Text: Hebrews 1:1-12

**Introduction**

Christmas Morning service is always a bit surreal for me. Usually because this is the actual feast day, the day that everyone has been preparing for, aaaaand it is usually relatively sparsely populated. When I looked at a couple of the hymns I almost swapped them. But this year It’s the 3rd service without 24 hours. 2017 was that last Christmas Monday, before that 2006 – which was before I was preaching consistently. So you forget this particular cycle and its stresses.

In honor of the strangeness, I thought I’d use the epistle lesson from Hebrews for the sermon text.

**Text**

I don’t know how much you know about the letter to the Hebrews. The biggest thing about it is probably that we don’t know who wrote it. Every other book of the NT is attributed to some apostle, and there is no real reason to discount any of the attributions. But Hebrews is the exception that proves the rule. Lots of people have asserted Paul wrote it. It’s position in order is something of a nod toward that. It comes at the end of the letters that bear Paul’s name and before the letters that bear other names. Although the ordering of Paul’s letters is by length, so if the early church were extremely confident is saying Paul, they would have put it much sooner between Galatians and Ephesians probably. Luther suggested Apollos as the writer. Making such guesses has been a parlor game for a long time. But the answer is simply, we don’t know.

The second weird thing about the letter is it’s introductory argument or purpose. The summation of the argument is that Jesus the Son is greater than the angels. And yes, to you and me that is stupendously obvious. So, why must that argument have been included in the New Testament? And why is it especially part of the a letter to the Hebrews?

The answer is simply that a great fascination with angels had overtake much of Judaism in the preceding couple of centuries. In the apocryphal literature – which was in Luther’s bible but has disappeared from ours – more of them are named. In the canonical books only Michael and Gabriel. There are 5 other angels named in the apocrypha. And then there are all kinds of biblical fan fiction from the time frame. Things like the book of Enoch which is all about angels and watchers and demons and names 7 total including the 2 biblical ones. An apparently the popular Jewish imagination called up the angels as the popular Roman Catholic imagination calls upon the saints.

Now we moderns go through spiritual fads a lot quicker, but I remember living through at least one bout of angel fever. Everything from ranks of angels to numbers of them to personal guardian angels was talked about in great detail. And “how many angels can dance on the head of pin” just might be the middle-ages version of this. Who knows, given the current interest in UFOs, maybe the next round of angels and demons is upon us. Why do they keep coming up? My guess is: 1) they exist and lots of people have direct experiences of some types, 2) they are powerful, but most importantly 3) they are not God himself and hence safer to talk about.

**Christology**

But the entire argument early in Hebrews is basically “stop it”. First of all, if you are talking about anything spiritual your source should be the prophets. “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets.” The prophets had the word. These are how God spoke to us. They are the proper for understanding. But even more than the prophets, “in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son.” Stop making up names and ranks and esoteric theology of angels when you have better things – prophets and now The Son.

And then we have probably the singular reason the Hebrews is in the New Testament. Who is the Son?

He is the heir of all things. Everything belongs to the son because it has been given to him by the Father. Call him the omega. He is the creator of the world. “Through whom also he created the world.” Call him the Alpha. John’s gospel opens with the same thing. And this is the reason that a Christian reads the OT with Christ in mind. Israel’s interaction with God in the Old Testament was always with Christ. Paul’s oddball saying that the rock that followed Israel in the desert, the one Moses drew water from by striking, was Christ. It was Christ at the top of Sinai giving the law. It was Christ who ate with the elders.

And then the author attempts to explain the relationship between the Son whom we see and the Father. “He is the radiance of the Glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature.” God from God, light from light, very God of very God.

How does this true God – alpha and omega – interact with us? “He upholds the universe by the Word of his power.” The Word the spoke all things into being is still that which sustains all things. All things rest upon the Word of God.

Anything else? Oh, yeah. “After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.” So basically the entire 2nd article of the creed.

**Moral/Eschatological**

So you foolish people playing around with the names of angels. This Son has revealed himself to you and invites you into his own life. Ask the son. Think about these things. If you are pondering things ineffable, ponder the mystery of the incarnation. How did this one whom God calls his son, become a baby sharing our flesh? The one begotten of the Father has assumed into himself humanity. God didn’t do that to angels. What angel’s form did he take on?

And it was to this child that the angels sang. What angel or man or anything in all creation did God direct worship toward, other than Mary’s son?

And what human or angel has ever sat on the eternal throne? All creation is like a robe that will be rolled up, like a garment they will be changed. But the Son is the same forever.

And the Son today has come to us. Today the son has made the will of the Father known.

That we should know God aright. That we should not perish but have everlasting life. That even when we found no room in the inn, God has made for us many mansions.

Today, we should put aside our fear of God almighty. Because just like us, he was once a helpless infant. He understands our helplessness. Ours which extends into adulthood with sin. He made purification for sin. And has given us the right to become Children of God.

Stop with the theological fads. You have been given the Son of God. Which is the most excellent name upon which to call, and ponder and rejoice. The best things we can do about the angels is join in their praise. Amen.