

The Fourth Sunday of Advent; December 20th, 2020:

Luke 1:26-38: Nothing Is Impossible with God!

To me the best thing about Christmas is the surprises. Who does not enjoy the look of wondrous surprise on a child's face on Christmas morning? Who among us does not remember the rush of excitement we experienced when we were surprised on Christmas day with the best gift ever?

Christmas is all about surprises. In fact, Christmas began with a big surprise. Mary got the biggest surprise of her life when the angel Gabriel appeared to her and told her that she would be pregnant with the Son of God! What could be more astonishing than that? Maybe "shocked" is a better word. After all, she was a virgin. Surprise! Christmas is about the joyous surprises of God. In the spirit of the surprise of Christmas I want to open up a few Christmas surprises from Mary's story because through Mary's story we find the transforming message of Christmas. If you take that message to heart you will never be the same.

If there is one thing Mary's surprise teaches us it is that God loves to do extraordinary things through ordinary people. Mary was just a poor, Jewish teenage girl. Based on life expectancy at the time Mary was probably between the ages of thirteen and sixteen. Mary didn't have much experience in life. She was not sophisticated. Yet, God chose her to birth the Son of God. Luke reports that Mary was "perplexed" by what the angel told her (Luke 1:29). This is perhaps the greatest under-statement in the Bible. **If an angel appeared to you, would "perplexed" be the best word to describe your reaction? No, you would be terrified!** So was Mary! Gabriel sensed Mary's fear and explained why he was appearing to her. Mary's response in verse 34 was priceless, "How can this be?" In our vernacular, Mary asked, **"Are you kidding me? How is that going to happen? Um, there is a problem here. I am a virgin. How can this be?"** Many of us have the same reaction when God desires to birth something great through us.

This is a story of impossibilities in today's Gospel. Consider the impossibilities Mary faced, mentioned above; She is a virgin and pregnant — she is having a child while she is a virgin. Impossible! No way! Won't happen! Joseph has to follow through on the marriage after he discovers Mary is pregnant. Impossible! Mary must avoid being stoned to death when the neighbors hear the news. Impossible!

Consider the impossibility Elizabeth faced. She was well past the childbearing age, and yet God says she is going to conceive and bear a child. This impossible news left old Zechariah speechless. Impossible! No way! Won't happen! This is a story of biblical impossibilities. What are the impossibilities in our world? What would you label "impossible" in your life? Peace in our world today. Impossible! No way! Won't happen! Christian values returning to our nation, morality becoming the norm? Impossible! Our church reaching our surrounding community and making our world different? Impossible! Restoring relationships, healing past hurts in our lives. A relative or friend entering a relationship with Christ and going back to Church. Breaking an addiction and overcoming past hurts and disappointments? Impossible!

We find ourselves with the same troubled mind as Mary, wondering over the impossible (v. 29). We even ask the same question Mary asked, "How will this be?" (v. 34). To us it seems impossible! No way! It won't happen! The real question for people today is "How can the impossible become possible?" But let us remember this; **"Nothing is Impossible with God!"**

Amen.