



"Agony in the Garden by William Blake (1757-1827)

God's Protection

Luke 21: 41-43

"He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."

An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him."

Dear Opal,

Over the past week, headlines featuring a recommendation regarding the length of time elderly people should be allowed to occupy a hospital bed during the COVID-19 crisis has caused this writer to pause and contemplate the issue of how society views the aging process in today's world.

While it is a given that older adults require longer recovery time from health issues, and are also very fragile during this season of life, the attitude of "experts" as to the solution pertaining to the dilemma of making more hospital beds available was truly alarming; being that of sending the old folks back to their healthcare facility while still contagious.

Furthermore, when the lone voice of a physician crying in the wilderness with the words, "For every one you send back still in a contagious condition, we will receive 20 more as new admissions", was treated by the press as a novel concept, light was shed on how drastically different the definition for civility is in today's world. The fact that it was breaking news for a physician to advocate for the elderly was not the exception but the rule when I grew up.

Certainly, it made this old girl feel a deep level of rage from within every fiber of her being. Who took issue? Who stood up with righteous indignation? Just one voice! Was an investigation launched as to why it was acceptable for those in power to think this could even be considered as a viable solution? No! The story was dropped.

First, the mere fact that this would even be introduced as a possible remedy at all speaks volumes. By taking a stand such as this means, they either think people lack intelligence, or are without heart due to focusing on numbers only. After all, if they are lucky, they will one day be older and should realize the importance of promoting respect and value for those that have forged the streams and climbed the mountains ahead of them.

Opal, having been taught from childhood to respect my elders, and now serving as a volunteer at a nursing home, this writer first stomped around fuming in anger at them, followed by an unfortunate bout of sadness.

Then, realizing neither one of those actions would bring about any type of useful resolution, the next move was to write a letter to God in my journal openly

expressing feelings about this dire situation and requesting relief from the deep sorrow that had engulfed my being.

Consequently, in a way that only God can react, the very next morning, he spoke to me through Scripture from Psalm 91:9-13, **“If you make the Most High your dwelling---even the Lord, who is my refuge---then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread upon the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent.”**

Wow, my friend and double WOW! Did you pause for a moment on the words, **“command his angels”**? This Scripture pertains to not only all older people that are alive now, but also for those that have gone before as well as all future generations. Are you comprehending the importance of the elderly to our loving Creator?

After reading this Scripture out loud several times this morning, this old gal understood it in a way that caused her melancholy to disappear like wispy clouds softly floating in the sky above! Even though the loved ones from her childhood have already been plucked from this earth leaving only memories to lean on, along with classmates now departing at a more rapid rate, plus the possibility of being left as the only one in her circle to face life without intimate acquaintances of her generation, there is hope. The angels God has COMMANDED to watch over both you and me have never left our side. Oh, joy!

Just think, Opal, as a Believer, every moment you have lived on this earth, God has commanded his angels concerning you; a loving miracle from your Father that applies now as a resident at Glendale Gardens. Even though you are the last one of your generation standing and are living with limited vision, angels watch over your countenance both day and night.

Unfortunately, some may read this and skeptically shout, **“Yeah! Yeah! Do you really believe that stuff? How do you know this is true?”**

In reply to this, I rare back by shoulders in pride and state, **“Yes! I believe this with all my heart! Since at age 12, Christ became my Savior, the Most High God became my dwelling place and refuge for all eternity.**

Given the many mistakes I have made on my journey, I can't even imagine the times the angels around me have covered their eyes with their hands in total disbelief at my foolishness. However, during the process, I do hope they have enjoyed moments of pride and laughter, too.

Having just celebrated Easter and its meaning for all Christians, think how many times angels watched over our suffering Lord, not only in the Garden as the Scripture above indicated, but on the cross and at the time of the Resurrection. Out of these, the one I love to center on is when the stone was rolled away and the process that took place inside the tomb. All Scripture indicates is that the stone was rolled away by angels and they then sat on either side of the opening waiting. (Confession Time: sitting by idly would have been torture for yours truly.) Obviously, what occurred from within the darken burial site was truly only God's business, a mystery that immensely puzzles man. However, he did let us know it was done with purpose by leaving the wrappings removed from our Lord's body, neatly folded, and placed appropriately behind for all to see. Regardless, the angels were indeed present and followed God's commands.

Additionally, some individuals might believe miracles like this happened to only Jesus, not to mere human beings. In reply to that, please hear what happened to my friend Mary, a wonderful resident that lived just down the hallway from you prior to her departure for the celestial shores as our closing prayer.

Mary's Story

Upon meeting Mary, a resident at Glendale Gardens Nursing Home, her personality stood out as having the same traits as that of Andrew; the first disciple Jesus invited to follow him. Just like Andrew, who was repeatedly described in Scripture as quietly working in the background, Mary had no desire to be in the limelight either.

Thus, if one was not observant of her behavior, it would have been easy to overlook all the enormous compassion she demonstrated to others. Even the resident tablemates were oblivious to her quiet gentle eyes contemplating their every action; noting the slump in their physical presence or an appearance of longing in their expressions.

In addition to the dedicated watchfulness she carried on toward the members of her community, it did not take her long to also size up the individuals in whom she placed her trust. Although she was an avid reader, she seemed to sense my approach and would softly whisper over her book, for my ears only, indicating ways in which the residents around her needed assistance. No one ever knew; just Mary and me!

