

Sermon followed by Service

August 20, 2023

2 Kings 6:8-17

What's your favorite angel story? I think of Colorado, driving out in the sand-hills, the oil-field, pasture-lands, of eastern Colorado. I was driving on a paved highway that became a paved road that became a gravel road (wide) that became a gravel road (narrow) with hills going up and down so you couldn't see what was coming. Heading up one of those hills, I got the nudge, "You better move over." And somehow there was enough room on the top of the hill for me a speeding oil-tanker semi. I'd like to claim credit for moving over, but I'm not that good a guesser. And I'm not that good a driver. A bit further down the road I'm full speed off the road, into the ditch, and then back on the road again without flipping over or getting stuck. My Mercury Zephyr was no Land-cruiser, and I'm no Mario Andretti. So I'm convinced it was God and his angels who got me home safely.

I imagine most all of us have our favorite angel stories. Have you ever wondered what the angels think of as their favorite angel stories? One has to be Christmas Eve with the angel appearing to the shepherds: "**I bring you Good News of great joy: today in the town of David a Savior is born.**" And before that, the angel Gabriel appearing to the young virgin Mary: "**Greetings you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.** You will be the mother of God's forever King." ... With this topper: "**With God nothing is impossible.**"

Or in the wilderness, after Jesus was baptized for battle, when Jesus faced off against Satan and put Satan in his place, we're told angels came and tended to Jesus. Or in the Garden of Gethsemane, when the weight of the world's guilt was coming down on Jesus, when the thought of his Father cursing him was crushing down on him, when Peter, James and John couldn't stay awake to be there for him, an angel came and tended to Jesus, helping him get ready for the cross. Makes me wonder how hard it was for the angels to leave Jesus alone on the cross as the Father judged Jesus for your sin and my sin.

But then on Easter, who is on the scene again? The angels telling the Good News of Easter: "He is not here; he is risen!" And now today, what is the angels' favorite thing to talk about? God's plan, his power, his promise - saving us from Satan. God's plan, his power, his promise in Jesus - saving sinners from their sin; forgiving us, God forgiving you and me. And this - God's plan, his power, his promise - that we - you and me - we get to join the angels in heaven with Jesus. I think I talked myself into a new favorite angel story - the angels praising God that we get to join them in heaven! You may have a different favorite angel story. Today, we see one of my favorite angel sightings in all the Bible.

We don't know when this happened, whether before or after Naaman. If it were after Elisha healed Naaman, we'd like to think that Aram and Israel would be getting along happily ever after in this lesson. If it were before Elisha healed Naaman, we'd like to think that Aram and Israel would be getting along happily ever after in that lesson.

Either way, what do we see? Israel and Aram and their kings were not getting along happily ever after. The king of Aram was at war against Israel. He'd make his war plans: "We'll set up camp here." But then Elisha would send word to the king of Israel who would send out his scouts, find the enemy, and stay clear and safe. This didn't just happen once or twice, so the king of Aram gets suspicious - "Who's the spy? Who's the traitor, telling the enemy our battle plans?" By this time Elisha was well-known and it was no secret in Israel who was warning the king and passing along the enemy's secrets. And because it was no secret in Israel who Elisha was and what Elisha was doing, it was no secret to Aram's spies who Elisha was, what Elisha was doing, and where Elisha was.

So the king of Aram sends his army south to solve his Elisha problem. He doesn't just send a SWAT team to take Elisha; he sends an army unit with horses and chariots, enough to surround the city where Elisha was staying. Overnight, they do just that; they surround the city while the city was sleeping. Early the next morning, Elisha's servant gets up and goes out and finds an army with horses and chariots surrounding the city. Can you imagine what goes through his mind? What comes out of his mouth? "How do you say "Yikes!" in Hebrew? Then to Elisha, "O lord, what will we do?"

