

*And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says,  
 “Let all God’s angels worship him.”*

<sup>7</sup> *In speaking of the angels he says,  
 “He makes his angels winds,  
 his servants flames of fire.”*

<sup>8</sup> *But about the Son he says,  
 “Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever,  
 and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom.*

<sup>9</sup> *You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness;  
 therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions  
 by anointing you with the oil of joy.”(Hebrews 1:6-9)*

### **The King was Born that Day**

I have this picture in my mind from an old black and white movie that I watched as a child. I’m not even sure what movie it was, although it may have been *The Prince and the Pauper*. In the scene that sticks in my mind, bells are ringing and town criers are announcing the birth of the prince. The future king had been born and it was announced throughout the kingdom with great joy and excitement. To this day, in countries that have kings, the birth of the heir is big news. TV cameras and reporters follow the pregnancy. When the child comes, it’s breaking news. Today, we have come to celebrate the birthday of the reigning King of the universe. But on the day he was born, there were no bells or town criers. There were no reporters covering the story. In fact, no one would’ve paid any attention at all, if God hadn’t sent angels to put the word out. But in spite of the general lack of interest that the inhabitants of Bethlehem displayed that day, we are celebrating because **the King was born on that day.**

#### **I.**

The opening verses of the book of Hebrews are all about the King that was born that day. The chief point the writer is making is who that King was. He wants us to recognize that he is greater than anyone else in the universe, greater than any created being. He is God. The writer makes that point in part by telling us that **the King of the angels was born that day.**

Our text says, **“And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, “Let all God’s angels worship him.”** This statement takes us right to Bethlehem. You all know the scene. It’s been depicted on thousands of Christmas cards. You’ve probably got a manger scene at home with figures of shepherds and an angel that you attach to the roof of the stable. Even Linus recited the account from Luke 2 in *A Charlie Brown Christmas*. After the baby was born, an angel appeared to the shepherds outside of Bethlehem and told them that the Savior had been born. And then suddenly, a great company of the heavenly hosts appeared, praising God and saying, **“Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.”** When God sent his firstborn into the world, he commanded his angels to sing his praise.

That shows us who this baby was. He was God’s firstborn. In most cases, the firstborn son of a king is the heir. And that’s the idea behind calling Jesus God’s firstborn. He is the true Son of God. He was begotten from all eternity. But as the firstborn son, he is the heir. He is the one who is born to rule over all creation in God’s name. The angels are commanded to praise him because he is their Lord.

In the very next verse, the writer quotes from Psalm 104 and says, **“He makes his angels winds, his servants flames of fire.”** What are angels? Angels are creations of God. They’re spirits – which would be just as a good a translation as “winds” here. Sometimes, the Bible associates them with fire. What exactly that has to do with their nature is unclear. But angels do not have physical bodies like we do. What’s more important is that angels are servants of God. The word angel actually means “messenger.” God contrasts these servants, these messengers, these spiritual beings with Jesus. Jesus has a physical body – it was born on the first Christmas. And Jesus is much more than a servant or a messenger. God the Father does speak through him, but he is no servant. He is the very Son of God.

Why does that matter? We're not surprised that the angels worship Jesus or that they rank below him. We expect that to be the case. But some people have misunderstood this point and thought of Jesus as a kind of greater angel. More importantly, this image of the angels worshipping him picks up an Old Testament thought. Many times in the Old Testament calls God "the Lord of hosts." Do you know what a host is? It's an army. What armies does God "lord" over? The angel armies of heaven. God is pictured as the ruler of the angels. When his Son enters this world and to every human eye appears to be no more than another poor, Jewish baby, God gives him the honor that he reserves for himself. All his angels worship him because this child is the Lord of hosts. He is God almighty come in human flesh.

And the last quote we have before us this morning makes that clear. The writer to the Hebrews says that this quote from Psalm 45 is "about the Son." And "about the Son" God says, "**Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom.**" Who is the Son? Psalm 45 calls him God and says that his throne will last forever. That's an amazing thing, a thing that the writer wanted Jewish Christians to think about. It's a thing that God wants Christians of every age to think about. The Almighty God, the Lord of hosts, the Creator and King of the universe was born in a stall and laid in a manger on Christmas. Almost no one cared. Unlike the queens and princesses of this world, people did not follow his mother's comings and goings waiting to hear of the birth of the new King. And when he was born, no bells rang and no town criers went out. The whole world would've ignored that birth if they could have. But that baby, that tiny, helpless infant who was probably curled into a ball the way that newborns always are, that little child was the God the Son, the King and Heir of the universe.

