

IMPOSSIBLE POSSIBILITIES

Luke 1:26-38

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As Max Lucado tells the story, the visiting professor was about half way through his lecture when a young man in the auditorium stood up and started firing questions:

“Are you telling us that God almighty really became Mary’s little boy?”
“Yes,” said the professor.

“Are you really asking us to buy into a religion banked on a young girl’s dream of divine pregnancy?” “Yes,” said the professor.

“Are you insinuating that the life of Jesus then actually affects me now?” “Yes,” said the professor.

The young man stood silent for a few moments and then said, “How absurd,” and sat down.¹

Though it has been told many times many ways, when someone looks beyond the tinsel and peeks through the hay, the Christmas story still seems rather absurd. Why would God pick a Mary to mother his only begotten son? How odd of God to become a baby. How does a personal relationship with Jesus Christ impact my present life? I’d like to consider these questions with you today with the glad and certain assurance that with God, all things are possible.

WHO WOULD CHOOSE A MARY TO BEAR THE SON OF GOD? God would. God did.

Fred Buechner in one of his writings tries to imagine the thoughts of Gabriel as he delivers the message to Mary. “She struck him as hardly old enough to have a child at all, let alone this child. But he had been entrusted with a message and that’s what angels do—deliver messages. ‘You mustn’t be afraid Mary,’ said Gabriel, and as he said it, he only hoped she wouldn’t notice that beneath the great golden wings he himself was trembling with fear to think that the whole future of salvation hung on the answer of that little girl.”

Mary, *You are highly favored*. What does that mean, to be highly favored? To be highly favored in a horse race means you are likely to win. To be highly favored in an election means that you are affectionately supported by friends. To be highly favored by God means that you have been chosen for a partnership which fulfills the will of God on earth as it is in heaven. Mary is chosen.

Jesus said to his disciples, *You did not choose me, I have chosen you, and*

appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last (John 15:16). You are a chosen person today.

When I was growing up, I was a little kid among older teens and adults. On Sunday afternoons we all played ball, not in nice parks and great recreation centers as we do today. In the winters it was basketball in the barn loft. In the summer it was baseball in the barnyard. An essential ritual of all those games was the act of choosing. What I remember most is never being chosen.

When at age 17 I felt the brush of angel wings and heard the voice of God calling me to ministry, it was hard to believe. With Mary I exclaimed, "How can these things be?" I had never been chosen for anything in my entire life. Yet God honored me with a divine invitation. The wonder of it all through the years has remained a mystery. How odd of God to choose me.

Kris Kristofferson wrote some lyrics several years ago that Elvis Presley recorded. In that little song the question is asked,

"Why me, Lord?
What have I ever done
To deserve even one of the pleasures I've known?
Tell me Lord, what did I ever do, to deserve loving you and the
kindness you've shown?"

Do you ever have those feelings? The feelings of awe, amazement, and wonder that God has a purpose, a place and a mission for you.

At least once during the holidays I like to sit down and watch Frank Capra's classic movie, It's a Wonderful Life. You know the story. Jimmy Stewart, in the person of George Bailey, envisions a life of adventure and travel, building highways and designing modern cities. Instead he spends his life trying to keep the Bailey Building and Loan afloat in Bedford Falls. When his Uncle Billy loses \$8,000 just as the bank examiner arrives, George despairs of faithfulness. Sitting at a bar on Christmas Eve he asks God for help. That's when Clarence the Angel comes and shows George what the world might have been like without him.

You are a child of the universe,
No less than the moon and stars.
You have a purpose for being here.
Whether or not it is clear to you
No doubt your life is unfolding as it should.

God has a way to weave His will into the lives of ordinary people who are willing to faithfully follow.

WHO WOULD SEND A BABY TO SAVE A WORLD FROM SIN? God would and God did.

We hold babies. A baby, a bare-bottomed, bouncing, burping baby boy is called the Son of God Most High. How odd of God. The omnipotent, almighty, everlasting, Lord of the Universe becomes an infant, needing His diaper changed. It is more than my mind can comprehend. Yet that is what God did. Don't let the familiarity of the story rob you of its meaning, God becoming a helpless infant.

What is more helpless than a human being at birth? When a baby giraffe is born it is hurled 10 feet to the ground where it lands on its back. Within seconds the newborn rolls to an upright position and takes its first view of the world. That is when the mother giraffe positions herself directly over the calf and begins kicking it until the newborn learns to stand on its own. If you are a giraffe you grow up quick to make it in the world.

