

Luke 1:26-38 First Christmas Impossibility Falls Ch. AM 12/10/2023

Here we have the announcement from the angel to Mary that the impossible will happen - she will conceive and bear a son named Jesus! Her response is to be admired. Every December, Christians read again over this event and we treasure these things in our hearts, too. This event remains a favorite scene in Christian art for the 2,000 years since it happened. Understandably so, for it is a moment of great significance in the history of our salvation. Some call this scene The Annunciation – referring to the announcement by the Angel Gabriel to Mary that she will conceive. We learn from God in this Bible passage to have the attitude of a servant. The First Christmas attitude of Mary is the year-round Christian attitude - the attitude of a believing servant.

Because Christ did the impossible when He came, we are called to take the attitude of believing servants.

1. We appreciate the humiliation of Christ for us. (v.26-27)

(v. 26-27, *“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.”*

“in the sixth month” of what? In the sixth month of the pregnancy of Zechariah and Elizabeth’s child – she was expecting with John the Baptist.

“the angel Gabriel was sent from God...” What a mighty angel of God, dispatched on a mission from the central place of power and authority.

“Gabriel was sent from God” to where?

“to a city of Galilee named Nazareth.” Now saying Nazareth, a town in Galilee was like saying, “nowhere-ville” The town of Plat in Washington County, Wisconsin. It is not a prestigious place. It is a little bit west of Colgate, Wisconsin. No presidential candidate ever made a long stop and an important speech in Plat.

What is my point? The fact that Gabriel was sent to Nazareth is enough to make one wonder just why God would break His silence, allow His angels to be seen and heard, and send His mighty and important angel to such an insignificant place as Nazareth. What is there? Nothing! That is a part of the message of the coming of Jesus. It is a surprising humiliation for the angel Gabriel to come from standing in the presence of God, the control-room of the universe, and come down to a little place like Nazareth. How much more surprising of a step down it was for Jesus to come from the throne of the universe, to the quietness of a womb of a woman, so that suddenly Jesus was an unborn baby - powerless to speak, or to go anywhere on His own.

For us take the attitude of believing servants of Jesus, we have to first realize what a servant Jesus is. God showed us in Philippians 2, Jesus *“...emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.”* We love babies and it is all wonderful, and so we celebrate the birth of Jesus. However, let us remember the Biblical truth that the birth of Jesus is not a glorious thing for Jesus Christ. The

birth of Jesus at Christmas is not a part of the exaltation of Jesus. Quite the opposite! The birth of Jesus is a part of his humiliation. To be born was an act of humiliation for the Son of God. Why? Because of one important difference for Jesus from every other baby - this was not His beginning. He existed prior to His time in the womb.

To wait in the womb for nine months was restrictive for the Son of God. To go from hearing “*Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come, Holy holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come.*” To hearing the soft rhythmic sound of Mary’s gentle heartbeat. To go from seeing the vast reaches of heaven from its epicenter, and being able to see all of earth at once, to being confined in the darkness inside of a womb.

Being born at Christmas was a colossal step down for the Son of God. It would have even been humbling for Jesus to come down to earth as a powerful King. How much more so when He did not have the prestige and honor that ordinarily goes with the birth of a king. Jesus was born despised. Jesus was born poor. The Spirit of God Himself came to overshadow this woman in a small town. And the humiliation was furthered when Jesus was born surrounded by barn sounds.

Jesus is God, and yet must answer to his parents as his superiors! Deepen the humiliation further, and again and again, as we consider various aspects of His humanity and suffering. Luke went on later in this book to tell us of Jesus’ betrayal, His trial, His abandonment, His beatings, His crucifixion. At every point, Jesus was God, yet expected to submit and obey God the Father. He who is the Resurrection and the Life obeyed the order to lay down his life and die. And what sort of death was it? - a shameful and cruel death! Philippians 2:8, “*And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*” For three days, Jesus came under the power of death.

Just a few lines prior to that, we read in Philippians 2, “*Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus...*” How’s that? Verse 4 of Philippians 2, “*Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.*”

Has God called you to suffer? Has God has given you a heavy burden? Look where Philippians 2 goes, and the expectations God has for our attitudes while carrying our burdens, “*Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe, as you hold out the word of life...*” We are children of God, and we are also servants of God.

Okay, what does God expect of us? Our orders are to stop thinking only of ourselves, and to stop thinking only of others, and to always think of both ourselves and others. Yes, our orders are to be concerned for both – to be concerned about others doing well and to be concerned about ourselves doing well. Since we are servants of Jesus, and our model is Jesus Himself, who came from heaven’s throne to the womb in Nazareth for us, then we being shown that God expects us to do a lot of humbling

of ourselves. Romans 12:16, *“Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.”* Do the powerful people get all of our attention? How about that person in your neighborhood, your workplace, your school, your team, who is all alone? Our church does well in this – we associate with the lowly. This is why - Jesus came from heaven to earth, so we are able to step down a rung or two on our ladders.