Elisha is calm, confident. No "yikes" from Elisha. He's confident; the LORD has got him, and so the LORD has got this too. Elisha answers his servant: "**Don't be afraid. Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.**" That's too good to just hear once. "**Don't be afraid. Those who are**

with us are more than those who are with them.” Elisha wasn't talking about Israel's army; Israel's army had been working to avoid Aram's army. No, Elisha had a different army in mind, the army commanded by the LORD of hosts. He prays: **“Oh, LORD, open his eyes so he may see.”** So the LORD opened the servant's eyes so he saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around. Elisha knew, and now his servant saw: with the LORD and his angels, they had nothing to be afraid of.

Abraham saw the LORD and two angels appear as men; Jacob saw angels ascending and descending on a stairway to heaven; the writer to the Hebrews describes angels as ministering spirits. Here in our lesson angels appear as horses and chariots of fire. Different kinds of angels? Angels appearing in different ways? When Jesus shows us his angels in the book of Revelation, what do we see? Different kinds of angels, and they appeared in some very different ways.

But what is true of all of them? God created them; God commands them; they listen to God; and something else - God uses them for you. How? In a way that should leave us calm and confident. God sends his angels to serve us and protect us in ways we may never know, to defend us and fight for us against Satan and his spirit armies in ways we may never see.

I hesitate to say this. But what if ...? What if God commands his angels to step back? What if God commands his angels to let the enemy strike, and knock me down? Like Jacob cheated by his uncle Laban. Like Joseph sold into slavery by his brothers, thrown into prison by Potiphar. Like Job, who lost most

everything he had, except God's hold on him. Like Jesus, who gave up everything he had, except his hold on God. Like Peter and the rest of the apostles.

What then? There's a part of me that doesn't want to go there, that doesn't want to think about that. But what then? Jacob, Joseph, and Job - what do we see in their lives? An incredible amount of hurt, an incredible amount of hurt turned into an incredible amount of blessing. Jacob was cheated and bullied by his uncle and father-in-law for 20 years. He was made to believe his Joseph was killed, forced to leave his promised home. Apart from a peek here and there, he couldn't see the angels; he couldn't see God. But you know - in all things, even when God had his angels step back, God worked for Jacob's good; and not just Jacob's good, in all things God worked to keep his promise for us. And Joseph - sold into slavery, thrown into prison. Yet what do we know? In all things, even when God had his angels step back, God worked for Joseph's good; and not just Joseph's good, in all things God worked to keep his promise for us. And Job - he lost his children, his riches, his wife's smile, all in a day. He lost his health in a most awful way. Yet what do we know? In all things, even when God had his angels step back, God worked for Job's good. You know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him.

For Jacob, Joseph, and Job, we see their lives go from pain to comfort. What about Peter and the rest of the apostles? What about when God's angels let the knife cut and the cross kill? One of the twelve, John, shows us a picture from Jesus. He reveals a revelation from Jesus. And what do we see? Angels, countless

angels, angels around the throne of God with Jesus and his Father. We see and hear angels singing back and forth, singing about the Savior and the saints he's saving. But not just singing about those saints. We see and hear the angels singing with the saints.

When they were here in this world, the saints in heaven - they were like us; they couldn't see when the angels were stepping in and when they were stepping back. In this life, it may well have looked like the angels were doing more stepping back than stepping in. But what do we see in heaven? The saints and angels singing together in heaven. What do they know? God with his angels will get his people home!

“But what if?” How do we put those words to rest? Listen to Elisha: **“Those who are with us are more than those who are against us.”** Listen to the Psalm writer: **“He [the Most High] will command his angels to guard you in all your ways.”** Listen to Jesus promise that he has his angels watching out. And if God has them step back? Even then God is working his plan and promise for the good of his people. Even then, God has his angels at the ready, ready to step in for you and for yours. Even then, and always, we get to know we still have our favorite angel time ahead of us. How so? Some day we'll be singing with the saints and angels in heaven. Singing, “Thank you, Lord, for Jesus, and his angels!” Amen.

August 19 & 20, 2023

THE SERVICE

IN OUR WORLD TODAY ... angels seem more popular than God.

