

The Possible of the Impossible
Luke 1:26-38; November 27, 2016

Page: 855

Introduction:

- I don't know about you guys, but Thanksgiving week is one of my favorite weeks of the year. We kicked it off last Saturday with our Thanksgiving Meal Giveaway and then we had a great members' meeting and tailgate party last Sunday afternoon. And then this week has been full of food and fun with family and friends. Prepping and cooking a turkey with my kids, playing flag football with my boys and friends, watching some football on TV and even getting some Black Friday shopping in...at home in front of my computer eating leftovers.
- Well, today we kick off a five week Advent Series called, "The Wonder of the Story." This series will conclude on Friday night, December 23, with Christmas at the Chevalier. We will be having a Friday night service instead of a service on Christmas Day. This will be a great opportunity to celebrate the birth of Christ and invite others to celebrate with you.

Transition and Main Point: The story that we're going to read today is a story of where the impossible becomes possible because of God's marvelous power and plan.

The Context:

The story that we are going to read today is found in the Gospel of Luke. Luke is one of the four Gospel accounts and his purpose in writing this book was to give an "orderly account" of the life and work of Christ so that we could have certainty concerning what really happened with Jesus. But before we read our passage today, let me bring you up to speed with the "bigger" story that this story is a part of.

Act 1. God's Kingdom Established in **Creation** (Genesis 1-2).

Act 2. Rebellion in the Kingdom at the **Fall** (Genesis 3).

Act 3. The King Chooses **Israel**, *Initiating Redemption*

Scene 1: A People for the King (Genesis 4 to Deuteronomy).

Scene 2: A Land for his People (Joshua to Malachi)

From Conquest to Exile

From Exile to Jerusalem

The Silent Years: 400 years of silence between Malachi and John the beginning of the NT.

During this time, there was no new prophet-mediated divine revelation.

- Let this sink it. 400 years. Think about one day, sending your kids off to college and then waiting around for them to call. "Well, I haven't heard from Ava in a few days. Leigh,

you think she's forgotten about us? Does she still love us?"

Act 4. King **Jesus** Comes, *Accomplishing Redemption* (Gospels)

This is where Luke picks up and gives his orderly account. He begins by sharing the story in Luke 1:5-25 of how an angel named Gabriel visited a priest named Zechariah and promised Zechariah the birth of a son who was to be called "John" (Luke 1:13). The wonder of this story is Zechariah was an old man and his wife, Elizabeth was "advanced in years" also. John would be the forerunner to Jesus, preparing people for his coming. Zechariah left the temple that day literally speechless. Gabriel said he wouldn't be able to speak until this promise, the promise of a son, was fulfilled. Well, guess what happened? Zechariah's wife, Elizabeth, conceived and she kept herself hidden for the first five months (all the while Zechariah remained speechless until John was born - see Luke 1:57-66). This is where we pick up the story today.

Read Luke 1:26-38

Today I want to share with you three responses that I believe this story demands of all of us.

1. Believe in the Faithfulness and Power of God (1:26-37).

The Announcement Setting (1:26-27):

- The first few verses in this passage set the context for the announcement of Jesus' birth.
- The **Timing**: Sixth months into Elizabeth's pregnancy with John.
- The **Messenger**: Gabriel, an angel sent from God.
 - Gabriel is the same angel who made the birth announcement to Zechariah.
- The **Location**: Nazareth, a city of Galilee
 - Nazareth was a small village roughly 50+ miles north of Jerusalem, not the highly public place where Gabriel announced John's birth.
- The **Recipient**: Mary, a virgin betrothed to Joseph, of the house of David.
 - Virgin: this expresses her chaste stage, which is confirmed in 1:34 as she confesses her lack of sexual experience (see also Matt. 1:23).
 - Betrothed to Joseph:
 - ◆ The language of "betrothal" refers to the first stage of the Jewish marriage process. In this first stage of betrothal or "engagement," a man would formally agree to marry a woman and a put money on it (see Mal. 2:14). Then, the man and woman would be legally married, but he wouldn't take her home to live with him until a year later when there would be a marriage ceremony (the second stage).
 - ◆ Though Luke doesn't explicitly point of Isaiah 7:14, there's a high likelihood that it was in his mind. There, the prophet Isaiah says,

"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."

The Birth Announcement (1:28-37):

Mary is the Object of God's Favor and Presence (1:28-30)

- 1:28: Mary is addressed as the “favored one.” She is a recipient and special object of God’s grace. Additionally, he assures her of God’s presence with her through all of the events that he’s about to reveal.
- 1:29: Mary is “troubled.” Can you blame her? She’s just heard from an angel that she is the special object of God’s grace and that his presence is with her. She’s gotta be thinking, “God, what’s going on? What are you going to do with me?”
- 1:30: Gabriel calms her fears by restating the reality that she has found favor with God.

