

**ZIONSVILLE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

**REV. JIM CAPPS- DECEMBER 16, 2012**

---

**“NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE WITH GOD”**

**LUKE 1:26-38**

---

In the book, *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, Dan Millman tells the story of the 4-year-old named Sachi who soon after her baby brother was born began to ask if she could be alone with him. Her parents worried that like most four-year-olds, she might feel jealous and want to hit or shake him. But she showed no signs of jealousy. She treated the baby with kindness and her pleas to be left alone with him became more urgent. They decided to allow it.

Elated, she went into the baby's room and shut the door, but it opened a crack—enough for her curious parents to peek in and listen. They saw little Sachi walk quietly up to her brother, put her face close to his and say quietly, “Baby, tell me what God feels like. I’m starting to forget.”

I’m afraid that many of us, the older and more sophisticated we become, forget what “God feels like.” Maybe that is why Jesus said that we need the “faith of a child” if we are going to have a personal, on-going relationship with God.

Often the worry and hurry of life makes us become so caught up with “things” and “situations” in this life that we forget what “God feels like.” There are times when all of our intellectual learning and wonderful innovations are a barrier between us and God. We become so obsessed with ourselves, with our ideas and accomplishments, that we miss out on the most meaningful relationship in life—that personal relationship with the God who tenderly made each one of us.

Let’s briefly look this morning at the beautiful story of the Angel Gabriel encountering Mary in Luke 1:26-38 and discover anew that nothing is impossible with God. Please note three element of this dialogue between the Angel Gabriel which help us see what God feels like.

**WHILE HUMANLY IMPOSSIBLE, GOD COMMUNICATES WITH MARY THROUGH THE ANGEL GABRIEL.**

In the first part of Luke 1, this same Angel Gabriel had appeared to Zachariah sharing the news that He and his wife, Elizabeth, would have a child in their old age. Their son was John the Baptist who would prepare the way for Jesus.

In the original language of the New Testament, the Greek, the word for “angel” means, “messenger.” Gabriel means “Mighty Man of God.” Michael is the only other angel given a name in the Bible. Many times in the Bible, God communicates important messages through angels.

Can you begin to imagine what it must have been like to be encountered by an angel? The popular TV program, “Touched By An Angel,” which our own Ava Memmen helped to get its start, conjectured what it would be like. In every Biblical encounter with God through His heavenly messengers, there was fear and awe. Understandably, the first words from angels were, “Don’t be afraid!”

Furthermore, in Mary's encounter here with an angel, the angel tells Mary that she has found favor with God. God feels good about Mary. Probably Mary is no more than in her middle teens. Nothing could have possibly prepared her for this moment. She had a special destiny.

While probably not by Gabriel, Michael, or any other heavenly angel, God may want to speak to you through different means and messengers. I have never experienced a heavenly angel like Gabriel, but I have been blessed by several messengers through whom God has spoken to me to show me how He feels about me and what He wants me to be and do.

Watch and listen! God may want to speak to you today.

### **NEXT, WHILE HUMANLY IMPOSSIBLE, THE ANGEL TELLS MARY THAT SHE WILL BECOME PREGNANT AND GIVE BIRTH TO HIS SON.**

As if being encountered by an angel wasn't difficult enough, Mary next is told that she will conceive and have a baby. She is to call Him Jesus, which is the same name as the Old Testament character, Joshua. The name means "the Lord saves." That baby will be none other than the Son of the Most High. He will be given the throne of his father David. He will rule over the house of Jacob forever. And finally, His kingdom would never end.

Can you imagine how Mary must have felt? One moment she is doing the routine stuff of her life. The next moment encountered by the Angel Gabriel she is told that she will give birth to God's Son. It takes a moment to catch your breath after hearing news like that.

Incredulously she responds, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" It's like, "I don't mean to be disrespectful, but this doesn't compute. It just can't happen. You must understand, I have not been intimate with my intended, nor anyone else. This is beyond reality."

Gabriel, must have smiled, that is if angels smile, and tells her that she is completely correct. What will happen is beyond human reality. The Holy Spirit will come upon her and the power of the Most High will overshadow her. The baby born will be the Son of God.

Then Gabriel tells her that her relative, Elizabeth, who was far past the age of having a baby, but was 6 months along in her pregnancy. That startling announcement meant that truly nothing was impossible with God.

