

Written Copy: Luke 1:34-38 “Nothing is Impossible”

LWML Sunday: 20th Sunday @ Pentecost

Sunday, October 6th, 2024

Text: Luke 1:34-38

³⁴ And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵ And the angel answered 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 called holy---the Son of God. ³⁶ And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. ³⁷ For nothing will be impossible with God." ³⁸ And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

Exegetical Statement

The Lord chose Mary, a virgin born into the line of David, to be the mother of Jesus, the Savior of the world. But that seemed impossible: she wasn't married yet betrothed to Joseph. In order to get pregnant, the normal way she would have to sin by breaking her vow of celibacy. And how could a human girl give birth to the divine Savior? But with the Lord all things are possible. He sent His angelic messenger to call her into service. The Lord would work supernaturally so that the Spirit, in His overshadowing her, would make God the father. While she questioned the logistics of how this could be, she never doubted that the Lord could make this happen. Even though she didn't understand the how, or even what exactly her son would be, by faith she believed and answered, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word."

Focus Statement:

Nothing is impossible for God. He takes people who by themselves are not up to the task and equips them, making them worthy through the gift of His Spirit. He did the impossible through the supernatural birth of His Son, who did the impossible taking on and paying the price for the sins of the whole world. He gives to us His Spirit who equips us to be a part of His miraculous working to call others to faith. He loves to do the impossible through us.

Function Statement:

Why it's important to know:

We see the work of sharing the Gospel and calling people to faith as being impossible for us. We are not theologians or evangelists. Why would anyone want to listen to us? How can my meager donation to missions help when the need is so great?

What the hearer should do as a result:

By the faith He gives and nurtures we can answer the call with Mary's words "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word", realizing it's not us who does the work of calling, conversion, and building faith, but the Lord in whom all things are possible.

Subject Sentence: In our life and service all things are possible for God

Introduction

Whenever I'm considering starting a new Bible Study, I think back on what have been the popular topics in the past that our members seem to be interested in. By far one of the most popular was our Bible Study on the tv series, The Chosen. Other popular topics have been certain books of the Bible, namely Revelation. Our Gospel of Mark study seems to draw interest. Certain Old Testament historical books have done well including studies on Genesis and Exodus. Other topical studies have drawn interest such as one I did called "Faith on the Edge: the Unexplained". It dealt with near death experiences, our dreams, demons, and angels.

But there are two topics that many don't have any interest in: Evangelism and Stewardship. Problem is, as members of Christ's Church on earth, we are called to participate in both. We are called to be good managers of God's gracious gifts to us, and especially of the most gracious gift: the Gospel Message. Yet all of us struggle with this call to serve. While there is more than one reason for this, I want to focus on something that is dealt with in our Gospel Lesson. It's the testimony of the angel Gabriel to Mary and her response in **Luke 1:37-38** ³⁷ **For nothing will be impossible for God.** ³⁸ **Then Mary said, "See, I am the Lord's servant. May it happen to me as you have said."** We know these verses, and we might even agree with them in essence as a general rule. But how much do you struggle to make them apply to you personally?

Old Testament Witness of God Equipping to do the Impossible

The Old Testament is filled with people who God called and equipped to do the seemingly impossible.

Take for example Samuel. He was just a boy who didn't know who the LORD was, and who had never heard or responded to His voice, even though he lived and served in the temple. Yet the LORD came to him and called him repeatedly, first to know and believe in Him, and then to be His prophetic voice. And his first mission? Speak words of judgement and condemnation to the high priest Eli, the man who had taken care of him since his mother had brought him to the temple to serve the LORD when he was around 3-4 years old. He had to tell Eli that because his sons had sinned greatly before the LORD as priests serving at the temple, and since Eli knew about it yet did nothing, he and his family would stand condemned forever, and no sacrifice could atone for them. But Samuel went on to be a faithful prophet, and all of his prophetic utterances came to pass. He was the last Judge of Israel, having the honor of anointing David as king, from whom would come the Messiah.

But men are not the only ones called and equipped by God to do the seemingly impossible. There was a woman named Rahab who lived in Jericho at that time of Israel's coming into and taking possession of the Promised Land. She was an unlikely person to serve the LORD, being the keeper of a house of prostitution. But the LORD had planted faith in her heart. She no longer trusted in the false gods of her people, but turned to serve the LORD, willing to sacrifice her own life and the life of her family to save the spies the LORD had sent by letting them escape by ropes she provided down the wall when the city soldiers came for them. And for that the LORD blessed this woman by saving her from the destruction of Jericho. And although she was not born into the people of Israel, He grafted her in and made her part of the lineage leading up to the birth of Jesus.

Then there was Ruth, who was not from one of the tribes of Israel, but came from the Moabites, who had been enemies of God's people since their march up to enter the Promised Land. She worshiped the idols of her people. Yet she came to know the LORD God through her mother-in-law, Naomi. The LORD called her to faith through Naomi, and she was willing to leave behind her family, her nation, and her God, and serve the LORD by going with and caring for her mother-in-law. As she faithfully confessed in **Ruth 1:16** "**Do not urge me to abandon you or to turn back from following you. Because wherever you go, I will go, and wherever you make your home, I will make my home. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God**". And the LORD blessed this faithful woman, even though not born as one of His chosen people, grafting her in so that she became part of the lineage leading up to Jesus.

There were other faithful women who, in a culture that did not always find women to be important, did the seemingly impossible to save God's people. There was Deborah, whom the LORD lifted up to become a Prophetess and Judge of Israel. She led the army of Israel against its enemies because the man who was commander of the army was too afraid to go without her. And as she prophesied, the death of the commander of the enemy's army came at the hands of a woman, who invited him into her tent, fed him, and then as he lay in hiding, covered up, took a hammer and tent peg and put it through his heart.