Mary will conceive and birth Jesus by the Holy Spirit (1:31, 34-37)

- Jesus is the NT version of “Joshua” in the OT meaning, “God Saves.”
- 1:34: Mary’s Bewilderment
 - She doesn’t doubt the announcement but rather she’s puzzled how this birth can occur since she has not “known a man,” aka, had sexual relations, and she’s vowing to keep her virginity during this betrothal season. In other words, she gets normal biology and sees Gabriel’s announcement as a present conception and not something down the road after she has consummated her marriage.
- 1:35-37: Gabriel’s Response
 - The answer to Mary’s question is direct divine involvement through the power of the Holy Spirit. This verse parallels 1:15 and the Spirit’s filling of Elizabeth’s womb. The Spirit is God’s active and life-giving agent. Interesting here, this imagery that God will “overshadow” Mary is an allusion to the Shekinah cloud in the OT that rested on the tabernacle (see Exod. 40:34-35; Num. 9:18; 10:34). It’s referenced again later on in Luke 9:34 when the disciples are overshadowed by a cloud on the mountain at Jesus’ transfiguration. In other words, God’s glorious presence will come upon Mary through the Holy Spirit to produce the conception of the holy, Son of God.
 - Jesus is a God’s child in a way that no child has ever been since Adam. He is the second Adam, who’s coming is to reverse the tragic effects and consequences of the first Adam’s fall.
 - Gabriel gives confirmation by sharing the news of Elizabeth’s upcoming birth (“And Behold...”) - see 1:20. Elizabeth’s conception is another reminder that “nothing is impossible with God.”
 - Given the existence of a creative God, this isn’t impossible. God originally created from nothing and gave life to Adam without a sexual act so there’s no reason that he can’t do it again. Nothing is beyond God’s power. J. J. Van Oosterzee, a Dutch pastor and scholar in the 19th century once said, “The laws of nature are not chains which the Divine Legislator has laid upon Himself; they are threads which He holds in His hand, and which He shortens or lengthens at will.”
 - The virgin birth is significant for three main reasons:
 - ◆ It shows that salvation must come from the Lord, not through mere human effort.
 - ◆ It made possible the uniting of full deity and full humanity in one person.
 - ◆ It made possible Christ’s humanity without inherited sin.

“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons” (Galatians 4:4-5).

This story demands that I believe certain things about God:

- God is faithful. He promised salvation long ago and he’s bringing it to past.
 - You can trust him. He keeps his word. He never breaks his promises.
- God is powerful. The impossible turns into possible because of God’s power.
 - What are you facing today that seems impossible?
 - Have you left God out of the equation?
- God is present and you can rest in his presence.
 - Though his plan may be difficult, trying and filled with suffering, we never go through it alone.

2. Submit to Jesus as your Forever King (1:31-33, 35).

Let’s now go back and unpack some of these truths about Jesus.

Jesus’ Origin: He is God’s Son

- He is the Son of the Most High. This is simply another way of saying that he will be the “Son of God.”

Jesus’ Position and Role: He is the Promised Forever Davidic King

- Jesus is the fulfillment of one of the major promises and covenants in the OT.

And I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before you. And I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth....He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son (2 Samuel 7:9, 13-14 ESV).

- The initial fulfillment of 2 Samuel 7 is found in David’s son, Solomon, but the ultimate fulfillment is found clearly realized in Jesus. Reflect on the history of Israel: king after king after king who was more evil than the one before him and on and on. Finally, God sends Jesus.
- “Nothing will overcome Jesus or bring a halt to his reign” (Darrell Bock). Jesus is the hope of salvation for all humanity (there’s no one like him).

This story demands that you respond to Jesus as your forever king:

- Who is your king? Who rules your heart? Who has the functional authority in your life to drive decisions?
- The hardest part of coming to Jesus is laying down your own throne and bowing on your knees in front of King of Jesus.
- Does Jesus reign over your relationships?

- Does Jesus reign over your possessions?
- What would it look like this Christmas to display to the world that Jesus is your king and not things?

3. Be a Vessel Ready for God to do the Impossible (1:38).

What do you notice about Mary's response?

- Mary is an exemplary servant and saint in her response to God's grace.
- She responds with submission, obedience, humility and trust. As Bock notes, "God can do with her what he wishes."
- Additionally, she really believes that God has the power to do what he says he's gonna do and she's a willing and ready vessel.
- But don't glaze over her response because there was much at stake:
 - Potential problems with Joseph
 - Her reputation with her own family and others
- There's always risk when it comes to following Jesus and often times the barrier is ourselves. Are we willing to lay down our lives and preferences for God's will to be done.

This story demands that you respond to God's grace in your own life and make yourself a ready vessel to be used by God.

- God will use anyone or anything to accomplish his kingdom purposes. Are you ready?

Conclusion:

This is an incredible story God keeping his promises and displaying his power by making the impossible possible. Imagine bringing God into that impossible situation in your life. What are the possibilities now?