

“Nothing Is Impossible With God”

A few years ago a hospital in London, England mistakenly sent letters to over 30 unsuspecting patients informing them that they were pregnant. A clerical worker hit the wrong key on a computer, and instead of mailing them a form letter telling these people that their surgery was being postponed, they were told they were going to have a baby! Among the people who received this letter were six men! Imagine how surprised they were to get that letter! I’m sure many, if not all, of the women were shocked too!

I had an elderly man in a church I pastored tell of going to a doctor’s office, and having one of the receptionists give him a strange look, smile at him, and then inform him that she had a test result with his name on it that said he was pregnant!

Well, I learned a long time ago that *men don’t get pregnant. Neither do virgins!* **But it happened!** In Luke, chapter 1, we find the much-loved story of Mary. She is described as a “virgin, engaged to a man whose name was Joseph” (Luke 1:27). One day an angel, Gabriel, appears to her with the words, “Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you” (verse 28). Now we don’t know where Mary was when the angel visited her, or what she was doing when Gabriel suddenly showed up, but it shook her up! Luke 1:29 says, “But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.” “Greatly troubled.” “Much perplexed.” In other words, Mary was stunned and confused. *The Message* renders it: “She was thoroughly shaken...”. Do you think if an angel appeared to *you*, it would shake you up? We can deduce that Mary was scared, because the angel says, “Don’t be afraid” (verse 30).

Now if talking to an angel wasn’t enough of a jolt, check out what the angel says next: “And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus” (verse 31). Guess what, Mary! You’re going to have a baby boy! Can we begin to grasp what must have gone through Mary’s mind? “Wait minute. I’ve never had sex with anyone! Not even Joseph, my fiancée. I’m still a virgin!”

If that news from the angel isn’t astounding enough, there’s more: “He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end (verses 32-33). Now that message probably doesn’t mean much to us today – but to the Jew of that time, those words tap into the Jewish hope and longing for a *Messiah/King*.

Mary, shaken to the core, replies: “It can’t happen! I’m a virgin!” But, “the angel said to her, ‘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 holy; he will be called Son of God’” (verse 35). Wow! Talk about something to wrap your brain around! But the angel has even more incredible news: Your relative, Elizabeth, she’s an old lady, infertile her whole life. Guess what! She’s six month’s pregnant, carrying a son! Then, I love what the angel says next: “*For nothing will be impossible with God*” (or “*Nothing is impossible with God*”) Luke 1:37.

Nothing is impossible with God. When you hear those words, how do you respond? Most of us will probably say, “Yeah, sure. Nothing’s impossible with God.” But do we really believe it?

Some of us, perhaps, have family members who are not believers. We've been praying that they will come to know Christ. But do we really believe that will happen? Hear the word of the Lord, "For nothing is impossible with God." Some of us may be trapped in habits, addictions, sins. We've been praying for months, even years, for deliverance from these things. But we have given up thinking we will ever change. Listen to the angel's words: "For nothing is impossible with God." Some of us may be feeling our life is stale, routine. Is doesn't count for much. Maybe we're in our senior years, and we're thinking, "What have I accomplished?" We're not feeling that we have much of a purpose for our remaining days. Not much to live for. But then there are these words: "For nothing is impossible with God."

See, it's easy to get to a point in life where we *lose hope*, and think nothing will change, and we're trapped where we are: I'll never get a good job and get ahead in life... I'll never be able to overcome my shyness, my lack of self-confidence....I'll never have the capacity to forgive that person who hurt me so badly...I'll always look on the dark side of things and never be a joyful person. But listen to the words of Gabriel: "Nothing will be impossible with God" (Luke 1:37).

Some of us need to believe again in the "nothing-is-impossible-God"! Years ago when our children were small, Nancy and I got involved in Amway as an Amway distributor. The motivation for selling Amway products was to make money! We had three small children. Nancy was not employed outside the home. We didn't have much income. The Amway pitch to potential sales people was that many people have given up hope that they can do better in life. It was suggested that you make a list of all the things you want, then put pictures of those things on your bathroom mirror, or some other prominent place, so you could start to dream all over again.

Well, I'm in a different place now. And I look back on that time with some embarrassment – the goals were very materialistic. But the concept was important. Many of us adults stop dreaming – and we need to capture a sense that God is big enough to do extraordinary things in our lives – not just to feed our selfishness – but for others, and for His glory!

God is still the God of the impossible! God is still a miracle working God! Here's a story about a teenager named Erika Lorentzsen. One cold, rainy afternoon she and her dog Brittainy went hiking in the woods of the Adirondack Mountains. Her dog spotted a squirrel and took off. Erika yelled for Brittainy to come back, but lost her. She hunted for hours and finally found her, but by then she had no idea where she was, and it was starting to get dark. Walking along, she walked into a branch and her glasses went flying. She says, "I was already tired, hungry, and cold. Now I was practically blind!" Shivering, afraid, she curled up with her dog for the night. "Please God," she prayed, "send someone to find us."

