

Luke Chapter 1 v 26 - 45

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[0 : 00] And we often neglect Mary because we're good Protestants, but really she's a woman of great faith, and we're going to learn a little bit about her later on.

But I want us to, it's really a psalm in one sense that she sings as she comes to God. And as we come to God to sing his praises and to worship him, then it's a good place for us to start as well as we praise him.

So we're going to read together. I wonder if we could read together out loud as we sometimes do a psalm from the second line of verse 46, which begins, My soul glorifies the Lord, and read through to the end of verse 55.

Is that okay? So we're going to read through together out loud from Luke 1 and the second line of verse 46. My soul glorifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.

For he is really mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on, all generations will call me blessed. For the mighty one has done great things for me.

[1 : 11] Holy is his name. His mercy extends to those who fear him. From generation to generation, He has performed ninety deeds with his arm.

He has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones, but has lifted up the humble.

He has filled the hungry with good things, but has sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as he said to our fathers.

There's that lovely line there, isn't it? For the mighty one has done great things for me. And because of that, we can sing his praise and worship him.

Our first hymn is 504, which speaks of the mightiest thing, the greatest thing God has done. He has shown us his sovereign grace and saved us from our sins.

[2 : 16] So 504, let's stand and sing this hymn of praise. Let's stand and sing this hymn of praise.

Enter our minds upon the events that took place. And there's going to be particularly one phrase that I want us to be thinking about later. But we'll read from chapter 1 and verse 26.

Luke chapter 1 and verse 26, reading through to verse 45. In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David.

The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, Greetings, you who are highly favoured. The Lord is with you.

Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, Do not be afraid, Mary. You have found favour with God.

[3 : 50] You will be with child and give birth to a son and you are to give him the name Jesus. 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 and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever.

His kingdom will never end. How will this be? Mary asked the angel, Since I am a virgin. 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. 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.

I am the Lord's servant, Mary answered. May it be to me as you have said. Then the angel left her. At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea where she entered Zachariah's home and greeted Elizabeth.

When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting the baby leaped in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed, Blessed are you among women and blessed is the child you will bear.

[5 : 11] But why am I so favoured that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears the baby in my womb leaped for joy.

Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished. So we're in Luke in chapter 1 and that passage that we read just a few moments ago concerning the visit of the angel Gabriel to Mary in Nazareth.

When 60 years ago Roger Bannister ran one mile in just under four minutes he did something which up until that point most people considered to be impossible.

From ages past people had been trying to break the four minute barrier. Even right back in the ancient Greeks records were found concerning how the Greeks who were mad on athletics of course the founders of the Olympic Games how they used to try to get their runners to break the four minute mile.

They would get wild animals to chase them hoping that that would make them run a bit faster but that didn't work. They even tried feeding their athletes on tiger's milk to get them to run faster.

[6 : 35] The question that popped into my mind was this who got the job of milking the tiger? But nothing worked. And so ultimately over time they concluded it was physically impossible for a human being ever to run a mile in four minutes.

The bone structure that we have in our skeleton was all wrong. The wind resistance that we would feel was too great. The lung capacity was inadequate. There were a million and one reasons why it was impossible and no one would ever run a mile in under four minutes.

And then of course 60 years ago one athlete proved the doctors wrong. The trainers wrong. The athletes wrong. Roger Bannister. Amazingly in the 12 months that followed his record breaking efforts over 300 other runners ran under four minutes per mile.

There's been a large number of impossibilities in the world that have now become possible. Men walking on the moon. There are some impossibilities that will always remain impossible apart from the additional ingredient of which the angel Gabriel speaks in Luke 1.37.

For nothing is impossible with God. The closing words of the angel to Mary of course are designed to relieve her concerns, her fears, her doubts maybe concerning the impossible challenge that God had set before her.

[8 : 18] These words were a profound encouragement to her faith so much so that she was able to trust God with all that he'd promised. So that's why we included those verses through to verse 45 because Elizabeth recognizes in Mary, blessed is she who's believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished.

So these words were the words that inspired in her faith to believe the impossible could be done with God. There were two very obvious impossibilities of course that Gabriel had set before her that God said he would do.

The first impossibility was that she, a virgin, would bear a son. Even with our science, even with our advances in medicine and technology, even with our greater understanding of the reproductive system, we cannot make a woman pregnant apart from some contribution from a man.

Yes, we have the advances in IVF and what commonly we call test tube babies for many years, the implanting of embryos into a womb.

A woman can conceive without having sex with a man, but she still must have that male sperm added to enable the egg to be fertilized for the development and growth of a fetus into a baby and a child.

[9 : 43] There's never been any other way for this to happen, either before Jesus' birth nor since his birth. It's impossible.

The second impossibility was actually more impossible than the first impossibility, impossible though it was. And the second impossibility that God said would happen is this, that God himself would take on a human nature.

Look at this, verse 31. You will be with child and give birth to a son, clearly somebody who is human, birth to a woman. You are to give him the name Jesus.

He will be great and will be called the son of the most high. And then later on in verse 35, as Gabriel explains, if we can use that phrase, to marry how this can be since I'm a virgin, the Holy Spirit will

come upon you, the power of the most high will overshadow you, so the Holy One to be born will be called the Son of God.

How can that possibly be that he who is God can be joined to that which is human? How can the Creator become part of creation?

[10:55] How can the infinite become finite? The immortal become mortal? The eternal become temporal? How can the heavenly become earthly?

It's never happened before. It's never happened since. Gabriel was aware that for Mary and for any other human being, the thought of these things actually taking place was impossible.