With humans it is different. A baby could never make it on its own. A baby is helpless, totally at the mercy of others for survival. We hold babies. We need to think about that today.

According to the paper this week, four architects are now proposing to build a new World Trade Center that is bigger and more spectacular than ever. Daniel Libeskind of Berlin, who offered a rendering called Life Victorious said, "A skyscraper rises above its predecessors, restoring the spiritual peak of the city, creating an icon that speaks to our vitality in the face of danger and our optimism in the aftermath of tragedy."

Isn't that the American way? Let's do it bigger and better than we have ever done it before. We like being big. In our worship of big buildings, big churches, big malls, big events, we need to remember the nature of God's invasion of earth. No wonder Christmas is odd. The Almighty arrived as a baby.

They were looking for a king
To slay their foes and lift them high,
Thou cam'st a little baby thing
That makes a woman cry.

We hold babies, but don't be fooled. Babies hold us. If you don't believe that, ask any grandparent present. Babies get on your mind and in your heart and pretty soon control your life.

The baby's hands in Bethlehem
Were small and softly curled.
But held within their dimpled grasp
The hope of all the world.

When they moved from New Jersey to Tennessee they were very ambitious and upwardly mobile. Trying to make it in a competitive world, they often held parties in their elaborate home carefully checking the invitation list to assure the

presence of just the right persons. There was a little girl who lived in this home. Thanks to neighbors she regularly went to church, even though her parents never attended with her. On one particular night the party got loud and a little rough. That's when the young girl, awakened from her sleep, walked down the grand stair case and in a voice that was kind and sweet said, "Let us say the blessing please." Without waiting for a reply she began to pray, "God is great, God is good and we thank him for this food. Amen." In a matter of minutes the party was over. People suddenly remembered they had other urgent things to do. The following Sunday Mr. And Mrs. Mom and Dad walked down the center aisle and joined the church. Never underestimate the power of a child! A little child shall lead them.

WHO WOULD EMBRACE RELIGION TO FIND THE ANSWER TO LIVING?
You could.

Faith is more than a trivial pursuit. Faith is plunging into the depths of truth. Faith is asking the question, but it is getting beyond the question and offering your life. What would happen if you moved from marginal Christianity to a meaningful relationship with Jesus Christ today? What would happen in your life if you were to take that risk?

You see, Church is not about the music, it is not about the building. Church is not even about the sermon. Church is about a vital faith in God.

A pastor received this letter from a parishioner challenging the pastor's obsessiveness about sermons. "Dear Sir, it seems ministers feel their sermons are very important and spend a great deal of time preparing them. Over the last 30 years I have probably heard 3000 sermons and I must say I cannot remember a single one of them."

The pastor wrote this reply: "Dear Sir, I have been married for 30 years. During that time I have eaten 32,850 meals. I must say that I cannot remember the menu of a single meal. Yet I have the distinct impression that without them I would have starved to death a long time ago." God works in mysterious ways.

The important thing today is not the sermon. It is not about the preacher. It is about God who chose to climb down on earth for the likes of you and me. The important thing today is a vital relationship with Jesus Christ. God does not offer us an explanation. He only extends an invitation. *I am come that you may have life. Life in all its fullness.* Could you use a little dose of real life today?

Faith is an obedient life. The key to the story is in that little phrase of Mary's, "*May it be as you have said.*" When the day of opportunity meets the delight of human response, God can do great things.

David Legge was living the good life as a second-year law student at Yale. With a promising career and plenty of time to party, David had a kind of life that would

make young men ache with ambition and old men seethe with envy. Yet on the inside David was empty. One day while writing a paper on Abraham Lincoln, David realized he knew more about ex-presidents than Jesus Christ. So, he bought a Bible and began reading it. It didn't happen all at once but in God's time David developed an authentic faith in Jesus Christ. Then one day on a personal retreat, says David, "I surrendered my life completely to the will of God. That day I discovered the most dramatic consolation I have ever known." He said, "I will never forget the sense of peace and consolation that settled in on my young life on that particular day." David is one of many young adults who are finding their way home to God these days.

Could you use the presence of God in your life? You see, that is the miracle of Christmas. That is what it is all about. Christmas is about God connecting with you and me.

A.W. Tozer once said, "Anything God has ever done, He can do now. Anything God has ever done anywhere, He can do here. Anything God has ever done for anyone, He can do for you. With God, nothing is impossible."

After all, isn't that what Christmas is all about? Amen.

Endnotes

1. Max Lucado, When God Came Near, Multnomah, Sisters Oregon, 1999.