2. We know our privilege as servants of God. (v.28-32)

The Roman Catholic church pays honor to the Virgin Mary. Well, what do we say? God sent the angel Gabriel to Mary to say something that is recorded here in the Bible for us to read in verse 28, *“Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!”*

We recognize that Gabriel gave honor to Mary. We also do well to give honor to Mary. The trouble comes in when Mary is held up further than God does, and further than Gabriel does. Some people go too far and say that Mary herself, when she was a baby was conceived without sin, which is not true. Starting with that error, they go further and begin to venerate or worship Mary, seeing her as another mediator, having the same access or power of talking with God the Father, as our Lord Himself has. For all of that, there is no warrant in Scripture.

Having said that, we must, in fairness, admit that no woman in all of human history had the high honor to be the mother of our Lord Jesus. It remains undisputed that Mary had that unique privilege. By one woman Eve, sin and death were brought into the world at the beginning, confirmed by the greater failure of Adam. By one woman Mary, the solution was born into the world. No wonder she is considered favored by God.

What are the rest of us supposed to do? We are supposed to remember that there is a spiritual reality in our relating to Christ. We cannot have the relationship to Christ of flesh and blood, as Mary alone had. However, let us not forget that there is a relationship with Christ that is available to us that is nearer and closer than that of flesh and blood. The relationship of a sinner to the Savior is closer than the relationship of a mother to a son. Furthermore, Jesus showed the deeper meaning of family words, when Jesus said, *“Whoever does the will of God is my brother, my sister, my mother.”* When someone said to Jesus, *“Blessed is the mother that gave you birth and nursed you”* Jesus replied, *“Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.”*

We are being reminded of our privilege as servants of God. We have a special privilege at our time in redemptive history. We bring honor to Jesus today in the world, and Mary cannot, and David cannot, and Elizabeth cannot. As servants of God alive today, our privilege is one of obedience. We are today’s servants, Christ is the King.

Verses 32-33 emphasize Christ’s kingly role in relation to us as servants of God. The angel Gabriel described the coming King this way, [Jesus] *“...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.”*

What do we want for our children and grandchildren? A good life, education, church, job, family, friends? What if God said that your child would be great, and will be called the Child of the Most High, and will reign on the throne of David?

There is a place in God's kingdom for a servant named Mary. She has a favored position. But her position did not come because of her own godliness. Her position came not because of her own blood lost during childbirth for son's birth, but rather her position came because of Her Son's own blood lost at the cross for her second birth.

That role is the same for us and for our children. That position is the same for us and for our children. That way of relating to Christ is the same for us. It is not what we do for Jesus that gives us this privilege. Our servant position is not because of our work for Jesus, but because of Jesus' work for us. Our favor with God is a gift. Our favor from God is a privilege. Our relationship with God is the joy of having a place in the kingdom of Christ that will never end, purchased by our Savior for us.

To serve Christ now is to take up our own cross. Soon enough, we follow Jesus in exchanging cross for crown. Philippians 2:9-11, "*...God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*"

We know our privilege as children of God extends to the next coming of Jesus Christ into the world to take us home to heaven! Hebrews 10:36-37, "*For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.*"³⁷ For, "*Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay;...*" That brings us to our third point.

3. We live expectantly. (v.33-38)

Verses 33-38 bring out the fact of the Impossible Birth of Jesus Christ.

Remember how Dr. Luke showed us that it was medically impossible for Elizabeth to conceive because of her age? How much more medically impossible for a Virgin to conceive!

The angel Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, puts it well in verse 37, "*for nothing will be impossible with God.*" So, we can live expectantly!

We are servants of God, like Mary. What does that mean? It means God can do anything with us that God wants to do with us. As a result, we may take the believing attitude of Mary. "*...let it be to me according to Your Word.*" Mary was meek and ready for the Lord's will. Are we? Remember what Jesus said to a man who was lame for 38 years? "*Arise.*" And he stood up. What if Christ said to a person who has been dead in unbelief for 4 decades, "*Believe*" and he believed?

We need our attitudes to match up with the fact that God can do as God promised to do.

Concluding Application:

Because Jesus did the impossible, became a man, died and rose again, He

enabled us to take the attitude of believing servants of God.

After four hundred years of silence, God dispatched His angel Gabriel to an unknown place, and things began to happen. Jesus remained God and became man.

It is a work of God. How do we respond? We serve the Lord with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind, and watch what impossible things God accomplishes in us and through us. Conversion is impossible. How can a spiritually dead person believe? Only by the work of God to do the impossible!

In the 1730s and 1740s, in England, and what spread to the colonies in the United States was a time of increased interest in spiritual things. George Whitfield was a traveling preacher, and Jonathan Edwards was a pastor in Massachusetts.

Each conversion is a work of God. But what about conversions in mass numbers? It has been 283 years since God moved in the revival in Massachusetts in the church of Pastor Jonathan Edwards.

But look at it this way - God worked in our country before. There was a Great Awakening here, and a second Great Awakening in 1790-1820. That was 203 years ago. Why not now? Take the attitude that it could be now! One of the fundamental things we must remember about being servants of this King, is that we must never forget the power of our King. We serve a God for whom all things are possible.

We are expected to pray like it. We are expected to act like it.

That is the Christian attitude. That is living as a believing servant.

This is one of the core lessons of the Christmas story. The angel Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, puts it well in verse 37, "*for nothing will be impossible with God.*"