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ... we see the LORD of Hosts (LORD of the Angel Armies) blesses us with the work of his angels – serving, protecting, defending, and fighting for you, the people of God!

OPENING HYMN

“God of Grace and God of Glory”

Hymn 770

God of grace and God of glory, on your people pour your pow’r;
crown your ancient Church’s story, bring its bud to glorious flow’r.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage for the facing of this hour,
for the facing of this hour.

Lo, the hosts of evil round us scorn the Christ, assail his ways.
From the fears that long have bound us free our hearts to faith and praise.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage for the living of these days,
for the living of these days.

Cure your children’s warring madness; bend our pride to your control;
shame our wanton, selfish gladness, rich in things and poor in soul.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage lest we miss your kingdom’s goal,
lest we miss your kingdom’s goal.

Save us from weak resignation to the evils we deplore;
let the gift of your salvation be our glory evermore.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage, serving you whom we adore,
serving you whom we adore.

INVOCATION

In the name of the Father and of the T Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.
Blessed are they whose sin the Lord does not count against them.

Let us confess our sins to the Lord.

Almighty and merciful Father,

we have strayed from your ways like lost sheep.

We have followed what we have devised and desired in our hearts.

We have offended you and sinned against your holy law.

We have done those things that we should not have done,

and we have not done those things that we should have done.

Have mercy on us, Lord!

Spare us, forgive us, and restore us,

according to your promises in Christ Jesus.

Silence for meditation and reflection

God, our merciful Father, has forgiven all our sins. He sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to be our Redeemer and Savior. Jesus paid the penalty for our guilt by his death on the cross and freed us from death by his resurrection from the grave. We have peace with God now and forever.

Amen.

LORD, HAVE MERCY (SUNG)

CW 174

In peace let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace from above and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For this holy house and for all who offer here their worship and praise, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.

Amen.

GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST (SUNG)

CW 176

Refrain: Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.

Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory. *Refrain*

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us. You are seated at the right hand of the Father; receive our prayer. *Refrain*

For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in the glory of God the Father. Amen. Amen. *Refrain*

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty and most merciful God, the protector of all who trust in you, strengthen our faith, and give us courage to believe that in your love you will rescue us from all adversities; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

FIRST READING

2 Kings 6:8–17

Now the king of Aram was at war with Israel. After conferring with his officers, he said, "I will set up my camp in such and such a place."

The man of God sent word to the king of Israel: "Beware of passing that place, because the Arameans are going down there."

So the king of Israel checked on the place indicated by the man of God. Time and again Elisha warned the king, so that he was on his guard in such places.

This enraged the king of Aram. He summoned his officers and demanded of them, "Tell me! Which of us is on the side of the king of Israel?"

"None of us, my lord the king," said one of his officers, "but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the very words you speak in your bedroom."

"Go, find out where he is," the king ordered, "so I can send men and capture him." The report came back: "He is in Dothan." Then he sent horses and chariots and a strong force there. They went by night and surrounded the city.

When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. "Oh no, my lord! What shall we do?" the servant asked.

"Don't be afraid," the prophet answered. "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them."

And Elisha prayed, "Open his eyes, LORD, so that he may see." Then the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

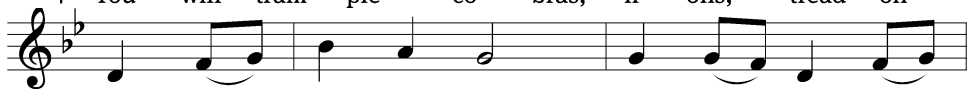
The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM OF THE DAY

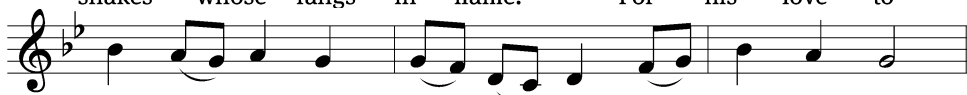
Psalm 91E



1 Dwell in God Most High as shel - ter, rest with -
 2 With God's truth your shield and buck - ler, you will
 3 If you make the LORD your ref - uge, if you
 4 You will tram - ple co - bras, li - ons, tread on



in Al - might - y's shade. To the LORD I
 fear no ill by night, nor the day - light
 dwell in God a - lone, noth - ing e - vil
 snakes whose fangs in - flame. "For his love to



say, "My ref - uge!"— all my trust, my God, my aid.
 ar - rows fly - ing, nor dis - ease that shuns the light.
 will be - fall you; harm will not come near your home.
 me I'll save him, keep him, for he knows my name.



