

THE ANGELS OF ADVENT

LUKE 1:26-38

THE TEACHING ANGEL



FIRST BYRON CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

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INTRODUCTION

Are you facing an impossible situation in your life? A challenge you cannot overcome? A family problem you cannot solve? A terrible decision you cannot undo? A financial pit you cannot dig out of? A conflict you cannot reconcile? A sin you cannot reverse?

If not, you will one day. One day you will look at a mountain or a chasm facing you and say, "It's impossible!" Some of us are looking at it today. But whether we need it today or a later date, we can get courage to face our present or our future from God's words to Mary, the mother of Jesus: **"For nothing will be impossible with God"** (Luke 1:37).

We can use these words to climb the impossible mountain or to bridge the impossible chasm. These words replace defeatism, discouragement, and despair with hope, courage, and faith.

CONTEXT

We know this story well. For thousands of years, God has been setting the scene for the entrance of Jesus into the world. Everything is in place and going according to his plan. At this point, God called an angel, "Gabriel, six months ago I sent you to Jerusalem with a message about a special baby for an old man, Zechariah. Now you're going to Nazareth with a message about an even more special baby for a young woman named Mary.



How does God make the impossible possible?



1. GOD GIVES BIG JOBS TO SMALL PEOPLE (26-29)

Gabriel's previous mission was to a prestigious priest in a prestigious place doing prestigious work. This mission was jarringly different. He was sent to give a high calling to a low person in a low place.

A low place

Nazareth was in Galilee, a region that the Jews looked down on because the people were so racially mixed.

If Galilee was a despised region, then Nazareth was at the bottom of the Galilean pile. It was isolated and far from any major trade routes. It was so insignificant, that it was never mentioned in the Old Testament. Nazareth was renowned for its corruption and for its immorality due to the fact that Rome stationed a large number of soldiers there. No wonder when Philip first told Nathaniel about Jesus of Nazareth, he responded, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46).

A low person

Whereas Zechariah and Elizabeth were part of Jerusalem's elite, Mary and Joseph were the lowest of the low. Mary was about fourteen, and, like most girls of that time and culture, she was uneducated. She was engaged to be married to Joseph, a young apprentice carpenter. In the world's eyes, she was a nobody from a nothing town that would amount to nothing.

A high calling

"Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" Quite the opening line from Gabriel, isn't it? "Greetings" is literally "Rejoice!" "Favored one" means someone who's been a passive recipient of God's grace. "The Lord is with you" was often spoken by angels to encourage those who were about to face an enormous challenge. Little wonder that **she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be** (29). It was like a nobody from nowhere being called, "Your Majesty."

CHANGE YOUR STORY WITH GOD'S STORY

Does your background say "Impossible"? Maybe you are from a humble background. People look down on you because of where you grew up or went to school. You'll never be anyone special or do anything special. Remember, 'impossible' is not in God's vocabulary.

Does your family say "Impossible"? Maybe your family background is embarrassing. Whether it's poverty, or immorality, or shame, or looks, you are stigmatized because of your family. Remember, 'impossible' is not in God's vocabulary.

GOD GIVES BIG JOBS
TO SMALL PEOPLE



How did Mary recover from her big shock?
God gave big promises.



2. GOD GIVES BIG PROMISES TO SMALL PEOPLE (30-33)

Mary was thoroughly shaken by this high and noble greeting from this high and noble being. **"Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God,"** he comforted her (30), before going on to explain himself further.

Mary's Son

"Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus" (31). So far, so relatively normal: conception, birth, naming. The only hint of something out of the ordinary might be his name, Jesus, meaning Savior. But it wasn't an uncommon name in that culture. However, it did begin to move the announcement from the normal to the abnormal, the natural to the supernatural.

God's Son

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 father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end (32-33). Now we're into another realm and dimension altogether. This is far from normal, far from natural, far from ordinary: He will be great? The Son of the Most High? The King of Israel? The eternal king? The universal king?

CHANGE YOUR STORY WITH GOD'S STORY

Let us worship. This is the fulfillment of multiple Old Testament promises, especially those in 2 Samuel 7:8-16. The wait is over. The King and his Kingdom have come. Worship Jesus the Great, Jesus the Son of the Most High, Jesus the King, Jesus the forever King, Jesus the universal King.

Let us wonder. This is not only Mary's son, but God's Son. A Great One inside such a small one, God and man united in one person. That's impossible! Not with God, for nothing will be impossible for God. Take time to ponder this impossible possibility and this possible impossibility.

GOD GIVES BIG PROMISES
TO SMALL PEOPLE



How did Mary ever believe these big promises?
God gave her big faith.



3. GOD GIVES BIG FAITH TO SMALL PEOPLE (34-38)

Mary's Question

And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" (34). Unlike Zechariah's question about Gabriel's promise of a son in his old age (18), this is not a question of doubt, unbelief, or skepticism, but faith seeking understanding. She's not questioning the *what*, she's asking about the *how*. That's why, unlike Zechariah, Mary got an answer not a chastisement.

Gabriel's Explanation

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"** (35). The answer is found not in human action but in divine action. Just as the Holy Spirit hovered over the original creation to bring everything out of nothing at the beginning (Gen. 1:2), so he will also hover over Mary's womb to bring the Savior out of nothing and give the world a new beginning. This was the highest lesson Gabriel ever taught, the hardest lesson any human ever learned. God with human genes! To encourage Mary's faith, Gabriel instructed her that barren Elizabeth has been blessed with a baby well past normal child-bearing age (36), for **"nothing will be impossible with God"** (37).

Mary's Faith

Mary said, **"Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word"** (38). Isn't that the most astounding faith? The old respected believer Zechariah rejected a simpler promise, but lowly Mary believed an even greater one. "I'm ready to serve the Lord," she assured Gabriel. "I'm at his disposal. May your Word be fulfilled in me." Remember, to be pregnant outside marriage was not only to invite ridicule and criticism but even stoning (Deut. 22:23ff). What whole-hearted surrender, what warm-hearted devotion!

CHANGE YOUR STORY WITH GOD'S STORY

Believe God. God has given us exceeding great and many promises in the Gospel. Do we believe them so fully and speedily? Whatever your impossible situation, it's nowhere near as uniquely impossible as Mary's. Yet she believed that all things are possible with God.

Surrender to God. Is God calling you to follow him in a particularly dangerous path, a path that will involve sacrifice and suffering. With Mary, say, "I am the Lord's property, devoted to his will!" God gives big faith to enable big surrenders.

GOD GIVES BIG FAITH
TO SMALL PEOPLE



Hear > Change > Tell



CONCLUSION



PRAYER: Lord of impossibilities, I bring my impossibilities to you and pray that you would show once again that nothing is impossible to you. Amen.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What impossible situation have you faced in the past that God has made possible?
2. Where else in the Bible did God give big jobs to small people?
3. What promises of God do you say "That's impossible!" to?
4. In what ways does Christ's incarnation encourage your faith when facing an impossible challenge?
5. What impossible task has God given you just now? What does Mary's response to her "impossible task" teach you?
6. How does God use angels today? (Heb 1:14).

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