

12/16/2018

**“Believe the Impossible”**  
*For nothing is impossible with God.” Luke 1:37*

Scripture: Luke 1:26-38; Philippians 4:4-7

Third Sunday of Advent

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**Theme: We can find joy and peace in knowing, believing, and responding to a God who can do all things.**

On this third Sunday of Advent, we continue with remembering and preparing for the coming of Christ - our Redeemer, Savior and King.

The Birth of Jesus, the One who came from God, was foretold by a heavenly messenger. Hear these words as shared by Luke in his gospel account (1:26-38 NIRV):

<sup>26</sup> *In the sixth month after Elizabeth had become pregnant, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee. <sup>27</sup> He was sent to a virgin. The girl was engaged to a man named Joseph. He came from the family line of David. The virgin's name was Mary. <sup>28</sup> The angel greeted her and said, “The Lord has given you special favor. He is with you.”*

<sup>29</sup> *Mary was very upset because of his words. She wondered what kind of greeting this could be. <sup>30</sup> But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary. God is very pleased with you. <sup>31</sup> You will become pregnant and give birth to a son. You must name him Jesus. <sup>32</sup> He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High God. The Lord God will make him a king like his father David of long ago. <sup>33</sup> The will rule forever over his people, who came from Jacob's family. His kingdom will never end.”*

<sup>34</sup> *“How can this happen?” Mary asked the angel. “I am a virgin.” <sup>35</sup> The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come to you. The power of the Most High God will cover you. So the holy one that is born will be called the Son of God. <sup>36</sup> Your relative Elizabeth is old. And even she is going to have a child. People thought she could not have children. But she has been pregnant for six months now. <sup>37</sup> Nothing is impossible with God.”*

<sup>38</sup> *“I serve the Lord,” Mary answered. “May it happen to me just as you said it would.” Then the angel left her.*

† **We, like Mary, may have mixed thoughts and feelings when given a word from God.**

I often wonder why it is so difficult for us humans to have faith, to even believe that God can do anything. Perhaps, it is because we, like Mary, the mother of Jesus, are “perplexed”, dumfounded, “troubled”, even afraid, when God makes his presence and will known to us.

Maybe we find it so hard to believe or out of the ordinary, that God would communicate with us, let alone find favor with us. Maybe we are afraid of what other people might think if they thought God was communicating with us.

Maybe you've heard or seen the new CBS TV Show, **God Friended Me**. Unlike Mary, the mother of Jesus, the lead character in it, called Miles Finer, is an outspoken atheist. He is also the son of a pastor. His whole life is turned upside down when he receives a friend request on social media from God and unwittingly becomes an agent of change in the lives and destinies of others around him. After repeated pokes by God, Miles' curiosity takes over, and he accepts the ultimate friend request and follows the signs to Cara Bloom, an online journalist. Brought together by the mysterious account, the two find themselves investigating God's friend suggestions and inadvertently helping others in need. Miles is set on getting to the bottom of what he believes is an elaborate hoax, but in the meantime, he'll play along and -- in the process -- change his life forever. (*First episode date: September 30, 2018. Composer: Michael Suby. Program creators: Steven Lilien, Bryan Wynbrandt*)

Although it is labeled variously as a romantic comedy to a drama, it reflects the broad range of faith and spirituality today, at least in New York City, as well as the blending of modern technology with eternal human needs. It also reminds us of the influences of time and generation into which we are born and the intergenerational relationships which also help shape who we are.

Is the "God account" really from God? I don't know, as I'm several episodes behind. But, I do like the positive message it sends about following God's direction, showing God's love, and making a positive difference in the world.

Now while I can tell you that God doesn't communicate with me in quite the same way, those of you who know me know that I received and accepted a friend request from God many years ago. I continue to listen for God's still, small voice in various ways and have followed where he would lead me. Yet, I, too, have some occasional hesitance about what God may ask me to do or whether it would be possible.

How have you, do you, or would you feel about communications from God?

What do you believe is impossible – for yourself, for others, for God?

† **We, like Mary, may focus on our limitations, instead of God's power and will for us.**

We may ask ourselves, God's messenger, or even God, "*How can this be?*"

For Mary, she was still young and a virgin. For Elizabeth, she was old and had not or apparently could not conceive a child.

What, if any, limitations do you focus on? . . . too poor, too rich; not the right color, not the right size. Perhaps, you don't feel smart enough, educated or trained for the job. Maybe, you feel like you're too good or too bad for what God has planned for you.

Or maybe, we are really just afraid of the changes in our life if we did what God has planned for us or asks of us. No doubt the description of Jesus' life given by the angel would mean great changes and even challenges for Mary and Joseph, as well. Would Joseph even believe her if such a thing happened?

For Mary, it meant that The Holy Spirit would come to her, and the power of the Most High God would cover her. As followers of Jesus we seek the Holy Spirit's influence upon us, within us, and through us. Friends, I hope you know what kinds of difference that makes in our lives. Our lives are transformed by the power of God! No problem is too great. No addiction too powerful. No defeat insurmountable.

What, if any, limitations do you focus on? What experiences or memories? What anger or resentment? What pains or hardship? What faults or failures? What injuries or illnesses? What loss or grief?

There's no obstacle that cannot be removed by God. Even with our limitations, God can do the seemingly impossible. God can heal you and make you whole. God can use the negative and turn it into a positive. God can use your wounds to bring healing to others. God can use you in marvelous and mysterious ways. God can take you places and show you things you only dreamed of, or may never even have thought of.

Because with God, all things are possible!

† **We need only believe the impossible and submit to God – be open and receptive to God's purpose, plan and power.**

Repeatedly, the Bible affirms that all things are possible with God . . . even with us and for us. Remember what Jesus said, *"If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, it is enough. You can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there.' And it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."* (Matthew 17:20b)

I don't believe that means that we will always have our way with God. It means that when our will is in accord with God's will, then all things are possible. Nothing is impossible. We need only believe the impossible is possible, and submit to God, as Mary did, being open and receptive to God's plan, purpose and power.

As the prophet Isaiah proclaimed the words of the LORD God . . .  
*"so shall my words be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but is shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it."* (Isaiah 55:11)

So, let us rejoice, as the Apostle Paul wrote to the early believers in Philippi!  
*Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. ~ Philippians 4:4-7*

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