

Nothing is Impossible With God

- After some last-minute Christmas shopping with her grandchildren, Carol was rushing them into the car when four-year-old Jason said, "Grandma, Susie has something in her pocket." He reached in and pulled out a new red barrette from his 3 year-old sister's pocket. Though she was tired, Carol knew it was important for Susie to put the item back where she had found it. They did just that. Later at the grocery store checkout, the clerk asked, "Have you kids been good so Santa will come?" "I've been very good," replied Jason, "but my sister just robbed a store." Well, maybe some of you had that kind of Christmas so far, with all the rushing around to buy everything, and then return the things your kids have stolen. Let's take a moment this morning to look at some good news, which is what Christmas is. Good news of great joy! And you don't have to return anything.
- I want to combine two texts this morning as we celebrate the birth of our Savior. Let's look first at the announcement that the angel Gabriel made to Mary that she was to give birth to the Lord and examine what may well be the key verse in that announcement. Then let's look at the way Mary 'preached' that news to Elizabeth.
- Luke 1:26-38
- Mary asked the question that every single one of us would have asked when the angel told her that she would conceive and give birth to the One who would be called the Son of the Highest: "How will this be?" Although I like the difference between the question Mary asked and the question Zechariah asked, earlier in the chapter. He had just been told his wife, who was too old to have a child would have a child, and he said to Gabriel, "How shall I know this?" In other words, "Prove it to me, Mr. Angel. It's great that YOU know this, but until I know this to be true, then it is not true." True. "To which Gabriel basically told Zechariah to shut up for the next nine months. Do you ever play that game, where you tell the Lord, through your unwillingness to believe what His Word plainly says that you need to be able to "know for sure" that it is true? It's a dangerous game, for sure. And Mary did not play it. Even though what the angel was telling her was absolutely impossible. It wasn't just improbable or highly unlikely. It wasn't just a fantastic or incredible notion. It was impossible. She was a virgin, betrothed to be married to Joseph, and a child was absolutely not possible. "How will this be?" she asks, a question that rests on unquestioning faith. "Lord, you said that you care for the birds of the air and you feed them, and we are facing a financial crisis that we can't see our way out of. How WILL this be that you will provide for us through your riches in Christ Jesus? Not, how CAN this be, or how will I know this (give me a sign).
- Gabriel answers Mary's question by dispelling any doubt that she may have had about who this child was going to be. If she wondered when Gabriel said he would be called "the Son of the Highest," she didn't wonder any more when Gabriel said, "the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God." Mary, being a Jewish girl, would have known that this was the long awaited Messiah that Isaiah had prophesied about more than 700 years prior. **Behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.** (Isaiah 7:14). But Gabriel didn't just tell her WHO would be conceived in her. He told her HOW: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you." In other words, this **is** impossible, Mary. That's why God is going to have to do it. For further "proof," the angel who stands in the presence of God (verse 19) and is sent to deliver God's most important messages, says, "And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren." Not only was Elizabeth an old woman, past the years of childbearing, she was barren. Unable to have children. Gabriel has just dropped his second bombshell on Mary: not only are you going to conceive without being with a man, your cousin relative Elizabeth, who is old enough to be your grandmother is already 6 months pregnant even though she was barren. Again, not just an unlikely or improbable scenario: an impossible one. That's why Gabriel said it and why God did it, perhaps, to demonstrate and reinforce this truth: **For nothing will be impossible with God.** This is a truth for

the ages. It didn't start with the birth of Christ but started with the birth of Adam! Where did the first man come from? There was no father. There was no mother. He was formed by God's very hands, if you will, out of the dust of the earth and the Lord breathed into Adam's nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul. How can that happen? For with God nothing will be impossible. When Sarah heard that she, at 75 years old and barren, was going to conceive and have a son, she laughed.

