



Angels Out in the Field

*Forget not to show love to strangers...
Hebrews 13:2*

One winter almost two decades ago, I boarded a plane to the Bay Area to pay a family visit. But my heart was heavy; I was single and had no real prospects for marriage on the horizon. Rather, I felt as if the ticks of my biological clock pounded like nails on a coffin, slowly burying my hope. After shuffling down the aisle of the plane amidst the other passengers, I found my seat and noticed an attractive young woman with long wavy hair sitting beside me. Soon we exchanged pleasantries and struck up a conversation about where we were from, our destinations and the purpose of our trips. A wonderful listener, she connected with me instantly even though we were strangers.

It didn't take long before our conversation took a spiritual turn and not surprisingly, I discovered her to be my sister in Christ. Perceptive and sensitive, she understood my emotional plight and listened compassionately as I described the spiritual desert I faced concerning marriage prospects. But she herself had traversed the same desert without compromising God's will, yet without losing faith or hope. Because she understood firsthand my situation, her encouraging words were like an oasis; she went on to share with me her story about the honorable man God had brought for her to marry. So she encouraged me likewise not to compromise or lose heart for I, like she, would reap in due time (Galatians 6:9). And I still remember the words that sank into my ears, almost like a prophetic declaration, "You're not far." It was almost as if she somehow knew that my deliverance from God was at hand. So real was her exhortation that I took heart in spite of the fact that I had no chapter and verse in the Bible to promise me I'd ever get married.

Thus after a short one-hour flight I deplaned with a renewed spirit. But we both enjoyed our interaction and expressed the hope to meet again someday. Yet each of us realized we'd probably never see each other again on earth; therefore we actually formulated a plan to seek one another out someday in our ultimate destination, Heaven.

I don't experience these types of encounters regularly; in fact I've never had any like this before or since. Interestingly, shortly thereafter I met and married John, my godly, honorable husband of almost 18 years now. And though I've never been prone to visions or subjective spiritual experiences, I have occasionally mused about the possibility of this young woman having been an angel in human form. Now I'm sure she was just as much flesh and blood as me but still, Hebrews 13:2 says that others in the past unwittingly interacted with angels who looked just like people.

Concerning angels, Hebrews 1:14 states that they are servants to the heirs of salvation, a passage that to me supports the fact that we indeed have guardian angels. More specifically the Bible speaks of angels that openly visited men and women such as Abraham, Zechariah, and Mary (Genesis 18:1-3, Luke 1:11-19, 26-27). If manifested in spiritual form, their angelic nature was obvious but if human in appearance, it wasn't. Either way, the Greek word "angel" literally means, "messenger;" hence these ministering spirits bore messages from God to man.

But of course messages from God to man aren't delivered just through angels; we as redeemed souls indwelt by the Holy Spirit also communicate divine words to others. These might be tidings of encouragement, admonition, exhortation, wisdom, and of course words of prayer lifted up to the Throne of Grace on behalf of others.

I believe that the young woman on that plane years ago was divinely sent to deliver fitly spoken words to my beleaguered spirit; thus they became for me apples of gold in silver settings (Proverbs 25:11). Likewise, God orchestrates our circumstances to cross paths with others in order that we may in turn water and refresh the world around us. And even if these interactions are fleeting encounters with strangers, God nonetheless uses them to bring about something eternally meaningful. After all, there are no accidents in His Plan.

Moreover, just as that young woman never knew the final outcome of my story, we may never know the end result of our kindnesses that are in effect exchanges between ships passing in the night. But this certainly doesn't mean our gracious acts to strangers are insignificant. At this point in time the woman on that plane has probably forgotten all about our interaction and what her words meant to me. But I certainly never have; they are burnished as something precious in my memory.

Therefore, though each of us is quite sure that we're very much flesh and blood, may our kindnesses prompt strangers to reflect back upon our actions as something that came to them from above. A few might even wonder if *we* were angels in human form.