

**Friday 29 September 2023**

# St Michael and All Angels



The only angels named in the Bible are Michael, Gabriel and Raphael and are depicted in Scripture as the trusted, beloved messengers of God.

The name 'Michael' itself means 'who is like God?' and is described as protector of Israel and leader of the armies of God and is perhaps best known as the slayer of the dragon in the Revelation to John. He is thus regarded as the protector of Christians from the devil, especially those at the hour of death.

A basilica near Rome was dedicated in the fifth century in honour of Michael on 30 September, beginning with celebrations on the eve of that day, so 29 September is now kept in honour of Michael and all Angels throughout the western Church.

**Sermon** © Revd Dr Paul Monk.

**Liturgy and prayers of intercession** © 2000 The Archbishops' Council.

**Bible readings** © the publishers of the NRSV translation.

The liturgy assumes the service is Eucharistic. The prayers of consecration appear at the end.

All the hymns are hosted on YouTube. Please click on the links to hear them.

To see service transcripts from previous weeks, please visit the page,

<http://www.medlockhead.co.uk/resources/index.htm>

## Introduction and welcome

**HYMN 1 Angel voices ever singing** (please click on this link to hear the hymn)

### The Welcome

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit

**All Amen.**

The Lord be with you

**All And also with you.**

### The Preparation

**All Almighty God,  
to whom all hearts are open,  
all desires known,  
and from whom no secrets are hidden:  
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts  
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,  
that we may perfectly love you,  
and worthily magnify your holy name;  
through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.**

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

The first commandment is this:

‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,  
with all your soul, with all your mind,  
and with all your strength.’

And the second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’

There is no other commandment greater than these.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

**All Amen. Lord, have mercy.**

We have come to Mount Zion,  
the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,  
to myriads of angels, to God, the judge of all,  
and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant.

**All** Almighty God, our heavenly Father,  
we have sinned against you  
and against our neighbour  
in thought and word and deed,  
through negligence, through weakness,  
through our own deliberate fault.  
We are truly sorry  
and repent of all our sins.  
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,  
who died for us,  
forgive us all that is past  
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life  
to the glory of your name.  
**Amen.**

Almighty God,  
who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon you,  
pardon and deliver you from all your sins,  
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,  
and keep you in life eternal;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**All** Amen.

## **The Gloria**

This Gloria is sung to the tune of 'Cwm Rhondda'. Click [here](#) for the tune.

**All** Glory be to God in Heaven,  
Songs of joy and peace we bring,  
Thankful hearts and voices raising,  
To creation's Lord we sing.  
Lord we thank you, Lord we praise you,  
Glory be to God our King:  
Glory be to God our King.

Lamb of God, who on our shoulders,  
Bore the load of this world's sin;  
Only Son of God the Father,  
You have brought us peace within.  
Lord, have mercy, Christ have mercy,  
Now your glorious reign begin:  
Now your glorious reign begin.

**You O Son of God are Holy,  
You we praise with one accord.  
None in heav'n or earth is like you,  
Only you are Christ the Lord.  
With the Father and the Spirit,  
Ever worshipped and adored:  
Ever worshipped and adored.**

### **The Collect for St Michael and all Angels**

Everlasting God,  
you have ordained and constituted the ministries  
of angels and mortals in a wonderful order:  
grant that as your holy angels  
always serve you in heaven,  
so, at your command,  
they may help and defend us on earth;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

**All Amen.**

### **First reading**

A reading from the first book of Moses called Genesis

Jacob left Beer-sheba and went toward Haran. He came to a certain place and stayed there for the night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place. And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, the top of it reaching to heaven; and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And the Lord stood beside him and said, 'I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring; and your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and all the families of the earth shall be blessed in you and in your offspring. Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.'

Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said, 'Surely the Lord is in this place—and I did not know it!' And he was afraid, and said, 'How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; and this is the gate of heaven.' *Genesis 28:10–17*

This is the Word of the Lord

**All Thanks be to God.**

## Second reading

A reading from the Revelation of St John the Divine

War broke out in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon. The dragon and his angels fought back, but they were defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. The great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, proclaiming, 'Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Messiah, for the accuser of our comrades has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. But they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they did not cling to life even in the face of death. Rejoice then, you heavens and those who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, for the devil has come down to you with great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!' *Revelation 12:7–12*

This is the Word of the Lord

**All Thanks be to God.**

**HYMN 2 Majesty, worship His majesty**      ([click on this link to hear the hymn](#))

## Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John

**All Glory to you O Lord.**

When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, 'Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!' Nathanael asked him, 'Where did you get to know me?' Jesus answered, 'I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you.' Nathanael replied, 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!' Jesus

answered, 'Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these.' And he said to him, 'Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.'

*John 1:47-51*

This is the Gospel of the Lord

**All Praise to you O Christ.**

## Sermon

Look at the picture of angels on the front of this service transcript. It comes from a beautifully illuminated manuscript that currently resides in the [British Library](#). It was created at an unknown time between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries and illustrates a scene from Revelation 8:7.

