

“Impossible? Don’t Believe It!” Luke 1:34-38 Sunday AM, June 16, 2024

Prelude – Scripture: Luke 1:26-38 (NASB95) Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, 27 to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary. 28 And coming in, he said to her, “Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.” 29 But she was very perplexed at this statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was. 30 The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. 31 “And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. 32 “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; 33 and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.” 34 Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?” 35 The angel answered and said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God. 36 “And behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month. 37 “For nothing will be impossible with God.” 38 And Mary said, “Behold, the bondservant of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.

And so we continue with Luke’s defense of the gospel to Theophilus, and that defense includes real men and women who feared God—faithfully serving/obeying from where they were. They were people—real needs, real tears, real sins, but they continued. And providentially, THESE were chosen to receive a visit from Gabriel. First Zacharias, and last week, Mary. Gabriel begins favorably, “Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.” Mary could have been as young as 12-13 or perhaps older. How would you have responded at 12-13, 17, 25, now? Any angel, anytime pretty tough. Our passage says simply, 29 *But she was very perplexed at this statement*, (greatly troubled, terrified, at a loss, confused)—yeah, that about sums it up—but the passage doesn’t stop there—she *kept pondering what kind of salutation this was*. When? Then? For how long? Later? I’m sure, but she had to deal w the rest of the scenario which included WHY the angel was there. “Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. Encouraging? Could she hear it OR still a mess? Be encouraged that even as your emotions are going all over, you could be doing RIGHT and can be a recipient of God’s favor. But the focus is NOT on Mary and her coping with the visit from an angel, but on the message and hope for those who would live in line with it. 31 “And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. 32 “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; 33 and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.” Find hope in a GREAT KING—David WAS a great king for Israel even WITH faults, but we are directed to the fulfillment of God’s promises to the GREATER DAVID who reigns with righteous judgements and gracious compassion. As we did last week, let’s begin with Praise to God. Those at VBS well familiar now—sing it!

***Hymn (Powerpoint): Praise the Lord (Ps. 150)**

Mary heard Gabriel’s words, then wondered at her part in them—as she pondered her humanity, she asked, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?” The angel answers, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.” Furthermore Mary, look around you. You are not the only place where God exhibits this power to bring about His word. 36 “And behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month. This is also a seeming impossibility. But note something else. Mary is given an answer to her question without seeming chiding for unbelief like Zacharias for asking a similar question. Why? We may question from where we are, but we must recognize that our questions may stem from the wrong assumptions about right/fair. As we’ve been learning in Habakkuk, question humbly, accepting even the Lord’s reproof as righteous which means it is good. And the amazing part? When you yield to God’s righteousness, He will work in you to show you more of His righteousness. 37 “For nothing will be impossible with God.” He is so far above us. Worship His holy transcendence with another song from this past week.

***Hymn (Powerpoint): Ancient of Days *Pastoral Prayer: Pastor Jahn Choir: Sheltered in the Arms of God Scripture: Isaiah 43:1–28**

But now, thus says the LORD, your Creator, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel, “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are Mine! 2 “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, Nor will the flame burn you. 3 “For I am the LORD your God, The Holy One of Israel, your Savior; I have given Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in your place. 4 “Since you are precious in My sight, Since you are honored and I love you, I will give other men in your place and other peoples in exchange for your life. 5 “Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, And gather you from the west. 6 “I will say to the north, ‘Give them up!’ And to the south, ‘Do not hold them back.’ Bring My sons from afar And My daughters from the ends of the earth. 7 Everyone who is called by My name, And whom I have created for My glory, Whom I have formed, even whom I have made.” 8 Bring out the people who are blind, even though they have eyes, And the deaf, even though they have ears. 9 All the nations have gathered together So that the peoples may be assembled. Who among them can declare this And proclaim to us the former things? Let them present their witnesses that they may be justified, Or let them hear and say, “It is true.” 10 “You are My witnesses,” declares the LORD, “And My servant whom I have chosen, So that you may know and believe Me And understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, And there will be none after Me. 11 “I, even I, am the LORD, And there is no savior besides Me. 12 “It is I who have declared and saved and proclaimed, And there was no strange god among you; So you are My witnesses,” declares the LORD, “And I am God. 13 “Even from eternity I am He, And there is none who can deliver out of My hand; I act and who can reverse it?” 14 Thus says the LORD your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, “For your sake I have sent to Babylon, And will bring them all down as fugitives, Even the Chaldeans, into the ships in which they rejoice. 15 “I am the LORD, your Holy One, The Creator of Israel, your King.” 16 Thus says the LORD, Who makes a way through the sea And a path through the mighty waters, 17 Who brings forth the chariot and the horse, The army and the mighty man (They will lie down together and not rise again; They have been quenched and extinguished like a wick): 18 “Do not call to mind the former things, Or ponder things of the past. 19 “Behold, I will do something new, Now it will spring forth; Will you not be aware of it? I will even make a roadway in the wilderness, Rivers in the desert. 20 “The beasts of the field will glorify Me, The jackals and the ostriches, Because I have given waters in the wilderness And rivers in the desert, To give drink to My chosen people. 21 “The people whom I formed for Myself Will declare My praise. 22 “Yet you have not called on Me, O Jacob; But you have become weary of Me, O Israel. 23 “You have not brought to Me the sheep of your burnt offerings, Nor have you honored Me with your sacrifices. I have not burdened you with offerings, Nor wearied you with incense. 24 “You have bought Me not sweet cane with money, Nor have you filled Me with the fat of your sacrifices; Rather you have burdened Me with your sins, You have wearied Me with your iniquities. 25 “I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake, And I will not remember your sins. 26 “Put Me in remembrance, let us argue our case together; State your cause, that you may be proved right. 27 “Your first forefather sinned, And your spokesmen have transgressed against Me. 28 “So I will pollute the princes of the sanctuary, And I will consign Jacob to the ban and Israel to revilement.

Offering: *Doxology:

God’s right as Creator, God’s presence and power to protect, and God’s plan to do what seems impossible is affirmed over and over in the Old Testament, heard today from Isaiah some 700 years before our passage. “Since you are precious in My sight, Since you are honored and I love you, I will give other men in your place and other peoples in exchange for your life. 5 “Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, And gather you from the west. 6 “I will say to the north, ‘Give them up!’ And to the south, ‘Do not hold them back.’ Bring My sons from afar And My daughters from the ends of the earth, 7 Everyone who is called by My name, And whom I have created for My glory, Whom I have formed, even whom I have made.” Impossible!NO, stop looking at the past or what makes sense to you 18 “Do not call to mind the former things, Or ponder things of the past. 19 “Behold, I will do something new, Now it will spring forth; Will you not be aware of it? I will even make a roadway in the wilderness, Rivers in the desert. As Pastor prepares to preach, focus not merely on Mary/the angel, but on the character of God making His word trustworthy and praiseworthy.

***Hymn #17: Ye Servants of God**

Mary responds simply, “Behold, the bondservant of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word.” In the face of impossible situations, will you accept and embrace this identity—bondservant of the Lord? Will you bring your life under His Word? This is what it means to follow Christ—the path of those born again. This disposition/identity will keep you looking to God as Master through it all. As Pastor prepares to preach, let this phrase haunt you--*may it be done to me according to your word*.

***Hymn #414: I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say**

Message: “Impossible? Don’t Believe It!” Luke 1:34-38 *Hymn #56: Day by Day *Prayer