After this supernatural interruption and startling news, the teenager simply responds, "I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said."

While I was a person of faith at age 15, I can't imagine responding with that kind of resolve if God were asking me to do something that far outside of the realm of reality. Yet, maybe, life was less complicated and entangled back then. Like the faith of a child, maybe my faith was more pure in those days. There is no question that Mary's faith is extraordinary. God certainly had picked the right person.

Could it be that God wants to move outside of your comfort zone today? Maybe He is asking you for commitment to Him in a way that seems impossible. Does God want to stretch you today? Maybe it's through being willing to step out in mission or service to others. Possibly, it could be He is asking you to tithe or even move beyond the tithe. Maybe God is asking you to take the first step in bringing

reconciliation in a relationship which has seemed impossible. Could it be that today, God is calling you to take the first step in dealing with an addiction which has long plagued you?

Are you willing to respond like the teenager, Mary, "I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said."

### **IMPOSSIBLE BY ALL HUMAN STANDARDS, GOD FOREVER BROKE THROUGH HUMAN HISTORY WITH THE BIRTH OF JESUS.**

In essence, in the birth of Jesus, announced to Mary in this passage, we as human beings have the opportunity of knowing "what God feels like." Since we were not capable of the perfection it would take to ascend to His place of highest honor and righteousness, God did what was humanly impossible and came down to us.

I like so much the way Eugene Peterson puts it in his paraphrase of the Bible entitled *The Message*, in John 1:14:

"The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into our neighborhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, generous inside and out, true from start to finish."

My dear friends, this is the joyous good news of Christmas! Jesus was born in a lowly stable in Bethlehem so that all of us, no matter how great or insignificant by this world's standards could have a relationship with God; to know "what God feels like."

Giving gifts and singing and listening to the wonderful music of Christmas, is to celebrate the wondrous news that our Creator God has given the greatest gift of all times. In Jesus, who was born of the virgin teenager, Mary, God has forever shown us that He loves us this much. Jesus is the Divine Self-Disclosure. Why did He do this?

The answer comes in first question of the Westminster Shorter Catechism: "Q.- What is the chief end of man? A.- Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever." In simpler language, Jesus came to our world so that we might have a personal, ongoing relationship with God. In so doing, we experience "what God feels like."

### **APPLICATION**

This on-going, personal relationship comes through unwrapping God's greatest gift of love and allowing this Jesus to enter in our lives. That begins with the confession of our sinfulness and repentance, turning away from our waywardness and toward the God who loves us.

If you have never done so, you can unwrap and receive this gift of God today, right now, in this place, at this season of the year. In so doing, you can know on a daily basis what God feels like. Not only does God want to bring you forgiveness for your sins, but also a deep sense of joy and peace as you live life, and hope as you face the future.

A couple of years ago, I had dinner with some friends, in the newly remodeled and named Harvey Penick Room of the Austin Country Club in Texas. Harvey Penick became famous for being the teaching pro at the golf course, instructing such greats as Ben Crenshaw and Tom Kite.

*Reader's Digest* wrote of the late Penick:

"For 90-year-old golf pro Harvey Penick, success has come late. His first golf book, *Harvey Penick's Little Red Book*, has sold more than a million copies, which his publisher believes makes it one of the greatest things in the history of sports books. His second, *And If You Play Golf, You're my Friend*, has already sold more than three-quarters of a million. But anyone who imagines that Penick wrote those books to make money, doesn't know the man.

In the 1920's Penick bought a red spiral notebook and began jotting down observations about golf. He never showed the book to anyone except his son until 1991, when he shared it with a local writer and asked if he thought it was worth publishing. The man read the book and told him yes. He left word with Penick's wife the next evening that Simon and Schuster had agreed to an advance of \$90,000.

When the writer saw Penick later, the old man seemed troubled. Finally Penick came clean. With all of his medical bills, he said, there is no way he could advance Simon and Schuster that much money. The writer had to explain that Penick would be the one to receive \$90,000 and not the other way around."

Isn't it interesting that people often have the same reaction as did Penick to the fabulous gift of God in Jesus Christ. We ask, "What must I do?" God answers, "Just receive." Have you received and unwrapped the greatest gift ever given? If not you can do so today? This same God who offers this gift wants to meet your deepest needs whatever they may be.