reached that far then certainly she would be right there. Immediately I looked to the right but she was not there. As I ran to the corner I could look down our street for nearly half a mile, and there were no openings in the wall in that direction. On both sides were large corrals. The same was true of the street to my left.

Where could she be? The closest gate was to my right and that nearly a block away. There I ran (and my days on the track team in school stood me in good stead at the age of twenty-four). I rushed inside the open gate and there my two closest neighbors were repairing the spokes in a large wooden wheel. Hastily I inquired, "Did an Indian woman just come in here?"

Both men look up at once from their work and replied, "No sir."

"I mean just now," I insisted.

"No sir, we have been right here in the gate for an hour or more, and nobody has entered or left during that time." I thanked them, and hastened back to the corner. There was not a soul in sight. At the noon hour there would be few on the road since it was time for lunch and the siesta.

She must be somewhere; but where could she have gone? I waited there nearly ten minutes looking in all directions, but no one appeared on the street. Slowly I retraced my steps to my own gate, and after locking it again went back to the table.

"Where have you been so long?" inquired Friend Wife.

"There was an elderly Indian woman knocking on the gate. She prayed for us and invoked God's blessing upon us and then started on down the street. I unlocked the gate and stepped out to call her, but she was not along the wall as I had expected. So I ran to the corner and sought her, but in vain."

Strange!

We spoke no more about the matter. However, for days afterward my own heart remained strangely moved. It burned

within me as I recalled that Indian woman's prayer, and it was strengthened by the blessing she had pronounced upon me. There seemed to be an aroma indescribably sweet and indefinable which certainly did not come from the flowers in the garden. Even now, as I write down these words for you, there comes anew the witness of God's Spirit to the ministry of that stranger.

After some days, I began to reflect upon that word in Hebrews 13:2, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." I began to understand that the Almighty had none of His earthly servants at hand to encourage two young missionaries, so He was pleased to send an angel from heaven.



Not long after that heavenly visitation, I was stricken with typhus fever while visiting some Indians high in the mountains above the city. In the providence of God I was able to return home on horseback despite great pain and frequent periods of unconsciousness. From that same little home and gate I was carried by some Indians to the railroad station (because the Reverend George P. Simmons of the American Bible Society found us in our desperate need). The rest of that story – how I was raised up to health and strength after being diagnosed as dying (in fact a coffin was bought and Friend Wife dyed her wedding dress black for the funeral service) is well known to you, I am sure.

Through all that deep testing, and over the many years since then, there has remained the glow of God's blessing pronounced by someone who looked exactly like a little old Quichua Indian woman. It was just a little re-enactment of part of the Christmas story, because it was the ministry of an angel.

I am persuaded that such experiences are more common than we think. It is not our province to contact angels or to manufacture circumstances in which we think they should appear for our help; rather, the Almighty has His own way of helping His people. He uses His word to that end, and on occasion He sends some servant of His, just as He sent George Simmons to us.

There are times and circumstances, however, when God is pleased to send help directly from heaven, and that assistance

always takes us unawares. Perhaps not until long afterwards, perhaps never in this life, will we understand who was the stranger who helped us – and he looked just like a citizen of the place in which we were then situated.

So we go back to the Christmas story. In imagination we sit with the shepherds on those Judean hillsides below Bethlehem. With them we suddenly become aware of a stranger who has approached so silently that we heard no footsteps.

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. (Luke 2:8-12)

Everyone loves a good story...especially at Christmas! ***Christmas Tales that Warm the Heart Volumes 1 and 2*** (each with 12 stories)

AVAILABLE ON AMAZON
Volume 1: \$12.99 paperback or \$9.99 e-Book
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*Merry Christmas and
Happy New Year*
from all of us at Abundant Living

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