

Mission Possible

Scripture: Luke 1:34 – 45

Boy, I think verse 37 of our scripture reading from the Gospel of Luke holds the essence of Christmas – *‘For nothing will be impossible with God’*

When writing this message that I have entitled ‘Mission Possible’ I found myself struggling to separate my thoughts from a show from my childhood – ‘Mission Impossible’. I can not tell you how many times my mind regressed to a tape recorder talking and then a fuse burning away – Miss you Peter Graves!

Ok, enough of that – Imagine ladies, you are minding your own business going about your day as usual when out of no where comes a voice and then a vision. An angel appears and informs you that you are going to have a baby. I do not care if you have an active love life or not, just imagine that an angel appears and informs you that you are going to have a baby. No, not through adoption but through natural childbirth. You are pregnant! Yes, you are – SURPRISED!

Now, for the men here today, imagine that you are the partner of the one whom has just been informed of this news. Your girlfriend or spouse hears voices, then claims to seen an apparition, and then lays it on you that she is expecting. What a day! At this point you do not know whether to take her to the doctor or run as fast as you can away from her, or fall to your knees in prayer. Yes, your companion in life is pregnant and it is not your child.

OK, back to our passage, God's angel suddenly appeared to the most implausible of people. In our story, God's angel appears to a poor Palestinian girl. God's angel appears to an unwed adolescent girl. First God's angel appears to a virgin and tells her she is pregnant. Secondly God's angel tells her that she will name the child Jesus. How bold of the angel to choose the name for her child! And thirdly God's angel tells her that her child will be considered the Son of the Most High and an heir to his long lost cousin David's throne.

How is that for an Advent story? Who needs the fanfare of Christmas when we have this kind of drama leading up to it?

'For nothing will be impossible with God'. Do we really believe that to be true? I must admit that for me, it is difficult to believe that is true at times. Earthquakes after earthquakes, floods after floods, hurricanes after hurricanes - *'For nothing will be impossible with God'* – I think not!

Plus add to all that chronic needs of poverty, disease, displacement, lack of clean drink water, and the horrors of war - *'For nothing will be impossible with God'* – I think not!

And finally take into consideration the political oppression, our present political climate of division and unrest within our country - *'For nothing will be impossible with God'* – I think not!

The likelihood that we can actually do something to confront these realities seems slim. But so was the likelihood that a poor Palestinian unwed teenager would carry the Messiah in her womb.

'For nothing will be impossible with God' - Nothing! If Mary can give birth to the Christ child, certainly we can decide to give birth to peace. If an unwed teenager can birth to our Lord and Savior, certainly we can decide to give birth to kindness. If God would choose a young Palestinian girl to carry to birth his one and only Son, certainly we can decide to give birth to compassion during Christmas. Certainly we can find hope in the promise that with God we can create life and love.

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Yes, I am talking to you! *'For nothing will be impossible with God'* Yes, I am talking to each of you even though you think you are unworthy. *'For nothing will be impossible with God'* Yes, YOU, the one viewing this Christmas Eve service maybe. *'For nothing will be impossible with God'* You can create peace, kindness, and compassion. *'For nothing will be impossible with God'* Our church needs peace, kindness, and compassion! Our community needs peace, kindness, and compassion! And our country needs peace, kindness, and compassion!

Now, image that first Christmas Eve which included a busy inn and an empty manger. Our lives parallel these two images. We are like the busy inn that rejected Mary and Joseph. There is probably no more hectic time than Christmas. It requires a great deal of preparation, decoration, purchasing and wrapping gifts, sending greeting cards, and entertaining. The church calendar is full of special programs for all to enjoy. And it all climaxes by worshipping together on Christmas Eve. Busy is an understatement!

Our busyness often excludes space for the birth of Jesus in our midst, and so, Jesus is shut out and we must make his entry in the cold and drafty barn where he is laid in an empty manger.

As stark as that image may be, it nonetheless represents an openness and receptivity that is laudable. Maybe we should strive to be more like the manger and less like the inn!

So may we strive to be quiet in spirit and be receptive in a new way for the advent of Jesus!

Let us begin by slowing down, stepping back from the demands, and rededicating ourselves to creating a space for God's Spirit to dwell in us in a fresh new way.

Let us step back and get off the merry go round of the season and attend to the opportunity to welcome the Christ child into our hearts and minds.

Let us put new straw in the feeding trough of our lives so we are a receptive home for Jesus today!

Merry Christmas and God bless you!

Let us pray:

Heavenly Father, do not ever let us forget that with you, anything is possible. Inspire us to create life and love because of your love for us.

Forgive us, O God, for being a busy inn that has no space for you. Make us as receptive as an empty manger. AMEN.