

Text: Luke 1:26-38

Title: "That's Impossible"

Introduction:

After they were married, my Dad and Mom lived in Greensboro in a trailer in my grandparent's back yard. My Dad was in school at Elon College and he was pastoring a Wesleyan Church in Summerfield. The church was growing in Summerfield yet they still could not afford to pay a full-time salary, so my Dad was working on a teaching degree so he could support his family. Frances (my Mom) was pregnant with my oldest brother and was still working as a bookkeeper at a local business. My Dad had informed her that once they started having kids, he expected her to be a full-time Mom. She would not have to work outside the house again. My Dad planned on teaching during the week and preaching on weekends. These were my Dad's plans.

Well, one day while sitting in living room of the trailer studying for next Sunday's sermon, he heard a voice say, "I want you to go to Wisconsin!" My Dad replied, "Okay God, if you open the doors, I will walk through them." When my Mom got home from work, my Dad asked her, "Will you move to Wisconsin with me?" My Mom simply said, "I told you I would go anywhere God led you when I married you. If you think that's where God's sending you, then we will move to Wisconsin."

The next day my Dad read in the national newspaper for the Wesleyan Church that there was going to be a new church in Wisconsin being headed up by John Dunn. My Dad wrote a note to him on my Mom's stationary and sent a small gift to support the new church start.

John Dunn wrote right back to my Dad; wrote that he figured out it was a pastor writing on his wife's stationary. He encouraged my Dad to keep doing what God called him to do.

At that time Dale Emory was a superintendant in the Wesleyan Church and so my Dad contacted him and let him know that he felt God calling him to move out of North Carolina. When Dale Emory came to visit with my Dad, he brought a district superintendant, Charles Stout, with him. Charles Stout was one of the pastors involved in my Dad and Mom's wedding.

Charles offered my Dad some larger churches in Virginia. These churches were large enough to support my Dad and his family without my Mom working. At that time, R.A. asked to speak with Dale Emory alone. He asked Dale what was available in Wisconsin.

Dale said that he was almost embarrassed to say. They had one possibility for a new church start. They had an opportunity to buy an old church building in Pardeeville, WI. Hadn't figured out how to pay for the building yet and that Dad would have to do that. They could not pay for a house for my Mom and Dad, nor could they pay for housing once they got there.

My oldest brother Byron was four weeks old when they headed out through the mountains hauling a 2 ton trailer with a Chevy six. The mechanics who checked over his car told my Dad that the car was not made to haul that much, especially over mountains. Dad's response ... "I'll send you a card from Wisconsin."

Now remember, there is no interstate through the mountains in 1957! My Uncle Lee decided to ride with my Dad for when he broke down. Going up one mountain, the car starts to overheat. My Dad found a place to pull over onto the shoulder and raises the hood. His top radiator hose has busted. Uncle Lee asks, "What are you going to do now?"

Dad responds that he has tape in the trunk and he'll get the hose replaced in the next town. "Where are you going to get water?" Dad = "Out of that spring right there (over the edge of the road)." My Uncle Lee said, "R.A., drop me off at the next town. You don't need me. God's with you!"

God blessed my Dad greatly in Pardeeville. People came to the church and supported the new young pastor and took care of his family. Pardeeville was soon the fastest growing Wesleyan church in Wisconsin. Two years later, my Dad was asked to be a district Superintendent in the Wesleyan Church.

This is why I did not grow up with a southern accent. This is why I'm in Wisconsin. Growing up around my parent's faith in God has helped form who I am today.

When we are obedient to God because we trust that God will do what God says He will do and we trust that God is who He says He is, we will be blessed!

God responds differently to people who have faith and those who don't have faith! We'll get to that in just a moment...

At this time, I invite you to take the insert out of your program. On one side you will see our Scripture for today and at the bottom of that page you will find a brief outline of how we are going to approach today's Scripture. My hope is that as we study some people's faith in God today, you will be encouraged in your faith journey. As we approach Christmas I pray that we are encouraged and sense the hope that Jesus offers us. I hope and pray that you all can help pass on that hope and light in this dark and often discouraging world.

Let's pray before we go any further...

### **PRAY NOW!**

Before we can read our Scripture, I think that there are a couple of things that can help us get prepared to read it. First, let's remember that the author of the Book of Luke is Luke. Luke was a physician who worked closely with the Apostle Paul. Luke wrote an account of Jesus' life where he just included the facts. He worked hard at having eyewitness accounts of what *really* happened. Luke assures the reader(s) that he wanted only to write what could be confirmed if needed ... Nothing questionable.

After Luke declares that he dives right into the story...

- I. Zechariah Shuts Up (vv. 5-25)
  - A. Now, Israel was in a pretty dark part of their history. They had not had a true prophet of God for about 400 years. Malachi was the last who had spoken of the coming Messiah (Savior, Conqueror, etc.) for the nation.
  - B. Zechariah was a priest in the Temple and his wife, Elizabeth, was a woman of great faith as well.
    1. Getting up in years.

