

Nothing Will Be Impossible with God

He Has Done Great Things / Luke 1:34-38 / Sunday, December 10, 2023

Introduction:

We are continuing in our Advent series titled “He Has Done Great Things,” and, in this series, we are considering what led to Mary to her song of praise, called “The Magnificat,” where she proclaims how her soul will magnify the Lord because of the great things He has done for her. My hope is that this will move each of us to consider the great things God has done for us, and lead to a similar point in our lives of exuberant praise. We are looking at Luke 1:34-38 but let’s begin by reading all of verses 26-38 to remember the context, “In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin’s name was Mary. And he came to her and said, ‘Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!’ But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.’ And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?” And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.” And Mary said, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.” If you missed last week, Pastor Adam opened our series by unpacking the first half of this story and Gabriel’s announcement of a child who would be born to Mary. This was indeed a great thing done to Mary, because God, in His unmerited favor, chose her to be the mother of Jesus, a child who would be “great and be called the Son of the Most High.” A child who would sit on the throne of David and reign as the king of Israel over a kingdom that has no end. Our passage today is the second half of that announcement story showing how Mary processed what Gabriel told her. This part of the story reveals three things to us as we watch Mary process these things: that God will accomplish His purposes, how nothing will be impossible with God, and Mary’s resolve to trust in God’s purposes. Consider the first thing we see in verses 34-35, that,

God Will Accomplish His Purposes

Last week, Pastor Adam drew our attention to parallels between the announcements of John and Jesus’ births, and how those parallels are designed to heighten the significance of the conception and birth of Jesus. That pattern continues in our passage today. Look at Mary’s initial response to the promises of God in verse 34, “And Mary said to the angel, ‘How will this be, since I am a virgin?’” This seems to be similar to Zechariah’s response, where he doubted Gabriel’s announcement that Elizabeth would bear a son. However, a closer look reveals they are quite different. You might assume Mary would naturally conclude the child would come when she consummates her marriage to Joseph, but it is clear Mary understood and believed the promise would happen soon, before her marriage would be consummated. That is why she asks how she will conceive and bear a child as a virgin. Her question isn’t in doubt but in perplexity. She hasn’t had relations with a man, so how will she conceive a child. Note this is the third time Luke mentions Mary was a virgin. Luke is making it clear that this child would not come by natural means of marital relationship. Keep this in mind as we move forward. Notice Gabriel’s answer to her question in verse 35, “And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.” Gabriel starts with an important truth and draws a conclusion from it. First, he says, “the Holy Spirit will come upon” Mary. This is going to be the divine activity of God’s Spirit.

Second, he says, “the power of the Most High will overshadow” Mary. This is not a separate truth, but an extension of the first statement. The power of the Most High is the Spirit at work. Pay attention to the word “overshadow,” as it is likely very intentional. Luke uses it only one other time when speaking of the cloud enveloping the disciples and Jesus at His transfiguration, in Luke 9:34. James Edwards notes its significance noting how, “the word ‘overshadow’... recalls the divine cloud that overshadowed the tabernacle in Exodus 40:35. When all work on the tabernacle had been completed (Exodus 40:33), God overshadowed it and infused it with his presence and glory. In the tabernacle, God chose to materialize and localize himself within a particular time and space.” (James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 49). The point Luke is likely drawing our attention to is that God is accomplishing something akin to His localized presence at the transfiguration and in the tabernacle. The Spirit, as the power of the Most High God, is implanting Mary’s womb with the very presence of God. The conclusion then is that this child “will be called holy—the Son of God.” Holy doesn’t point to a special moral or ethical quality of Jesus but a unique separation from everything. Where earlier Gabriel said the child would be the Son of the Most High, here he says he would be called “the Son of God,” which points to both a quality of divinity and a purpose as the coming Messianic king. God was divinely working, in His power, to bring about the birth of a child who would be uniquely set apart in nature and purpose. Before we move on, pay attention to the three repetitions of the word “will.” This points to a certainty in the original language of something happening in the future. When Mary wonders “How will this be,” Gabriel proclaims it will happen because it is a divine activity for divine purposes. The second thing this story reveals, in verses 35-37, reinforces the first, helping Mary to see that,

Nothing Will Be Impossible with God

Gabriel not only helps Mary understand how this will be but goes a step further to solidify in her heart that there is no purpose of God which He cannot accomplish. Look at how he does this. Start in verse 35 and read through to verse 37, noticing the flow of thought, “And the angel answered her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.’” Immediately following the description of the miraculous nature of Mary’s conception, Gabriel speaks of another miraculous conception as proof of God’s power to accomplish His purpose. Her relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son, though she is old in age and was “called barren.” The fact that Elizabeth was “called barren” means her inability to conceive a child was well known. Yet, despite the difficulties of her age and known inability to conceive, she was now in her sixth month of pregnancy because “nothing will be impossible with God.” God purposed that Elizabeth would have a child, and even though it was seemingly impossible, it had been accomplished. Now, there may also be something deeper being communicated here because Gabriel speaks of Elizabeth’s conception in ways that recall the Lord’s announcement of Isaac’s birth in Genesis 18. After God promised a son to Abraham and Sarah, they doubt because Sarah was unable to bear children and attempt to bring about God’s promise on their own, God met with Abraham and Sarah again to confirm His promise again in Genesis 18. In Genesis 18:11, look at what we see, “Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years. The way of women had ceased to be with Sarah. So Sarah laughed to herself,” when she heard the announcement. After asking Abraham why Sarah was laughing, the Lord says this in Genesis 18:14, “Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, about this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son.” Do you see the connection? Sarah was old and barren, and the Lord proclaimed that nothing was too hard for Him to accomplish. Elizabeth’s miraculous conception recalls the fulfilled promise of God to Sarah through a similar miraculous conception, in order to strengthen Mary’s belief that “nothing will be impossible with God.” Elizabeth’s conception was miraculous because she was barren, Mary’s would be more so because she was a virgin. Neither are impossible with God.

