

Advent 4
December 20, 2020

“The Impossible is done for you through Jesus, the Son of God’s birth” (Luke 1:37)

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LSB 356

“Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Today’s text for this Fourth Sunday of Advent, is from today’s Gospel reading from Luke 1:37.

“For with God nothing will be impossible.” (Luke 1:37)

Here ends our text.

I. For Mary and Joseph, and Elizabeth and Zacharias

This first chapter of Luke tells the stories of two couples whose lives were abruptly interrupted and turned upside down all of a sudden. It was time. The prophecies of the Old Testament that a Savior would come, were now being fulfilled. God’s gracious plan of salvation was being interjected into the timeline of human history and it immediately impacted the lives of two couples.

The impossible, that man could never accomplish – his justification before God – was coming. The Wisdom from on high was entering the world. God’s Wisdom of righteousness, sanctification and redemption was coming into being. As we heard in our midweek Wednesday service last week from 1 Corinthians 1:30, Jesus, the Word, the Wisdom of God, became flesh.

What seemed like pure foolishness to the world, incredible humility to hide and not use His power and glory, was the only way that the impossible could be accomplished – Christ Crucified. Go back when you have a moment this week and reread 1 Corinthians 1.

This foolishness, according to the world...this absolutely implausible, impossible plan to rescue the world became the new normal for two unsuspecting couples.

Both couples received a visit from the angel Gabriel, sent by God with the important message of glad tidings of the coming Savior. God's impossible plan was so out of the realm of normal daily life, that He needed to send a messenger, in person, to directly relay what was going to happen. The message was received in unbelief in one case and incredible belief in the other.

One couple had celebrated many anniversaries together – Elizabeth and Zacharias. They had no children and now were advanced in age as we read in verse 7 of this chapter. Like Abraham and Sarah, they weren't expecting to have children, although Zacharias still prayed for this.

The other couple, a young couple, had only just said their wedding vows at their betrothal. God's favor came upon both and yet it was only immediately received by one. In this case, the inexperienced young couple were the wiser of the two – believing the message of Godly wisdom from on high.

At the arrival of the angel Gabriel, both Zacharias and Mary were troubled and fearful (v. 12, 29,30). Zacharias showed doubt and asked the angel for a sign that this impossible message was true. The angel told him that because he did not believe his words, and because of that, he would become mute unto the time came for their son, John the Baptist, to be born (v.20).

Mary, on the other hand, believed Gabriel's message as Elizabeth proclaimed later on the chapter in verse 45.

“Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord.”

Mary only asked for more information on how this virgin birth could take place. For it was ...impossible (v.34).

And we see her final response after being told that **“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.”**

What does she say? Let it be. **“Let it be according to your word... “Behold the maidservant of the Lord.”**

Wow! What faith! Mary, was going to be the mother of the Son of God, and she humbly accepted this role and abrupt change to her life. How well do you accept the abrupt changes that happen in your lives?

To strengthen Mary to accept and live this impossible news, the angel Gabriel speaks God's word to her. God's word efficacious. It creates faith (Romans 10:17) and gives strength to the believer. So Paul said to the Thessalonians.

“For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.” (1 Thessalonians 2:13)

And also in Hebrews 4:12, **“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”**

It discerns whether our hearts receive it with faith like Mary or in unbelief like Zacharias.

Mary was assured from God's word in the message that Gabriel spoke. For he said in verse 28 **“The Lord is with you.”** The Lord is with you to defend you from anyone who would try to bring shame on you for what appears to be an out of wedlock birth. The Lord is with you even when your own husband, Joseph, will seek to divorce you. The Lord is with you when you will have to flee from King Herod for your lives. For this impossibility of Jesus' saving work cannot be stopped.

And then the angel told Mary that her Son **“will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.”**

With her Son reigning now and eternally, what was there to fear?

And finally, the angel told her that **even** her relative was 6 months pregnant in her old age. With God, nothing is impossible! The word “even” tell us that Mary was now pregnant. How quickly her life turned on a dime, but she didn't skip a beat, for her God was with her!

II. For all of us

Yes, with God nothing is impossible in your lives too! For He gives you saving faith by the power of the Holy Spirit. The same Holy Spirit who overshadowed Mary, comes to us through His word and the sacraments.

Jesus also promised that He to us that He would be with us always.

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Whenever sudden unexpected changes come into your life, know that you are not alone. Jesus promises to be with you. And when the suddenness of the departure from this world comes, Jesus promises to be our eternal Shepherd in Psalm 23 and we **“will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”**

“For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” (Romans 5:6)

When we could not do the impossible of presenting ourselves godly and righteous, when we were without strength, Christ did the impossible and died for the ungodly. He died for you and me. And again Paul says two verses later,

“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

God did the impossible...for us! Jesus impossible birth to Mary resulted in our impossible salvation at the cross. And then, the Holy Spirit gave you and me faith through our baptisms, washing our sins away, so that we can say what is impossible for sinful man to say, “Jesus is Lord”. (1 Corinthians 12:3). God called us into this fellowship (1 Corinthians 1:9). He did it all!

And God continues to do the impossible for us as we receive Jesus’ very body and blood today. The impossible of Jesus’ real presence in with and under the bread comes to you and me. You’re sins are forgiven by the humble death of Jesus and His resurrection!

We also hear the good news that Mary heard. **“And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.” (Luke 1:23)** Jesus

rules by grace over His kingdom that has no end. That means He's ruling now for us!

So also, we heard earlier in Psalm 89,

“Mercy shall be built up forever; Your faithfulness You shall establish in the very heavens.”

Has your life been greeted with sudden changes? Are you praying for someone whose life has received sudden difficult news? We can never face life's changes and our mortality without fearful and troubled hearts. But God doesn't leave us troubled. Instead, He has sent us His good news of His word that the virgin did give birth to the Savior of the world whose name was even given, Jesus. For He did the impossible by doing what His name means, **“save His people from their sins.” (Matthew 1:21)**

And Mary believed this. She believed that her baby was also her Savior. So, she sings in her Magnificat, **“My soul magnifies the Lord, And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed.” (Luke 1: 47-48)**

God changed the lowly, sinful state of Mary to a blessed holy state, by faith. She received the impossible – her salvation. And Mary, as she continues to be inspired by the Holy Spirit, speaks of the impossible being done for future generations as the Holy Spirit gives faith to future Christians.

“For He who is mighty has done great things for me, And holy is His name. And His mercy is on those who fear Him from generation to generation.” (Luke 1:49-50)

From fear to **“let it be to me according to your word”**. That is how God's word calmed Mary's heart and strengthened her in this sudden change of motherhood with the Son of God. And it strengthened her for the difficulties and dangers that lay ahead.

The same word of God does no less for us in all of our life's circumstances. So that we too can answer with Mary, **“let it be to me according to your word”**. Amen.

“The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)