2. Zechariah was chosen by casting lots as the priest to enter the “Holy of Holies” of the Temple (one priest at a time) and burn incense.
  3. Crowds would stand outside the Temple and pray as they watched the smoke from the incense rise toward heaven.
- C. While Zechariah stood in the Sanctuary, an angel of the Lord appeared to him.
1. The angel saw that Zechariah was visibly shaken and said, “Do not be afraid.”
  2. The angel shared with Zechariah that he and his wife Elizabeth were going to have a baby and that the baby would grow up and be great in the eyes of the Lord.
  3. The baby will be filled with the Holy Spirit before he is even born and he will turn many Israelites to the Lord.
  4. He will prepare the people for the coming of the Lord by the Spirit inside of him.
  5. Zechariah was told that because of his son, fathers would turn their hearts back to their children and rebellious people would accept the wisdom of the godly.
- D. Guess what Zechariah’s response was ... “How can I be sure ... I’m an old man now, and my wife is well along in years!”
1. He doubted. Essentially he said, “How can I be sure you are telling the truth?”
  2. “There is no way this can happen, because God didn’t take into account our age!”
- E. The angel’s response to Zechariah’s doubts was to remind Zechariah that he was Gabriel and that he was sent by God to bring good news. Because of your doubts, you will not be able to speak audibly until your son is born!
- F. Remember that this story is coming from Luke, who spent a lot of time making sure he spoke to eyewitnesses about the facts...

## II. Mary Listens Up (vv. 26-37)

- A. Let’s compare Zechariah’s (Priest / Man of God / high status in society) response to the response that Mary gives when Gabriel appears to her in the very next story that Luke writes...

### **READ LUKE 1:26-38 NOW!**

- B. Again, as Luke writes this story, remember that he is a physician who has been very careful not to tell any story unless there are eyewitnesses to what has happened. He does not want to embellish the stories of how God moved through His Son Jesus...
- C. Mary is most likely a middle teenager ... 14-16 years old. Engaged to Joseph, a carpenter (In that culture, engagement was like marriage except that you did not live or sleep together), but not married. Although breaking an engagement was like a divorce.

1. What does this mean for Mary? She's still a kid.
  2. She's not married to a man.
  3. She's female.
  4. In other words, she had no societal status ... she was not special.
  5. She was a normal, average, Nazarene Jewish girl that God chose to bless!
- D. Notice how Mary answers ... humility and honesty before God. She does not say, "Well, it's about time you showed up!"
1. Mary was surprised by Gabriel's visit.
  2. Mary did not expect to be the mother of the long-awaited Messiah.
  3. She was very humble and kind of scared.
  4. Mary knew the consequences of being pregnant outside of marriage. She knew the possibility of being divorced by Joseph, Joseph's disappointment, the shame of the pregnancy in her society, etc.
  5. She kind of knew what she was getting into, but she didn't question the angel.
- E. Mary only asked, "How is this going to happen?"
1. When it happens, how will it happen?!?
  2. Mary had a faith in God that showed in this moment ... "I believe that God can do whatever He says He will do..."
  3. Like most of us would be asking if in Mary's sandals ... "How is that going to happen?"
- F. She was going to give birth as a virgin. There are many who struggle to believe this story for this reason. It's not possible!
1. Again, Luke was a PHYSICIAN! Luke knows how babies are made!
  2. If anyone would have doubts about this, it would be Luke.
  3. Remember that Luke is writing according to eyewitness accounts ... getting the story from those who were there.
  4. Tradition holds that Luke spoke with Mary the Mother of Jesus and got her story...
  5. Virgin birth ... If we believe that our God created the universe and everything in it; why not a baby in a woman's womb?
- G. Jesus says that unless we become like children in our faith, we will never see the Kingdom of God!
1. For some strange reason, all four of my daughters have trusted me as little kids.
  2. A little less now as they get older, but they trust that I won't hurt them and do everything to prevent them from getting hurt by anyone else...

3. They let me lift them up on one hand, they fall asleep while I'm driving, they trust that they have little, or at least less, to fear if Dad is around...
4. That's the FAITH that Mary shows in her final answer ("Is that your final answer?") to Gabriel.

### III. Mary Antes Up (v. 38)

- A. "I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true."
  1. That is a child-like faith to answer that way.
  2. Mary cannot see into the future to see how it will turn out ... will Joseph leave her? Will her family disown her? Will she be stoned for adultery? She doesn't know the outcome...
  3. Yet, she says, "I trust God."
- B. Mary trusted God. When we trust God there are no promises of rose gardens.
  1. Mary had a lot of heartache that went with being obedient to God.
  2. Mary was ridiculed and talked about behind her back.
  3. Mary almost lost her fiancé.
  4. Mary's home town rejected her Son.
  5. Mary's Son was crucified at a young age, even though He did nothing wrong.
- C. What will we do? If we are going to be HOPE and LIGHT in this world we live in, I suggest that we interact with God more like Mary did and less like Zechariah did.
  1. If we are going to be HOPE and LIGHT to other people, they need to see how WE Trust GOD!
  2. As the UM Churches of Boscobel & Mt. Zion, we will have some decisions to make soon that will challenge our faith ... we are going to have to make some decisions without being able to fully calculate how things are going to turn out!
  3. Will we?
  4. Mary's faith and obedience brought HOPE to the whole world ... Will our faith bring HOPE to this community / region?

Let's Pray!