Angels Among Us

"Do not be afraid." - The Angels

The angels that appear in the story of Jesus’ birth would have been very comfortable in our world of tweets and hashtags. Their messages were often short and to the point—their favorite line being #DoNotBeAfraid. As we look at the stories of these winged messengers to Zechariah, Mary, Joseph and the Shepherds and their reactions to them, we will contemplate what messages we can offer that will counteract a culture of fear and bring #morehope, #morepeace, #morejoy, and #morelove to the world.

Make Ready a People: #morehope

12/3/17

An angel from the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw the angel, he was startled and overcome with fear. The angel said, “Don’t be afraid, Zechariah. Your prayers have been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will give birth to your son and you must name him John… He will make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

Luke 1: 5-25, 57-80

It was just another day at the temple for Zechariah. It was his priestly turn to make sure everything was done properly and in good order. But it turned into something quite different when an angel showed up at the altar. Have you ever had a moment in your life after which you knew nothing would ever be the same? In the midst of great change, hope is always a welcome thing. Advent can remind us that God makes us ready for whatever unknown may come our way and calls us to be messengers of #morehope in an ever-changing world.
Nothing is Impossible: #morepeace

12/10/17

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary… The angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God… For nothing will be impossible with God.” - Luke 1: 26-56

Zechariah freaked out when the other-worldly creature appeared to him. But Mary was simply “perplexed.” Why would such an incredible message come to a common girl just barely a woman? Then her reply to such a foretelling about her purpose in life was also simple: “Let it be so.” Have you ever struggled with finding your purpose and being at peace with it? Or are you yearning for more peace in your life and relationships? #morepeace in the world happens when all of us feel #morepeace within ourselves and live out that message each day.

Do Not Be Afraid: #morejoy

12/17/17

…an angel from the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, don’t be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because the child she carries was conceived by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you will call him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” Matthew 1: 18-25

Every angel seems to use “do not be afraid” as an opening line. But perhaps no one needed to hear it more than Joseph. What was happening to him was the stuff that ruins lives. As a man, he had all the rights to abandon Mary and preserve his dignity. The stakes were high—who would believe this? Keeping up “appearances” can rob us of our #morejoy. Let us be messengers of encouragement and steadfast support, as Joseph was, for that which the Spirit is birthing in the world.

This Will Be a Sign: #morelove

12/24/17

Nearby shepherds were living in the fields, guarding their sheep at night. The Lord’s angel stood before them, the Lord’s glory shone around them, and they were terrified. The angel said, “Don’t be afraid! Look! I bring good news to you—wonderful, joyous news for all people. Your savior is born today in David’s city. He is Christ the Lord. This is a sign for you: you will find a newborn baby wrapped snugly and lying in a manger.” Suddenly a great assembly of the heavenly forces was with the angel praising God. They said, “Glory to God in heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors.” Luke 2: 1-20

The sky was brighter than usual that night, making it easier to keep track of the sheep. And then it
got really bright. You would have thought that all that “glory” shining would have been “the sign.” That’s what most of us look for–great big obvious clues about God’s presence. But instead, the angel says that a baby… a newborn helpless baby in a feeding trough was it–the sign. In a flash, the message was that #morelove is found where you least expect it and perhaps is already there residing in theordinariness of your life.

Get up and Go: #morelife

12/31/17

When the magi had departed, an angel from the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Get up. Take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod will soon search for the child in order to kill him…” After King Herod died, an angel from the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt. “Get up,” the angel said, “and take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel. Those who were trying to kill the child are dead.” Matthew 2: 1-23

By now Joseph was used to angels. And now he needed their timely warnings more than ever. Jesus was barely a toddler and his trouble with the Roman Empire had begun. Jesus, the Savior of Humankind becomes a refugee–forced from home by oppression and violence. We ask ourselves how we might usher in #morelife in the face of that which feels destructive. One last time in this series we hear the message #DoNotBeAfraid to get up and go–leaving those things that weigh us down and moving into the new year with new life.