

A barren woman in her old age, Elizabeth, is six months with child. A young woman, a virgin, Mary, conceives in her womb. This story in Luke's Gospel is filled with impossibilities. It almost reads like a fairy tale. Replace the angel Gabriel with a fairy godmother, make a few other changes, and Luke could have begun with, "Once upon a time..."

It is true that most everything about Christmas is contrary to the dictates of nature. Virgins do not conceive. Nor do women beyond the age of childbearing. Supernatural beings do not just suddenly appear out of nowhere. I suppose it would be just as easy to believe in a talking snowman as to believe these words of St. Luke. But I checked last week, and as far as I can tell, there is no church of Frosty. People enjoy the story, but they do not believe that which is impossible within it.

Yet the story Luke puts before us contains even greater impossibilities. One might say that the greatest of these is God, the Most High God Himself, becoming man within the womb of a young virgin.

Who believes this stuff? Mary does. She questions the angel, "*How will this be, since I am a virgin?*" Yet this is not doubt or unbelief talking. It is faith asking for assurance. And hearing the angel, she responds, "*Behold, I am the servant of the Lord, let it be to me according to your word.*"

Now here is something which is the most impossible thing of all. Even more impossible than this virgin conceiving a child in her womb. More impossible than for that child to be the Son of God. What is the most impossible thing of all is that Mary believes the word of the angel. She does not sense the child within her. There is no physical evidence to confirm the angel's message. And what he says is simply not possible. Yet she believes. She knows, beyond a shadow of doubt, that she is now with child, and that this child is her Lord and God, the Savior of the nations.

Earlier you confessed with your mouth that this Jesus, of whom the angel speaks, was made man by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary. Is this also what you believe in your heart? What I'm asking is do you believe that which is impossible? If yes, then be assured that this belief, this faith has come to you in the same way it came to Mary. "*With God,*" says the angel, "*nothing will be impossible.*"

Do you see? You are just like Mary. She did not approach God. He approached her. He chose her. Out of all the young women, she is the one He wanted. Within her, He would enter in and be born. And He has done the same for you. He chose you. Out of all the billions of people in the world, God chose to bring you to Holy Baptism where the Holy Spirit came upon you, and the power of the Most High overshadowed you, and the Son of God entered into you, and so you are now called a holy child of God. And this, by the grace and working of God with whom nothing is impossible, you believe.

You are just like Mary. "*Greetings, O favored one,*" the angel speaks to her, "*the Lord is with you.*" God greets you in the same way. You entered His house this morning. You began by remembering your baptism. And then you confessed, "I surely do not deserve to be called Your

avored one, O Lord, for I am but a poor, miserable sinner.” Yet God had His angel turn to you and say, “You are favored by God for your sins are forgiven. He favors you not because of how you have lived, good or bad, but because His Son Jesus lived and died for you. And this Jesus is with you, for you are baptized into Him.”

So you are just like Mary. A week from now Christmas will be past tense. It will be time to return our homes to normal. But will we also return our hearts and lives to normal? Mary could not. Jesus was now within her. And after His birth, her life would never be the same.

What about us? Are we like Mary in this also? Do people see the difference Jesus has made in us? Or do we live in more of an opposite way?

Here is how it is. Since you believe what is impossible, you can also live in a way that is impossible. You can live, like Mary, as one who carries Christ, because you do. If you confess with your mouth and believe in your heart that God has done what is impossible for you, then your life will never be the same. Christmas will come and go. But like with Mary, Jesus will always remain with you.

Friend, if you have put Him away in a closet, do not be afraid. He is now not your judge, but your Savior. He never puts you away. Remember that He chose you not when you were holy and righteous, but when you were a sinner.

Always, always remember that God does what is impossible. I have spoken to people who are of the opinion that their past lives are so sinful that it would be impossible for God to forgive them. Nonetheless, this truth stands forever, “*With God, nothing will be impossible.*” He became man within the womb of the virgin Mary, doing what is impossible, and you, my sinful friend, can be assured that He, Jesus, is your Lord and Savior. And you, yes you, are forgiven. And since “*nothing will be impossible with God,*” He will grant you the faith to cling to this wonderful truth now and always. Amen.