He will save you from the fowl - er, from the
 None of this will ven - ture near you, though be -
 He will have his an - gels keep you, guard you
 When he calls me I will an - swer, res - cue



dead - ly pes - ti - lence, cov - er you with
 side you thou - sands fall; as he guards you,
 well in all your ways. In their hands they
 him and lift him high; I will show him



out - spread feath - ers, make his wings your con - fi - dence.
 God will sure - ly pay the wick - ed back for all.
 will up - hold you lest your foot a stone should graze.
 my sal - va - tion, with long life will sat - is - fy."

SECOND READING

Revelation 12:7–12

Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.

Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say:

“Now have come the salvation and the power
and the kingdom of our God,
and the authority of his Messiah.

For the accuser of our brothers and sisters,
who accuses them before our God day and night,
has been hurled down.

They triumphed over him
by the blood of the Lamb
and by the word of their testimony;
they did not love their lives so much
as to shrink from death.

Therefore rejoice, you heavens
and you who dwell in them!

But woe to the earth and the sea,
because the devil has gone down to you!
He is filled with fury,
because he knows that his time is short.”

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia. Jesus spoke to them and said, “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.” Alleluia.

GOSPEL

Matthew 18:1-10

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”

He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. And he said: "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.

"If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to stumble! Such things must come, but woe to the person through whom they come! If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away.

It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell.

"See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven.

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise be to you, O Christ!**

HYMN OF THE DAY

"Lord God, to You We Give All Praise"

Hymn 500

Lord God, to you we give all praise, with grateful hearts our voices raise
that angel hosts you did create around your glorious throne to wait.

They shine with light and heav'nly grace and constantly behold your face.
They heed your voice, they know it well; in godly wisdom they excel.

They never rest nor sleep as we; their whole delight is but to be
with you, Lord Jesus, and to keep your little flock, your lambs and sheep.

The ancient dragon is their foe; his envy and his wrath they know.
It always is his aim and pride your Christian people to divide.

As he of old deceived the world and into sin and death has hurled,
so now he subtly lies in wait to undermine both Church and state.

A roaring lion, round he goes, no halt nor rest he ever knows;
he seeks the Christians to devour and slay them by his dreadful pow'r.

But watchful is the angel band that follows Christ on ev'ry hand
to guard his people where they go and break the counsel of the foe.

O Lord, awaken songs of praise for angel hosts that guard our days;
teach us to serve you and adore as angels do forevermore.

SERMON

NICENE CREED

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became truly human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate. He suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who in unity with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

Eternal Lord, give us peace as we ponder the good news that you forgive our sins in Christ. Lead us to see clearly the path you have laid out for us.
Work in us so that we believe and live the Word we have heard today.

Provide courage and compassion to all who preach and teach your Word. Fill them with a love like yours as they proclaim your grace to us and all people.

Move us to love all ministers of the Word wherever they serve.

Guard and guide the families of our congregation. Lead husbands and wives to love each other with commitment, respect, and patience. Help parents to grasp the eternal value of keeping their children close to Jesus all their lives. Grant joy to those who are single, and make them a blessing to others.

Protect us from the temptations that surround us; give us pure hearts and minds.

Provide wisdom and insight to those who make laws and set policies. Give us respect for those who protect us from crime. Lead us to value the rights of our fellow citizens and to defend those who cannot defend themselves.

Bless our land with peace and prosperity so that the gospel may be proclaimed to all.

Give us passion to share the story of your love with our family and friends. Overcome unbelief, and open the hearts of people everywhere to believe the good news that Jesus has forgiven their sins and opened the gates of heaven.