There was Esther, the Jewish woman whom the Lord lifted up to become Queen of Persia while the Jews were in exile. She did the seemingly impossible when she put her life on the line, coming unannounced before the king, in order to foil the plot of his right-hand man to exterminate all the Jews throughout the kingdom of Persia.

The Witness of Mary whom God equipped to do the impossible

But the greatest of all the women God lifted up to serve Him by doing the seemingly impossible is the lady who is the subject of our Gospel Lesson: Mary. She was a young virgin from the backwater town of Nazareth. She was betrothed to Joseph, meaning she had signed an agreement to marry him, and in the meantime remain a virgin until the day of their wedding. This is the lady who the LORD chose for one of the most seemingly impossible tasks.

The Lord chose her to be the one who would conceive and give birth to the long-awaited Messiah, the anointed one, the Christ, the one promised from the line of David, the One who would save His people and restore the kingdom of God among them. Not only that, but this child would be “the Son of the Most High”, meaning this human child would, at the same time, be the divine God in the flesh. How on earth could that be? What did that mean? In her present state, betrothed yet not married, it would seem impossible for her to conceive any child without breaking her vows to Joseph. And how on earth can anyone conceive and give birth to the God man?

But with the LORD all things are possible, even when we don't understand how that can be. The angel Gabriel told her that the Holy Spirit would overshadow or envelop her. What did that mean? She didn't know. We today really don't understand it either. Yet through the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit this human child would be God the Son in the flesh. Talk about something that seems impossible. But as our Gospel Lesson testifies **Luke 1:37-38** ³⁷ **For nothing will be impossible for God.** ³⁸ **Then Mary said, “See, I am the Lord's servant. May it happen to me as you have said.”**

The Impossible Supernatural Work Christ Comes to Do in You

That child that Mary gave birth to came to do the impossible for you. He came to take the sins of the whole world, including yours, upon His shoulders. He took them to the cross and gave His precious life for them so that you and all mankind might be saved. He saved us all from the devil's grasp which was over all mankind. He saved us from being judged worthy of eternal suffering in hell. And He came to save us for a life lived with Him now by faith that doesn't end when your body dies in this world. He came to save you for eternal life to come. That would be impossible for anyone else to do, but not for Jesus.

He is the One who does the impossible in your life. He sent His Spirit to make all that He earned in His suffering, death, and resurrection yours personally by giving you the power to have and hold it by faith. It's the work of conversion, giving you a new heart and mind that wants to serve your Lord God. It's the supernatural work that only He can do in you and does through the words of the Gospel joined to the water of your baptism.

And He comes to equip you to do the seemingly impossible tasks He calls His Church to be a part of: those scary things we call Evangelism and Stewardship. As broken sinful human beings these things really are an impossibility. We have hearts that are selfish and don't want to share things with others, especially those we don't know. We look at the great need around us here in Flint and in the world and doubt that we could ever make a difference. And when it comes to sharing our faith, how could we ever make a difference in the life of an unbeliever. After all, you don't consider yourself a trained theologian, how could you ever change the heart of a stubborn unbeliever?

Do you think our Old Testament heroes ever wondered how they could do what the LORD was asking them to do? How hard do you think it was for Mary to say, "Let it be done to me as you have said"? God called them and He calls us to do what is impossible for us, but never impossible for Him.

He is at work to build you up and equip you to do what seems impossible. He does that through Bible Study, devotional time, and here in Worship. He gives us the encouragement and faithful witness of each other, including those who are part of the Lutheran Women in Mission. They gather to study His Word and draw closer to Him in faith. And through the miraculous and supernatural work of the Spirit upon their hearts they seek to live out His call to share their time, talents, and treasures to spread the Gospel and grow His kingdom. Through their collection of Mites our Lutheran Women in Mission ladies are supporting two seminary students, one of which is Metro Police Officer Pete that visits and worships with us. They are the ladies who help cook for Franklin Avenue Mission. They help provide the food for the Funeral Dinners as well as other dinners we host for our members.

And they are sponsoring Orphan Grain Train, a Christian world-wide humanitarian effort to bring humanitarian aid, and merciful care including food, clothing, and supplies to those in need. Along with that they work to spread the Gospel in word and action. The local Orphan Grain Train chapter in Sebewaing is collecting items to help the victims of hurricane Helene. Information on how you can help can be found on the bulletin board in the Fellowship Hall. Here is something happening right now where the need is so great it seems impossible to help. But remember what the angel Gabriel told Mary as well as you and I today, nothing is impossible when it comes to the will and work of God in and through us.

Conclusion

God has called His faithful followers in the past to do what seems impossible. He does the same today as He calls us to be good stewards of His gracious gifts, and especially that most gracious and precious gift that is the Gospel Message. This may seem impossible for us, but not impossible for God working through us. He takes the Mite offerings of the Lutheran Women in Mission and uses it to help across the world, here in our country, and even right here among us. He takes their gifts of time and talent and uses it to benefit us to help us grow in our faith. And His Spirit is at work in you. He did the impossible for you in Jesus' death and resurrection. He did the impossible in you when the Spirit gave you the new heart of faith and the desire to worship and serve Him. He gives you more than enough to support your life with some to give back to Him. And He has given you the Gospel Message. May He continue to grow your faith in Him to do the impossible, as you work to be His Church, moved to serve, and who are forgiven when we fail. Amen.