- Genesis 18:13-14, ***And the Lord said to Abraham, 'Why did Sarah laugh...Is anything too hard for the Lord? No, For nothing will be impossible with God.'***
- Judges 7: When God told Gideon to narrow it down, that he had too many men, Gideon must have trembled at the thought of going into battle against 145,000 with only 300 soldiers. But God was showing him that the only way he COULD win would be to trust the Lord, ***For nothing will be impossible with God.*** If Gideon had had an army of 5 million, he would have surely been defeated by the Midianites because Gideon's trust would have been in his army, not in the Captain of the Heavenly Host!
- 1 Kings 18: When Elijah poured water on the sacrifice and prayed, "Hear me, O Lord, hear me that this people may know that you are the Lord God, and that you have turned their hearts back to you again," God answered with a fire that consumed the sacrifice and licked up every drop of the water that was in the trench. How can that happen? ***For nothing will be impossible with God.*** I heard about a missionary in the jungle in 1972 and a little girl was sick with a high fever. The missionary told the natives that if she could get some ice, maybe the fever would come down. The natives who lived in a jungle where the temperature averages over 100 degrees said, "What is ice?" "It is frozen rain," the missionary said. Of course they wanted to know what "frozen" meant. She tried to explain but then she just prayed that God would send them ice somehow. Now, she could have just prayed that God would heal the girl, but I guess she was led by the Lord to pray a different way. God, bring us ice in the jungle! Not long after she had prayed, the skies erupted in an awful storm, a dreadful storm. It kept getting worse and then all of a sudden, it began to hail. Hailstones the size of golf balls were falling from the sky and the ground was beginning to turn white. "What is that?" the natives asked the missionary. "Ice." The storm passed and they collected some of the frozen rain, used it to bring the little girl's fever down and a few days later she was running around and healthy. Why did God do that? Perhaps to demonstrate what we need to be continually reminded of: ***For nothing will be impossible with God.***
- I don't know what you are facing. But the Christmas miracle reminds us that no matter what it is, God is able. ***For nothing will be impossible with God.***
- But there is a second point I would like to make from this passage as the story continues. Let's look at the next passage and see how Mary preached the coming of the Messiah.
- Luke 1:39-56
- Elizabeth gives Mary an open door to talk about herself when she says, "Blessed are you among women. " But Mary doesn't take that occasion to boast in herself. She takes up right where she left off with Gabriel, when she said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." Now she is at Elizabeth's house and her relative has just praised her. But in Mary's response, how many times does Mary say "I"? None. Rather, her first statement controls her response: "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior." There was no halo on her head. She didn't walk through her village with her nose in the air either before or after Gabriel appeared to her. She was genuinely perplexed about why God would choose her to be the mother of the Messiah. So, when Elizabeth praised Mary and gave Mary the opportunity to talk about herself, Mary instead talked about the Lord.
- Oscar Wilde was coming into the United States from France and was asked at customs if he had anything to declare, and he replied, "Nothing except my genius." It reminded me that the next time I am asked by a custom agent if I have anything to declare, I want to remember to say, "Yes. Jesus Christ is Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior."
- We do not preach ourselves, Paul the Apostle said. We have this treasure (the Gospel of Jesus Christ) in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.

- Mary responds to Elizabeth in a way that is a lesson to all of us. When Elizabeth opened the door for Mary to say, “I am, I am, I am,” Mary instead said “He is, He is, he is.” **Look at the text (verses 48-55)**
- She makes much of God and little of herself.
- I have told you before how much I like the movie from 2006, “The Nativity Story.” I love the way Mary and Joseph were portrayed in it. When Mary returns from being with Elizabeth, and she had been gone for at least three months, Mary is obviously pregnant. This little teenage girl who is betrothed but not married, is expecting and everybody in Nazareth can see that plainly! Instead of defending herself, Mary quietly tells her story to her parents and to Joseph. She speaks of what God has done and is willing to accept the consequences. When Joseph is told by Gabriel that he need not fear taking Mary as his wife because that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit, Joseph accepts his responsibility and the consequences of public shunning and ostracism that goes with it. Joseph and Mary were willing to preach Jesus, if you will, at their own expense.
- John Calvin said, “The more determined men become to despise the teaching of Christ, the more zealous should Godly ministers be to assert it, and the more strenuous their efforts to preserve it entire, and more than that by their diligence to ward off Satan’s attack.”
- I thank God for Joseph and Mary for being the first ‘evangelists’ in a way who were willing to preach Jesus no matter the cost.
- For with God nothing will be impossible....He who is mighty has done great things for me.