

Impossible Possibilities  
Texts: Matthew 1:18-24, Luke 1:26-38  
Kirkpatrick Memorial Presbyterian Church – July 19, 2020  
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The young teenager sits in her room, dreaming about her upcoming wedding and the new life together with her future husband. She thinks about how many children they will have, where they will live, what married life is going to be like. As a young girl of 12 or 13 years of age, these thoughts contain such innocence and wide-eyed wonder. She is not yet old enough to recognize fully the cruelty of the world in which she lives. The shunning that some face because of their decisions and choices.

While she is sitting there, a man (perhaps – or was he a winged creature, dressed in white, with a gold halo? We do not know) enters her room and says, “Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you.” Who is this guy? What is he doing here? And what does what he said to her even mean? These are all questions that must have entered the young girl’s mind. Gabriel sees her confusion and maybe fear and tells her not to be afraid – that she has found the favor of God. Not only has she found God’s favor, but God has great things in mind for her. She will conceive and have a son, and she is to name Him Jesus.

Favor? Conceive? Have a child? Call Him what? All of these words must have gotten the young girl’s mind spinning and reeling with confusion and more fear. Certainly, in this moment, she is overwhelmed with...something. She responds to Gabriel, “How on earth could this happen? I am young. I am not yet even married. It is not possible – I am a virgin. There is no way.” Her confusion may turn to a little anger and nervousness at this point. But before she could object anymore or tell Gabriel to get out of her home, the angel responds.

“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy – the Son of God. 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. For nothing will be impossible with God.”

So, the Holy Spirit will help the young girl to conceive the Son of God. What about her fiancé? What about her upcoming marriage? What will her parents think? What about her other relatives (other than Elizabeth) – and the members of her village? What will they think of her? Will they believe that this child is from God? Or will they think it is just a poor excuse that her parents made up to lessen the sting of the shame that this act – under normal circumstances – would cause. Nothing will be impossible? No, this sounds pretty impossible.

Joseph, on the other hand, was planning something else. He had been pledged to this young girl, Mary, but before all of the details for their betrothal came together, word got out that she was pregnant. She was pregnant through the Holy Spirit (as if that is a thing!). Joseph thought and prayed about how he should handle the situation. He still cared about Mary, but he knew that the right thing to do under the Torah was to dismiss her – end the relationship. Joseph cared enough that he wanted to do things under the radar, so that Mary would not be subjected to any more ridicule or shunning. His plan came together, and now he just had to execute it. But first, he needed to get a good night’s sleep.

While he was sleeping, the angel of the Lord came to him in one of his dreams. The angel said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” The angel also explained to Joseph in the dream that this was a fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy, and with Joseph’s devotion to the Law of the Lord, he recognized this to be true.

When Joseph woke up the next morning, he felt differently. Although the Law said to divorce Mary, he would not do that. Joseph would stand by her. Joseph would endure, with her, the whispers behind their backs, the rude comments from the insensitive people, and the attempts at being shamed for their decision together to move forward. He and Mary would be married, and they would raise this son, whom the angel told both of them would be named Jesus. Mary responded to the angel, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.”

These stories are filled with absurdities. Old women getting pregnant well past their child-bearing years. Young girls getting pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit with the Savior of the world. Men believing what was communicated through a dream and going against what had been the practice for centuries as the rule and law of the land. Yet, maybe what was needed in that moment was something that seemed so ridiculous and unbelievable in order to prove what was true. “For nothing will be impossible with God.” Nothing was impossible. Jesus was born to Mary and Joseph on that first Christmas. He saved His people from their sins by dying on the cross. And as Jesus worked and moved among them 2,000 years ago, so He still continues to do so today.

We need those impossible possibilities more than ever today. This virus is tearing at the very fabric of humanity’s being today – not just our physical health, but our emotional health, our spiritual health. We are being divided more than ever over the validity of scientific claims, how, where and why to wear masks in public, and every decision has some political leaning attached to it that makes it divisive to one side or the other. Every time I watch the news, I become more disheartened and frustrated at how fractured we have become.

And in those moments of my deepest despair of where we are today, I am drawn back to the words told to a young teenager. “For nothing will be impossible with God.” Friends, therein lies our Good News for today. God is bigger than the coronavirus. God is bigger than any political leaning that may be happening in our society today. God is bigger than the divisive rhetoric that is being spouted from both sides of the aisle. Nothing is impossible for God. We need to believe that today more than ever. Do you believe that nothing is impossible for your God? For your Creator? For the One who defied death on the cross and rose again to bring you new life for all of eternity?

If you believe it, then our response to what we see needs to reflect the faith of Mary and Joseph. After being visited by the angel, Joseph risked everything and was willing to be used by God to serve God’s purpose. After the visit from Gabriel in Mary’s room, Mary was willing to be used by God to serve God’s purpose. “Behold I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” Aah, the trusting voice of a young person to show us older, more experienced folk that we are wrong.

In these crazy times, in these times of violence and unrest, when we do not know what is true and what is false, let us rest in the absurdity of our God. The God who loved us so much that He used Mary and Joseph to fulfill His ultimate purpose. Let us come together, united, believing with confidence that nothing – and I mean, NOTHING – is impossible for our God. And let it be so. Let us pray...

God of the impossible, Lord of infinite possibilities, we thank You for the faith and the willingness of Mary and Joseph. We thank You that they risked so much for the sake of Your will. We thank You for this reminder that nothing is impossible when You are in control. Lord, in Your mercy, look upon our world and make the impossible happen. We trust that You are Sovereign and Your will is done. In Christ’s name we pray, Amen.