

Luke 1:26-38 In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, ²⁷ to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." ²⁹ Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. ³⁰ But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. ³¹ You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end." ³⁴ "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" ³⁵ The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. ³⁶ Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. ³⁷ For nothing is impossible with God." ³⁸ "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her.

Dear Fellow Servants of our Loving, Powerful Lord:

"Impossible!" Look keenly at what a woodpecker does, and that's what you'll say: "Impossible!" Its little head strikes wood over and over again with 1,000 times the force of gravity. If our human heads did that at even 100 g's, we'd surely die. So how can a woodpecker do it and not knock itself loopy? Miraculously, it has a tongue that wraps all the way around the back of its brain to serve as a shock absorber. They're the only birds that are made that way. Yes, *made* that way. There's no way that happened by accident or could have developed slowly over millions of years. A wonderful designer named God did that.

God does the impossible. It's his thing. He created the universe and everything in it in its vast array out of nothing. He parted the Red Sea and clogged up the Jordan River. He stopped the course of the sun in the sky so Joshua could pursue the enemy at Gibeon. And even more impossibly, he turned our stone-cold, hard, dead hearts into pliable, believing hearts that trust in the Savior who was born for us!

We'll see in Luke today that ***"It's Not Impossible with God"*** (1) *For a virgin to have a baby* (2) *For that baby to be a King* (3) *For that King to rule forever* (4) *For us to be the reason it all happened!*

1

Luke writes, ***"In the 6th month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph."*** Putting this into context, the ***"6th month"*** referred to here is the 6th month after the conception of John (the Baptist) to Zechariah and Elizabeth. Elizabeth was barren and her husband and she were senior citizens. Now she was expecting a baby! Yes, God specializes in the impossible.

Elizabeth's relative Mary was also expecting a child. An angel named Gabriel just told her so. Mary was not a senior citizen. She was young. However, here's the problem: she was a virgin. An expecting virgin? Impossible? Usually. ***"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"*** We can imagine that she is confused!

The angel kindly explains: ***"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you... Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God."*** Little John was an answer to Elizabeth's prayers. John was her "miracle baby." But Mary hadn't been praying for a child -- not at this time in her life! But this was *God's* time. ***"The fullness of time had come"*** (Gal. 4:4). Mary was to be the fulfillment of God's prophecy given via Isaiah 700 year before: ***"A virgin will be with child and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel"*** (Is. 7:14). The Holy

Spirit moved Mary to believe this impossible message and miracle. She answered with obedient humility: ***“May it be to me as you have said.”***

2

But Gabriel tells her more seemingly impossible things. ***“The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David.”*** David’s throne would be ruled by Mary’s son? How would that happen? David’s kingly family line, split by division and rebellions, died out in shame and unbelief many centuries before this! The family monarchy tree was nothing but a dead stump cut off at the ground.

However, as impossible as it seemed, a shoot/branch would grow from this dead stump -- just like branches grow right out of the side of fence posts in warm and fertile Puerto Rico. ***“He will be called the Son of the Most High,”*** and again, ***“The holy One to be born will be called the Son of God.”*** Holy? Yes, a King with no sins. A King holy in every thought, word, and deed; holy in loving his Father and neighbor perfectly. He would rule over his people perfectly.

3

And if that isn’t impossible enough, Gabriel says, ***“He will rule over the House of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end!”*** That’s impossible, right? All kingdoms come to an end. Even the Roman government, which ruled nearly 1,000 years, came to an end. And while we all think the USA will be a sovereign nation forever, we can’t be so sure. Our nation is only a quarter of the way to the length of Rome’s rule. A lot can happen if our rulers don’t govern wisely and we don’t learn to work together. Jesus himself said, ***“Any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and a house divided against itself will fall”*** (Lk 11:17).

But this kingdom is different. Jesus told Pilate, ***“My kingdom is not of this world.”*** In fact, it’s a “forever kingdom” solidified by his death at Pilate’s hands. This one death, a mere trifle for the Romans who crucified thousands, changed the course of human history forever. In this one death, the devil was defeated, forgiveness of sins was won, and our eternal relationship with God was established.

And so we sing in the *Halleluiah Chorus*: ***“And he shall reign forever and ever!”*** Do we need any other reason to celebrate Christmas? Our eternal King did the impossible for us!

4

And one more impossibility: The reason Jesus did all this is for you and me. We say, ***“Really?”*** We rebel, we resist, we sin daily. We think and say and do gross things, and Jesus was really willing to do this for us? How is that possible? Well, it’s only possible because God is a God of infinite grace and mercy.

Everything we’ve been talking about was done for us! Gabriel’s trip to Mary, the child’s birth in Bethlehem, the angels singing for joy, the shepherds at the stable, the wise men from the east, and later the cross, the empty tomb -- all of it was for you and me! Just imagine, God shaped and molded and moved all of history for us! What impossibly wonderful love!

There’s a legend about a man who accidentally walked into some quicksand. The spiritual guru Confucius saw the man’s predicament and said, ***“It’s evident that men should stay out of places like this”*** and walked on. Next, Buddha observed the dilemma and said, ***“Let this man’s plight be a lesson to all people”*** and went on his way. Then Mohammed came by the sinking man and said, ***“Alas. It is Allah’s will that this be so”*** and moved on. Finally, Jesus appeared. ***“Take my hand, brother, and I will save you,”*** he said.

Unlike every other religion where people must save themselves (impossible!), our God reaches out to save mankind. So we can quit banging our heads against a tree trunk like a woodpecker, trying to get to heaven on our own. Relax. Jesus came. We can have a truly joyful Christmas!

Amen.