Therefore, having been a longtime volunteer, Mary and I became friends and coconspirators in ministering to the needs of others. Interestingly, it was never possible for me to decipher the exact moment when I earned her trust...it simply evolved.

As an example, it was at a Christmas dinner when residents were encouraged to invite family members, that her compassion appeared in full bloom. She noticed her roommate missing and found her sitting slumped over and alone in her wheelchair beside her bed waiting.... waiting.... waiting for family members that never intended to honor their reservations.

Thus, unbeknownst to another soul, she set her own wheelchair into motion with the destination being that of the serving tables where she knew I would be working. Wearing expressions of both worry and disgust, Mary was definitely on a mission to help her roommate. Without hesitation, I removed myself from the serving line and listened to her concern; a judgement from her that was accurate beyond measure.

As a result, it was discovered that her roommate's guests never had any intention of attending the dinner but had not bothered to inform their host. Although it was not important to them, it was of great significance to Mary; even though she had no one in attendance on her behalf.

After notifying the staff members of the situation, a new table was quickly set, followed by an invitation that went directly to both Mary and her roommate to join them in the festive celebration. Caring hearts had turned a time of brokenness into joyous laughter and fellowship; all brought on by one individual's compassionate nature.

Overtime, Mary just kept sharing her love with others; even though earning the reputation of being a bit standoffish; a label that was totally misplaced. Had they

only noticed, they would have seen her sitting in her wheelchair outside departing residents' rooms in a time of contemplation and prayer.

Therefore, upon arriving one day, I was greeted at the front entrance by resident and tablemate Murlene who had skipped lunch with the goal of informing me of Mary's declining health. With tears in her eyes, she told me that after sitting at her friend's bedside all morning, she was certain that Mary's time here on earth was short.

Without hesitation, I quickly departed to Mary's room and upon arrival asked, "Do you know who I am?" In a sweet, faint voice, I heard, ("Y shore"); meaning "sure."

Quickly realizing Mary could see me best if I stood at the foot of the left side of her bed, we proceeded to carry on a conversation. However, unlike her usual attentive style, she kept glancing out the window at the shrubs and appeared to be amused by something. Finally, not wanting to have me think she was being rude, she asked, "Can't you see them? Oh, can't you see them? They are having so much fun!"

Reacting to her remarks, I asked, "Are you watching the birds having fun in the bushes?" She replied, "No! Oh, no! There are about 15 angels fluttering around above the bushes. They have been there for two days. Can't you see them? Please tell me you can see them!"

In reply, I said, "No. Mary I cannot see them, but please understand that I believe you are telling me the truth. They are for your eyes only."

Noting her relaxed and peaceful state, I asked, "Would you mind describing them to me? I would love to know more about them. How tall are they? Do they have facial features? Do they have wings? Are they happy?"

Mary then answered, "They are about a foot tall, have facial features just like ours and all look different from one another. They have wings and fly, frolic, and are chasing each other all around. They are having so much fun. I can't keep my eyes off of them."

At the end of the time together, I was unclear if she would be there the following week for my usual Thursday time of volunteer work. It was obvious in my mind that the angels had arrived to carry her home.

However, the following Thursday, Murlene was waiting at the front entrance with the message that Mary was still present, but really in a fragile state.

After entering her room and repeating the usual greeting, she came to life and appeared to be incredibly happy to see me. However, this time, she asked, "Can you tell me how heaven will appear?" I told her that since no person had ever been there and returned to offer a description, I would have to rely on the Scripture from 1 Corinthians 2: 9 that stated "However, as it is written: "What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived" - - the things God has prepared for those who love him—"

Thus, standing in the usual position at the foot of her bed, I noticed an enormous change had taken place. Instead of looking out the window in amusement as she had earlier, she demonstrated the same behavior but never allowed her eyes to leave the room. Appearing totally intrigued and wearing a smile that lingered on her lips, her eyes followed a trail that moved over my left shoulder and above my head. However, quickly realizing I was not reacting, she once again asked, "Can't you see them? They are no longer outside my window but have moved to the foot of my bed. They are having so much fun flying all around you. Can't you feel them?"

Opal, at that moment in time, I realized fully that I was standing on holy ground. Here I was a mere human being allowed by God to stand in this place of honor. Trying to keep my composure, but feeling totally overwhelmed, I answered her as I had the week before.

However, this time, I felt led to ask, "Mary, is there anything you would like to ask about your departure from earth? Have you made peace with the Lord? Have you received him as your Savior?" She replied, "I am ready. Will you say a prayer for my departure?"

Not only did I offer a prayer, but thanked God for allowing me to get to meet Mary. I also looked deeply into her eyes and told her what a joy it had been to be her friend.

Then, after leaving her room with tears streaming down my cheeks, I found it necessary to just stand outside her door and regain my composure. Opal, it was during this time of solitude that I realized God had turned an ordinary nursing home room into an extraordinary thing of beauty. And...that is how much he loves his children.

That evening, I was informed that Mary had passed away. I BELIEVE WITH ALL MY HEART THAT MARY WENT TO HER ETERNAL HOME ON THE WINGS OF GLORY! The unseen real defined as faith, had become a reality. "And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit." (2 Corinthians 3:18) Amen!

My dear friend, may God richly bless you now and forever with the knowledge that he commands his angels to watch over you. It is not about worshiping angels, but revering God who has redeemed you and calls you by name. You are his and he will guard you in all your ways.



Angel of the Revelation by [William Blake](#), between circa 1803 and circa 1805



*Love,
Colene*