God was doing something great through Mary for His purposes, bringing the promised Messianic King through her womb, who would be greater than anyone had imagined, and nothing about her situation would keep that from happening. Church, consider an implication of this passage for our lives. Notice Gabriel says, “nothing will be impossible with God,” speaking in the future tense. I agree with commentator David Brown who suggests this “is designed to express an enduring principle” as though he says, “With God nothing ever has been nor ever shall be impossible” (David Brown, A. R. Fausset, and Robert Jamieson, A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical, on the Old and New Testaments: Matthew–John, vol. V, 220). How often have you questioned how things that God promises will be possible? See from this truth spoken to Mary that nothing will keep God from accomplishing His purposes in our lives. So, when God says His peace will guard your hearts in all circumstances as you make your requests known to Him, you can be assured it will happen because “nothing will be impossible with God.” When Jesus says come to Him if you are burdened and He will give you rest, you can be assured of that rest because “nothing will be impossible with God.” When God says He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability but will provide a way of escape to endure it, you can be assured of the ability to overcome your temptation to sin because “nothing will be impossible with God.” Church, cling to this truth and let it lead you to a deep and abiding trust. The final thing this story reveals, in verse 38, points are heart to that through Mary’s final response, showing us how,

Mary Trusts that God's Purposes are Good

To have Mary’s final response to Gabriel land properly, we need to understand what this could have meant for her. She was betrothed to Joseph and would soon become pregnant before their marriage was consummated. Questions, accusations, and rumors of infidelity would arise. According to the law, this could not only mean divorce but also the penalty of death for adultery. That is why when Joseph first hears, he desires to divorce her quietly. This points to the final parallel with Elizabeth’s pregnancy. Where Elizabeth’s pregnancy reverses her disgrace, Mary’s would lead to disgrace, and potentially more. With that in mind, look carefully at Mary’s response in verse 38, “And Mary said, ‘Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.’ And the angel departed from her.” Church, meditate on the full surrender of Mary and let it challenge your hearts. She starts with an emphatic interjection, saying “Behold,” and uses a term for servant that speaks of herself as a slave of the Lord. Then, though Gabriel’s words perplexed her in verse 29, she now proclaims full surrender to them. Though she likely understands what this could mean for her life, she emphatically declares full submission to the Lord’s rule over her life. And as we get closer to the Magnificat, where she bursts out in praise of the great things God has done for her, we understand she is not only submitted to God’s purposes, but knows they are good. The child in her womb would grow up with a similar resolve as He set his face toward Jerusalem, knowing a gruesome death awaited Him there. As we see Mary say “let it be to me according to your word,” we are reminded of Jesus’ future declaration in the garden of Gethsemane, in Luke 22:42, where in agony he says, “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.” Though the disgrace and torture of the cross awaited Jesus, He understood the will of God to be good and submitted Himself fully to the Father’s will to accomplish our salvation, bearing the punishment for our sin, so that we could be reconciled to God. The resolve of Mary and Jesus reveals the response of true faith is full submission to the word and will of God. And church, the joy that we will see Mary have in the coming weeks shows us that submission comes with a great reward of a deep and abiding happiness that can never be taken away. The amazing reality of this passage is these are not only great things that God has done for Mary, but they mean great things for us as well. God’s purposes through Mary’s life brought about our redemption and an eternity of His unmerited favor being pour out on us. See the great things God has done for you and resolve to live your life in full submission to His word and will.

Conclusion:

As the worship team is coming to lead us in a time of responds, where is your heart in relationship to these things? Do you believe the words of Gabriel spoken to Mary and know the child born to her over 2000 years ago is Christ the Lord? Will you embrace this proclamation of the miraculous birth of the Son of God? A child, born to a virgin, who was God incarnate, come to dwell with His people and die for their sins. Do you believe that nothing will be impossible for God? Will Mary's submission to the Lord's purposes lead your heart to submit fully to His purposes for your life? Will the joy Mary saw in this, lead your heart to sing with joy as well? Respond today as the Lord leads you. As always, you are welcome to come and kneel before Him as an expression of your trust. We also have a team a people ready to pray with you and for you during this time of response. You will find them worshipping on the front rows or at the bottom of the stairs in the back. Let's press into God's grace through His word today as we respond in faith to all He has shown us.

Pray with me