The next morning she woke up to find a small, brown sparrow perched right on her leg. She says, I felt silly talking to a bird but I was desperate. 'Can you please lead us home?' I asked.' The bird cocked its head, then took off, landing in a nearby bush. She got up and walked toward it, and it flew away again, but perched on a branch a few feet ahead. Erika thought, "It's like it wants us to follow." Erika and her dog kept up with that sparrow as it flapped from perch to perch. Suddenly it disappeared. Erika says, "That's when I saw the trail – and a forest ranger."

When Erika hadn't gotten home for dinner that night, her mother called the park service. Tons of people were out looking for her, but a little sparrow showed her the way home. "His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me." *Nothing is impossible with God!*

It was Christmas Eve. The Wal-Mart in Cleburne, Texas, was jammed. Check out lines were long. The woman standing in cashier Jeffrey Kandt's line seemed to be living on the edge of subsistence. Her clothes were worn, her hands looked like they had seen their share of hard work. She only had one item in her arms – a Sony Playstation 2. Her son would get the one present he had asked for. She had saved all year to buy it. With tax, the total would be close to \$220. As Jeff the cashier scanned this item, the woman panicked. Where was her money? It wasn't where she remembered putting it. Frantically checking out all her pockets, she began to cry. "Oh crap," the cashier thought. "Why my line?" Now he'd have to call his manager to void the sale and return the game player to a locked shelf. He'd have to shut down his checkout line and wait for her to come back from another part of the crowded store. For heaven's sake, it's *Christmas Eve*. The clock was ticking towards closing time. "I'm going to be late for church," he thought.

And then an amazing thing happened. At the back of the line, a man took out his wallet, took out a \$100 bill, and passed it forward. As the cash moved forward, a \$20 bill was added here, a \$10 bill added there. Someone threw in a bunch of ones dug out of their jeans' pocket. When the collection finally reached the register, the cashier counted it. \$220! Strangers had fulfilled a poor woman's Christmas wish to give her son his dream gift. And as a newspaper reporter writes, relating this event, "And Jeffrey Kandt wasn't late for church. The people in his line in the Cleburne, Texas, Walmart, had become one." *Nothing is impossible with God*

Let me relate several things that happened within a period of a week or two. The first has to do with a lady in a church I had served, a wonderful Christian lady. She had headed up our lay visitation program. I heard she was ill, and thought of contacting her, but didn't. Then I heard that her cancer had spread. Things looked bleak. Sometime later a friend of Nancy's shared more news: the lady went to her doctor for a scan. When the results came back, they were clear – no sign of cancer. The doctor said he simply couldn't understand. But the lady's husband said, "We can."

Around that same time I was waiting in a health center while Nancy was getting a routinely scheduled scan. A woman came over to where I was sitting. She and her husband were members of a church I served. He had been my barber until he retired. But he was irregular in church attendance. I imagine he had some belief, but I saw little evidence that he was a real Christian. His wife told me how he had cancer of the larynx. Then, more recently, he had developed a serious infection. It was terrible. The man became depressed. But a nurse, an aid, prayed for him. Then his wife, tears coming to her eyes, said, "He accepted the Lord. And he is a different man!" To be truthful, back in those days when I was at that church I'm not sure how much I would have believed this could have happened, especially since the man is in his eighties. *Nothing is impossible with God!*

Healing is a miracle. Being rescued is a miracle. Unselfish sharing is a miracle. Salvation is a miracle. Love is a miracle. *Do you believe in the nothing-is-impossible God?*

Now I know, miracles don't always happen when we want them. We know that. And we have to be careful that our relationship with God isn't based on God having to do what we expect all of the time. Or that God has to perform a miracle or else we won't believe in Him. If that's our perspective, our faith is on shaky ground! God sometimes has other plans for us, and His will and purpose encompass more than just what we can see and understand. *But some of us here need to dream again, and hope again, and believe in a God for whom nothing is impossible!*

In Luke's Christmas story, we see the great faith that Mary had. She was confused, frightened, but she moved beyond that and she *trusted God. She believed God!* In spite of her humble station in life, in spite of her probably being young (a teenager), in spite of her being a virgin, she believed God would do exactly as He said He'd do: *God would give her a Son who would be the Savior of the world!*

Faith is important if God's miracle-working power is to be released. Jesus would say to people, "According to your faith, let it be done to you." Faith is not *the only factor* in God doing the impossible – but Jesus taught that it is an *important element*.

Then, too, Mary said "Yes" to God! Luke 1:38 tells us, "Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word'". This very ordinary, teenaged peasant girl was invited by the Lord of all creation to play a part in bringing hope and salvation to the world. Mary said "yes" to God. "Here I am, Lord. Do with me as You want."

God wants *us* to play a part in bringing hope and salvation to the world by living as a real follower of Jesus. When we unreservedly say "yes" to God, *nothing is impossible!*

*Harry L. Kaufhold, Jr.
Community United Methodist Church
December 23, 2018*