Fill us with joy over every sinner who repents and comes to trust in you.

Extend your healing power to those who are sick and suffering in body or mind. [Pour out your special blessing on . . . *here name the person and the cause of the petition.*] Give patience and compassion to all who care for the sick and dying.

Lift the eyes of the distressed to your love in Christ.

Hear us, Lord, as we pray in silence.

Silent prayer

Gracious God, you govern and direct all things and you love all people. Hear our prayers, spoken and silent, and answer them in your wisdom and grace.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

THE SACRAMENT

(Guests, please see our communion practice on page 2.)
(Gluten-free wafers are available; ask Pastor.)

PREFACE (Sung)

CW 183

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give him thanks and praise.

It is truly good and right that we should at all times and in all places give you thanks, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who promised that wherever two or three come together in his name, there he is with them to shepherd his flock until he comes again in glory. Therefore, with all the saints on earth and hosts of heaven, we praise your holy name and join their glorious song:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY (SUNG)**CW 184**

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power, God of might.
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest, hosanna in the highest!

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my τ body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is my τ blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

The peace of the Lord be with you always. **Amen.**

JESUS, LAMB OF GOD (SUNG)**CW 186**

Jesus, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.
Jesus, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.
Jesus, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world;
grant us your peace.

DISTRIBUTION HYMN***"I Walk in Danger All the Way"*****Hymn 836**

I walk in danger all the way; the thought shall never leave me
that Satan, who has marked his prey, is plotting to deceive me.
This foe with hidden snares may seize me unawares
if e'er I fail to watch and pray; I walk in danger all the way.

I pass through trials all the way, with sin and ills contending;
in patience I must bear each day the cross of God's own sending.
Oft in adversity I know not where to flee,
when storms of woe my soul dismay; I pass through trials all the way.

Grim death pursues me all the way, nowhere I rest securely;
he comes by night, he comes by day, he takes his prey most surely.
A failing breath, and I in death's strong grasp may lie
to face eternity today; grim death pursues me all the way.

I walk with angels all the way, they shield me and befriend me;
all Satan's pow'r is held at bay when heav'nly hosts attend me.
They are my sure defense; all fear and sorrow, hence!
Unharm'd by foes, do what they may, I walk with angels all the way.

I walk with Jesus all the way, his guidance never fails me;
within his wounds I find a stay when Satan's pow'r assails me;
and by his footsteps led, my path I safely tread.
No evil leads my soul astray; I walk with Jesus all the way.

My walk is heav'nward all the way; await, my soul, the morrow,
when you at last with joy can say farewell to sin and sorrow.
All worldly pomp, begone! To heav'n I now press on.
For all the world I would not stay; my walk is heav'nward all the way.

CLOSING PRAYER

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his mercy endures forever.

Whenever we eat this bread and drink this cup,
we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

We give you thanks, O Lord, for the foretaste of the heavenly banquet you
have given us in this Sacrament. Through this gift you have fed our faith,
nourished our hope, and strengthened our love.

By your Spirit, help us to live as your holy people until that day when you
will receive us as your guests at the wedding supper of the Lamb, who
lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
Amen.

BLESSING

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace. **Amen.**

CLOSING HYMN

“Now Rest beneath Night’s Shadow”

Hymn 794

Now rest beneath night’s shadow the woodland, field, and meadow;
the world in slumber lies. But you, my heart, awaken,
with prayer and song be taken; let praise to your Creator rise.

The rule of day is over and shining jewels cover
the heaven’s boundless blue. Thus I shall shine in heaven,
where crowns of gold are given to all who faithful prove and true.

Lord Jesus, since you love me, O spread your wings above me
and shield me from alarm. Though Satan would assail me,
your mercy will not fail me; I rest in your protecting arm.

My loved ones, rest securely, for God this night will surely
from peril guard your heads. Sweet slumbers may he send you
and bid his hosts attend you and through the night watch o’er your beds.

OFFERING

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