No one knew about it except shepherds who living out in the fields keeping watch over their flocks by night. Nobodies. Common laborers. That's who got the good news that a King was born in the City of David. They did their job: they went and saw the child and then they spread the good news that the angels had told them and shared what they had seen. But you know what? No one paid any attention. Again, it total contrast to the attention that the sons of earthly kings receive, it seems like almost everybody dismissed what the shepherds told them. The message was lost for thirty years until it was time for this baby to begin the work God had sent him to do.

## II.

But he never stopped being the King. His throne will last forever. And righteousness will be his scepter. And that sets Jesus apart from all other kings and rulers. Can you think of one politician who's never told a lie for his own good? Was there ever a king who was totally righteous? A different kind of King was born that day, one unlike any king who has ever ruled in this world. **The King of Righteousness was born that day.**

The New Testament is full of songs of praise to this baby who was King. In the book of Revelation, we find those songs again and again. Many times, those songs sing of Jesus' righteousness. But what does that mean? It's so rare for us to meet a person who's even righteous from a human perspective, it might be hard for us to grasp what it means from God's perspective. Think of the song, "Away in a manger." There's that line, "The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes./But little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes." Is that what it means that Jesus was righteous? No. Babies cry when they wake up and when they're hungry because that's the only way they can communicate. It's not sinful. You can be sure the Jesus did, too.

But this line is headed in the right direction. Babies are sinful by nature. All people are. We inherit our sin from our parents and then we act on the sinfulness inside us and we radiate sinful words and actions, sinful thoughts and feelings. The essence of sin is selfishness. Babies could be the poster children for selfishness. I've raised three of them and I remember those days. Babies don't care how tired you are. When they want to be fed, they want it now. Babies scream when they don't get their way. They don't have to be taught to hit when they're angry. Temper comes naturally to them. They know how to twist and writhe and kick all by themselves. What we have to teach them is to share and be patient to put other people first. And guess what? Not one of us learns that lesson perfectly. We're all selfish sinners. It started at the moment we were conceived.

But Jesus was different. Hebrews quotes Psalm 45 and says, "**You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy.**" Jesus' physical Father was the Holy Spirit, so he had no sin in his heart. So he was never selfish. He loved righteousness. Starting already in the manger, he was perfect in being righteous. He hated all

wickedness. So that means that he avoided it himself. And it also means that he did not tolerate it for one minute. Jesus never let his disciples get away with sin. He never winked at it or treated it like it was cute. Jesus made enemies because he hated wickedness and wicked people hated him for that.

Jesus lived that way for us. We can't be perfect. So God sent his Son into this world to be perfect in our place. God sent Jesus to live a life of poverty and to be content in that poverty. Not once did Jesus complain because he didn't have a house or a bed. Not once did he complain when he had to go hungry. No once did he whine about other people having it better than he did. He trusted his Father perfectly. So he put all his needs in second place and he lived for God and for the people around him. Can we ever live like that? No. We're sinners and we're selfish every day of our lives. But Jesus loved righteousness and hated wickedness and selfishness in our place. God gives us credit for the life that baby grew up to live. God counts us as perfect because Jesus was.

And Jesus took hating wickedness to the ultimate end: he died for it. He loved righteousness so much that he took the penalty for our selfish words and deeds and thoughts and feelings on himself. On the cross, Jesus stood in for us selfish sinners. He made sure that all the hell and all the death that every human being deserves got suffered. He suffered it all. Then he rose and freed us from our own wickedness. God has ruled that we are righteous. Jesus works in our hearts every day through that gospel to make us lead more righteous lives. One day, we will live with him and be truly perfect.

God gave us all that when he gave us that baby. But what did God do for him? After doing all that, don't you think that Jesus deserves something? God thought so, too. So God exalted him – he gave him glory. He raised him from the dead. When the Lord ascended into heaven, God gave him a seat at his right hand, the position of power and glory and from there, Jesus rules all things. God set him above all his companions on this earth and in heaven. He gave him the throne of the King. Today in heaven, the angels never stop praising him. When he returns, all people, even his enemies, will worship him as the angels did that night in Bethlehem. Until that day comes, we echo their songs of praise here on earth.

Today is Christmas Day. The best way that we can use this day is to celebrate the birth of the King. He came here, to our world, to win eternal life for us. He hated wickedness and he loved righteousness. He made us his forever. Let us sing his praise. Amen.