The word 'angel' means 'messenger', so the Bible always describes angels acting as go-betweens, communicating messages and giving comfort from a remote, spiritual God to physical humankind. Perhaps that's why we usually want the angels to look human, for it helps 'tame' them and makes them less scary. It also explains why the angels in the painting look so human: they have human bodies with human faces, hands, feet, and human expressions and gestures. In effect, the artist took a straightforward vision of a human being and simply decorated it. We see the mindset in many forms of science fiction, with aliens who are in effect humans dressed in different cloths living in different alien cities.

Unfortunately, the same mindset explains why we often describe God in ways that make Him look more like us: we construct images of a God who looks very human.

Describing the indescribable is always a challenge, which perhaps explains why we so rarely try; success is rarer still. That lack of effort often doesn't matter: we do not need to know what the inhabitants of a made up fictional kingdom in space actually look like precisely because they are fictional. But, by contrast, describing God is vitally important because any errors could have eternal consequences.

One approach to describing God uses simple metaphors and similes. Maybe that explains why the scriptures overflow with choice examples: God is love (1 John 4:16); God is truth (John 4:24); God is Spirit (John 4:24); God is light (1 John 1:5); God is mercy (Deuteronomy 4:31); God is a consuming fire (Exodus 24:17 and Hebrews 12:29). Each helps but eventually none says enough because none is a direct description.

We must therefore employ different ways of describing a God who is utterly beyond description. Firstly, we could say that God is beyond anything that our

human-sized minds can conceive. We can say, for example, that,

- God knows everything: He is **omniscient**.
- God is all-powerful: He is **omnipotent**.
- God is everywhere: He is **omnipresent**.

Each example here contains the root 'omni-' which means 'all'. We need this mindset because it warns us not to conceive God as being ignorant, weak, or in any way bounded. Such images would be too human and would therefore not be real.

Sometimes it is easier to describe what God is not. Common examples include:

- We cannot see God by any physical means: He is **invisible**.
- God cannot change or be changed: He is **unpassable**.
- God's majesty and glory are beyond any imaginings: He is **infinite**.
- God exists outside of time: He is **eternal**.
- God was not born and will not die: He is **immortal**.
- God cannot be described: He is **ineffable**.

Each of these descriptions imply a common misrepresentation of God—He is visible, He is mortal, and so on. Each error is incorrect because it shares the same defect in portraying a God made in our own image. We end up worshipping a God who is human and, again, simply not real.

These two approaches seem abstract. One says that God is everything and the other says that God is not something. They all use words that veer between bland and everyday or shockingly new. In effect, these omni- descriptions and the negative classifications act together like the fencing that defines the perimeter round a vast field in which God resides. Those boundaries help exclude ineligible images of God and whatever remains will contain some truth ... however hard it may be to find.

God Himself tells us to avoid visualisations when, in the Ten Commandments, He says 'Do not create any images of me'. He does so because images can only represent a tiny fraction of His true glory and worth, and His real character and meaning. And they all inevitably look human. Therefore, as we grow as Christians, we must force ourselves to confront our images of God. Our maturing depends on letting them go, which itself means trusting Him more. In effect, growth into faith means growth away from earthbound ideas and concepts.

God is infinite and knows everything, so He is aware how this growth can seem impossible. That's one reason why He chooses to live within us in the form of His Holy Spirit. In proportion that the Spirit lives in us, we can move beyond concepts and images. Through the Holy Spirit, God Himself teaches us about God. Maybe that's why Jesus refers to the Spirit as 'the Helper' and the 'Spirit of truth' (John 14:16; 15:26).

## The Creed

Do you believe and trust in God the Father,  
the source of all being and life,  
the one for whom we exist?

**All We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Son,  
who took our human nature,  
died for us and rose again?

**All We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit,  
who gives life to the people of God  
and makes Christ known in the world?

**All We believe and trust in him.**

This is the faith of the Church.

**All This is our faith.**

**We believe and trust in one God,**

**Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.**

**Amen.**

## Prayers of intercession

In the power of the Spirit,  
and in union with Christ,  
let us pray to the Father.

Father in heaven,  
by his blood your Christ has ransomed us to you,  
and has made us a kingdom and priests to you our God.  
As the angels minister to you in heaven,  
strengthen your Church to serve you here on earth.  
Lord, hear us,

**All Lord, graciously hear us.**

Father in heaven,  
when the angels greeted the birth of your Son  
they sang for joy 'Glory to God and peace on earth'.  
Bless with Christ's peace the nations of the world.  
Lord, hear us,

**All Lord, graciously hear us.**



Father in heaven,  
your Son has promised to your children  
Protect by your mercy our neighbours, families and friends.  
Lord, hear us,

**All Lord, graciously hear us.**

Father in heaven,  
you give your angels charge over those who trust in you  
to guard them in all their ways.  
Be with those in trouble...,  
rescue them and show them your salvation.  
Lord, hear us,

