

“Nothing will be Impossible with God”

Luke 1:26-38

Throughout this Advent Season, we have been focusing our attention on John the Baptist. He was the final prophet of the Old Covenant and he had one job – to prepare the way of the Lord. Ever since the fall of Adam, God had been preparing His people for the Messiah to come.

John would be the very vocal witness announcing, “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” He would be that “voice of one crying out in the wilderness, “Prepare the way of the Lord.” He would be a silent witness leaping for joy in the womb of his mother Elizabeth when the voice of Mary, the mother of our Lord, is heard.

But first, John, in the womb of his mother, is a witness to Mary that the angel Gabriel speaks the truth and the Christ will come into the world through her. The angel says to her, “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.”

Gabriel had spoken to Mary. The angel had told her that she would conceive and bear a son. He will be called the Son of the Most High. He will take His rightful place on the throne of David

forever. And Mary asks, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?” Now this is not an expression of doubt or unbelief on behalf of Mary. This is not like the doubting questioning of the angel like Zechariah, John the Baptist’s father, who said, upon hearing that Elizabeth would bear a son, “How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years.

Zechariah wanted assurance before he told anyone about what the angel had said, or even before he believed what the angel had said. He doubted that this was possible because, not only were he and Elizabeth beyond the age of child-bearing, but even in her younger years, Elizabeth was barren. She could not have children.

And Elizabeth not having children was a burden upon her and her husband. Zechariah and Elizabeth lived under scrutiny and were considered anything but righteous and blameless, even though that is the assessment given of them in Luke’s Gospel. They had no children. And this defined their place in society. Children are, of course, a blessing from God. Therefore, it was assumed by the ignorant masses that they had done something deserving God’s curse. They were possessing or hiding some sin or guilt.

That is the way the world thinks. Luther calls it the Theology of Glory. It is proclaimed by many today that “if you have enough faith, or if you are right with God, the Lord is going to bless you with health, wealth, happiness - (children).” That is not the way

God operates. Look at the other “righteous” and “blameless” people in Scripture. Take Job or Elijah for example. Having crosses to bear is the normal plight of the people of God. And it is their faith, not their works that made them righteous in the sight of the Lord.

Mary is greeted by the angel Gabriel and is called the “favored one.” Yes, Mary is blessed to be the mother of the Son of the Most High God. But this new reality is going to make her earthly life much more difficult. She will be an unmarried pregnant teenager in a small Jewish town. She will have some explaining to do, and the angel Gabriel is not going to be making this announcement to anyone else.

However, the angel does give her a source of comfort and confidence within her earthly journey. The angel says to her, “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.”

This phrase “nothing will be impossible with God” is not a bad translation, but there are two Greek words left off the end. They are implied, but the words “pan raema” (every word) don’t come through in the English. A literal translation would be, “nothing will be impossible with all of God’s Word.” Again, saying “nothing will be impossible with God” is not a bad translation. It’s just that the connection to what Mary is about to say gets lost without knowing that the angel said “pan raema.”

Mary is told that she can look to Elizabeth, her relative who endured ridicule all her life for not having children (“she who was called barren”), and Mary can find comfort and confidence in Elizabeth and her child John – she can find confidence that what the angel says is true.

Even in the silence of his mother’s womb, John the Baptist serves as the witness of the reality that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God. Mary says to the angel, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word” (raema); same word that the angel just spoke about Elizabeth and John.

“Nothing is impossible with all of God’s Word” – “let it be to me according to your word.” Same word (raema) in consecutive verses. Mary has faith in God’s Word which the angel has spoken. Evidence of the truth of that word, the guarantee of that word being true is John the Baptist six months in the womb of his mother – “she who was called barren.”

We don’t hear about it yet, but Mary leaves Nazareth and goes where? To visit Elizabeth. John, the silent witness, bears witness, by his mere presence in the womb of his once barren mother, that the child in the womb of Mary is the Son of the Most High God. This is the word which the angel had spoken. Jesus is the Word of God incarnate. The Word has become flesh and made His dwelling among us. Truly, nothing will be impossible with God. Amen.