

Meadowbrook Congregational Church

August 9, 2009

“Angels”

Denise Parr – Guest Preacher

Psalm 34

Of David, when he feigned madness before Abimelech, so that he drove him out, and he went away.

¹*I will bless the LORD at all times;
his praise shall continually be in my mouth.*

²*My soul makes its boast in the LORD;
let the humble hear and be glad.*

³*O magnify the LORD with me,
and let us exalt his name together.*

⁴*I sought the LORD, and he answered me,
and delivered me from all my fears.*

You might be wondering what that story has to do with angels or the scripture lesson that Jim read for us this morning. Absolutely nothing. I've held on to this story for more than three years waiting for the opportunity to share it with all of you. I just couldn't wait any longer.

It was a dark and rainy night (sounds like the first sentence of a high school composition assignment). My family gathered for dinner on Friday, December 26, at my brother and sister-in-law's house in South Lyon to celebrate Christmas and exchange gifts. After getting family group pictures taken, we decided it was time to leave. Carl and I were both at work by 7 o'clock that morning. Yes, it was very dark, a bit foggy, the roads were wet, and it was misting; but, it wasn't icy. As many of you know, we did not make it home that night.

We learned that the smallest decisions often hold significant consequences. While traveling east along Ten Mile Road from South Lyon at 10:30, our lives were changed in an instant. That night on that two-lane road, a distracted teenaged driver's vehicle going the opposite direction went off the pavement onto the right shoulder. When the young driver tried to get the vehicle back onto the pavement there was an over correction and the Ford Explorer hit our Chrysler mini van head on, then swung around and hit us again on the driver's side of the van and pushed us part way off the road and part way down the culvert. The Explorer ended up on its side and Ten Mile was closed in both directions for six hours.

After the airbags deflated, and the safety glass from the driver's side window quit raining down over me, I asked my mom and my husband Carl, the other passengers in the van, how they were and then I prayed. Needless to say, we were all in shock. Even though we were hurt, there seemed to be calmness in the van. I think the words from Isaiah 41:10 say it best: "do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, and I will uphold you with my victorious right hand." God answered my prayers that night; God sent angels.

The first angels I met that night were the witnesses who called 9-1-1 and then came over to see if there were any injuries. Yes, we were all injured. We all were having trouble breathing because of the seatbelts, which we found out later had broken our ribs and collapsed our lungs. Maybe angels were traveling with us on that dark road that night before the accident, because we all had our seatbelts on, even Carl who was in the middle seat of the van.

One man asked if he could call anyone for us and he called my brother's house. Police and responders arrived from South Lyon, Novi and Wixom. Then I heard a familiar voice speaking with one of the responders. My son Andrew was offering his assistance as he is certified in First Aid. He and his wife left the party a few minutes after us. I'm still not sure if he knew it was us when he first approached the scene, but it was at that moment that I knew that God or God's angels were indeed with us, as the Explorer could have just as easily hit Andrew and his pregnant wife Jada instead of us.

Soon my brother Doug (in his house slippers), our other son Ben, and our nephew Jim arrived on the scene to offer their support, prayers and to help in any way they could. The cell phone companies had a lot of business from our family that night and in the days to come. Time seemed to move slowly, yet there was activity all around. More equipment arrived. I looked ahead and saw a line of vehicles – cars, police cars, fire equipment and ambulances all with their lights on and flashers going.

We could not be immediately extricated from the van because the doors on the left were damaged by the impacts. Even the lift gate was damaged and could not be opened. The doors on the right were inaccessible because of the brush in the ditch and the tilt of the van. It was explained to us that the person with the worst injuries would be the first to be removed.

There was quite a discussion about how to get the doors open. The Jaws of Life were sent for and used to cut through the side door of the van. Doug helped a responder pop the driver's door. The EMTs were discussing what hospital would be the best to send us to. The hospital had to be a good trauma unit. The choices were St. John's in Ypsilanti, Huron Valley in Commerce, or Beaumont in Royal Oak. I believe God and his angels took care of us that night again when it was decided that we would be taken to Beaumont. Two hours after the accident, Carl was finally put in an ambulance. Mom and I followed shortly thereafter.

The male family members went to Beaumont and sat and prayed and did what they could to help when we were in the ER that night or early morning. Proverbs 17:17 says, "A friend loves at all times, and kinsfolk are born to share adversity." And share adversity they did. Doug and our sons had to make decisions regarding our immediate care and treatment. Mom had a dislocated hip, fractured pelvis, broken knee cap and two broken ribs. I had a dislocated hip, fractured pelvis, a compound fracture of my lower right leg, a crushed heel, two broken ribs,

and a broken left wrist. Carl had a broken collar bone, a broken breast bone, 13 broken ribs and two collapsed lungs.

Again, the angels were with us. The doctors, nurses and hospital staff did a wonderful job treating and caring for us given our conditions. Family members, Rev. Ritter, church members, and friends visited us in the hospital, sent flowers, called and sent hundreds of cards. Prayers were being said for us from coast to coast, from north to south, and even from Canada and Africa. I believe those prayers guided the medical staff and gave us the strength to recover.

During that first week, I remember feeling my hospital bed move, like someone was giving it a little nudge. But no one was around. I knew it was God saying, "I'm here, just lay still and let your body heal." It gave me peace to believe that. My family would probably tell you it was just a muscle spasm or the drugs.

When I was in Rehab, three co-workers visited me. One brought me a book on CD titled *90 Minutes in Heaven* by Rev. Don Piper. It is the story of his head-on accident which happened on January 18, 1989. However, his accident was different from ours because the responders declared him dead at the scene. In the book Don tells of his time (90 minutes) in heaven, all that he saw and heard there, and his recovery.

He tells of the power of prayer and how one minister's prayers at the scene brought him back to earth. He tells of another friend's prayers which brought him through the painful process of his recovery. Don believes that the reason he is alive today is because of those prayers, because of the many people or angels who prayed for and cared for him and his family during his recovery.

Three and a half weeks after our accident, mom was discharged to continue her recovery at Doug and Linda's home. A few days later I was discharged. Ben and his future bride Elizabeth moved in to care for me and for Carl when he was discharged seven and a half weeks after the accident.

Our church family and God's angels continued to show their love for us and our families by continuing to pray, by bringing meals three times a week and sitting with us when our care givers had other things they needed to take care of. Those collective prayers and expressions of love and caring, have helped bring us this far in our recovery.

While we were in the hospital, we were asked what our goal was or goals were for the day. It could be something as small as eating one-quarter of a meal or standing for one minute. They didn't want the goal to be too big so we wouldn't be discouraged if we were not able to achieve it. I said all along, my goals were to dance at my son's wedding and hold my granddaughter. On June 19, by the grace of God, all three of us did just that.

As Jim read for us this morning, "I sought the Lord, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears." We are all still in treatment, but with your prayers and with the guidance of more of God's angels, we have come a long, long way since that dark, foggy night in December.

Now, there are three things I make sure I do every single day. I praise God; I thank God for his guidance; and I thank God for all the angels who have made a difference in my life.