**All Lord, graciously hear us.**

Father in heaven,  
your angel declares 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.'  
'Blessed indeed,' says the Spirit,  
'for they may rest from their labours,  
for they take with them the record of their deeds.'  
Enfold in your love [... and] all who come in faith  
to your judgement seat in heaven.  
Lord, hear us,

**All Lord, graciously hear us.**

Father in heaven,  
the angels sing by day and night around your throne:  
'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty.'  
With Michael, prince of the angels, who contends by our side,  
with Gabriel, your herald, who brings glad tidings,  
with Raphael, the protector, who ministers your healing,  
and with the whole company of heaven,  
we worship you, we give you glory,  
we sing your praise and exalt you for ever.

**All Amen.**

Merciful Father,

**All accept these prayers  
for the sake of your Son,  
our Saviour Jesus Christ.  
Amen.**

## The peace

Hear again the song of the angels: 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace.'

The peace of the Lord be always with you,

**All And also with you.**

**HYMN 3 All hail the power of Jesus' name** ([click on this link to hear the hymn](#))

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below

## The Dismissal

God keep you in the fellowship of his saints;  
Christ protect you by the ministry of His angels;  
the Spirit make you holy in God's service;  
and the blessing of God the Almighty:  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,  
be with you now and remain with you always.

**All Amen.**

**HYMN 4 I cannot tell**

([please click on this link to hear the hymn](#))

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

**All In the name of Christ. Amen.**

## The Liturgy of the Sacrament

### Eucharistic Prayer (prayer E)

The Lord be with you

**All and also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**All We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**All It is right to give thanks and praise.**

It is indeed right and good,  
our duty and our salvation,  
always and everywhere to give you thanks,  
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God,  
through your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.  
You reveal your wise purpose  
for the salvation of the human race  
by assigning to the angels and archangels  
the ministry of your steadfast love and protection.  
While they contemplate your glory,  
standing before you and singing your praise,  
they keep a faithful vigil for us,  
guarding us along the way that leads to life,  
and guiding us towards the kingdom of your light.  
In joyful gladness we unite our voices with theirs  
and sing the ageless hymn of your praise:

**All Holy, holy, holy Lord,  
God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
Hosanna in the highest.  
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Hosanna in the highest.**

We praise and bless you, loving Father,  
through Jesus Christ, our Lord;  
and as we obey his command,  
send your Holy Spirit,  
that broken bread and wine outpoured  
may be for us the body and blood of your dear Son.

On the night before he died he had supper with his friends  
and, taking bread, he praised you.

He broke the bread, gave it to them and said:  
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;  
do this in remembrance of me.

When supper was ended he took the cup of wine.  
Again he praised you, gave it to them and said:  
Drink this, all of you;  
this is my blood of the new covenant,  
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.  
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

So, Father, we remember all that Jesus did,  
in him we plead with confidence his sacrifice made once for all upon the cross.

Bringing before you the bread of life and cup of salvation,  
we proclaim his death and resurrection  
until he comes in glory.

Great is the mystery of faith:

**All Christ has died.**  
**Christ is risen.**  
**Christ will come again.**

Lord of all life,  
help us to work together for that day  
when your kingdom comes  
and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth.

Look with favour on your people,  
gather us in your loving arms  
and bring us with St Michael and all the saints  
to feast at your table in heaven.

Through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
all honour and glory are yours, O loving Father,  
for ever and ever.

**All Amen.**

## **The Lord's Prayer**

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

**All Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and for ever.  
Amen.**

## **Breaking of the Bread**

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

**All Though we are many, we are one body,  
because we all share in one bread.**

**All Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world,  
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world,  
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world,  
grant us peace.**

Draw near with faith.

Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ  
which he gave for you,  
and his blood which he shed for you.

Eat and drink in remembrance that he died for you,  
and feed on him in your hearts  
by faith with thanksgiving.

**All** We do not presume  
to come to this your table, merciful Lord,  
trusting in our own righteousness,  
but in your manifold and great mercies.  
We are not worthy  
so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table.  
But you are the same Lord  
whose nature is always to have mercy.  
Grant us therefore, gracious Lord,  
so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ  
and to drink his blood,  
that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body  
and our souls washed through his most precious blood,  
and that we may evermore dwell in him,  
and he in us.  
Amen.

Communion is distributed.

### **Prayer after Communion**

Lord of heaven,  
in this eucharist you have brought us near  
to an innumerable company of angels  
and to the spirits of the saints made perfect:  
as in this food of our earthly pilgrimage  
we have shared their fellowship,  
so may we come to share their joy in heaven;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**All** Amen

**All** Almighty God,  
we thank you for feeding us  
with the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.  
Through him we offer you our souls and bodies  
to be a living sacrifice.  
Send us out in the power of your Spirit  
to live and work  
to your praise and glory.  
Amen.