And so he gives to her those words of great encouragement, for nothing is impossible with God. Those two words at the end, with God, make all the difference in the world.

Because ultimately everything is impossible. Or there are things that are impossible. But with God, nothing is impossible. And those words that are spoken by Gabriel, the sense and meaning of those words we find all the way through the Bible.

We find again and again God speaking to his people. People like Mary who had put their faith and trust in him. The angel that spoke to Sarah concerning the Lord's promise that she would have a son even though she was 90 years old.

[12:13] Genesis 18. The angel declares, is anything, it's a rhetorical question, is anything too hard for the Lord? Jeremiah, as he prays after hearing God's promise that the exiles taken into Babylon would be returned and restored in the future.

Jeremiah 32, verse 7. Nothing is too hard for you, O Lord, he prays. And God responds and says to him in verse 27, I am the Lord. Is anything too hard for me?

And even the Lord Jesus himself particularly repeats those words to Mary that Gabriel speaks. For when his disciples ask, who then can be saved?

In Matthew 19, Jesus says, with man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible. Do you believe that?

I wonder. I don't think that we, I include myself, really do. Before we think about this truth and before we apply it to ourselves, because it is true of us, as it is true of every one of God's people, because it is true of the living God we've put our faith in, we need to ask ourselves, are there any limitations to this statement?

[13:33] No and yes. Little boy Harry was kneeling by his bed and saying his prayers. He closed with these words, please make Paris the capital of England.

Amen. Harry, said his mother, why did you say that? Because that's what I wrote on my exam paper today. It's impossible for God to do anything that he doesn't want to do.

It's impossible for God to lie. He's righteous. It's impossible for God to sin. He's holy. It's impossible for God to do anything contrary to his will, because he is sovereign.

God cannot break his promises because he is faithful. He cannot change because he is perfect. We could go on and on thinking about the things that God cannot do, but I want us to think about what God can do and what he can do in our lives and what it means to us, God's people, when we grasp and rejoice in and rest in the truth that nothing is impossible with God.

God. Since nothing is impossible with God, we see in this passage particularly, everything that God has promised is possible even when everybody else says otherwise.

[15:00] Even when everybody else says otherwise. There's an illustration of that in verse 36, isn't there? Even Elizabeth, your relative, is going to have a child in her old age and she who was said to be barren. What did people say about Elizabeth?

She's barren. She'll never, ever have any children. It's impossible. God had promised that she would have a child and now she's in the sixth month of her pregnancy.

Whatever God promises is possible no matter what the circumstances, the situations, no matter what people say, no matter what people think. No. Of course again, we see that what Gabriel is speaking about concerns Mary and what he has said to her from God.

God has said to her she will have a child. Yes, that's impossible because she's a virgin. But God has said that this child will be the son of the most high. That he will have the throne of his father David.

That he will reign over God's kingdom forever. Although that seems impossible, with God it is possible and with God it shall be done.

[16:24] J.C. Ryle was the first bishop of Liverpool back in the 19th century, a very godly evangelical Anglican bishop. And this is what he wrote in reference to this truth, nothing is impossible with God but every promise of God will be kept no matter how impossible it may appear to us.

He wrote this, there is no sin too black and bad that it cannot be pardoned. The blood of Christ cleanses from all sin. There is no heart too hard and wicked to be changed.

The heart of stone can be made a heart of flesh. There is no work too hard for a believer to do. We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. There is no trial too hard to be born.

The grace of God is sufficient for us. There is no promise too great to be fulfilled. God's words will never pass away. And what he has promised he is able to perform.

There is no difficulty too great for a believer to overcome if God is for us who can be against us. It's a very helpful way of approaching circumstances in our lives to counter them with the promises of God.

[17:45] God's word is his bond. What he has written we can be confident is true and dependable and reliable. And one of the chief reasons why often when we face difficulties we go into fear and doubt and worry and crisis is because we do not know God's word better than we do.

See we don't need an angel to come to us and say to us with God nothing is impossible. What God has said to us in his word here is sustainable and enduring.

His word is reliable. That's why he wrote it down. Have you ever had me say to you whatever you do don't put it in writing because they know that once you put something in writing it's binding it's lawful it can be used and held up against you.

God has not sent an angel simply to speak to us or given us a thundering voice from heaven he's given us his word and he's written it down for us so that we can sue him for it if I can put it that way. We can take him at it and say Lord you have said this therefore you must do it. God wants us to do that you know. He doesn't want us to treat his word as some sort of take it or leave it thing something we can dip into occasionally and now and again and give us a little bit of hope or comfort he wants us to take his word and to live it and to say God this is your word and I believe it.

[19:15] Therefore with God whatever he's promised is possible. Then we see as well this truth concerning Mary which applies to all of God's people that everything that God has planned for us is also possible.

Everything that God has planned is possible. You see Mary didn't realise it but God had a plan for her. Perhaps she already thought that she knew what God's plan was for her.

The plan was that she would after her engagement to Joseph be married to him and her plan was that she would be a faithful wife supporting him in Nazareth raising their family and living as a godly woman in that community.

God had another plan for her. One of the problems that we often face is this is that we confuse our plans with God's plans and we think that what we plan is what God should plan.

And so when we have goals set before us in our lives whatever they may be whether they be in the workplace or in the family or in the church when we set those goals up and they do not they are not fulfilled we start to doubt God's ability instead of recognising or even considering that it may be that our plans are skewy.

[20:40] That actually what we think should happen is not what God thinks should happen. It's not that God has failed us and let us down by not doing the things that we thought he should do or planned that he should do but rather that his ways are not our ways and we've yet to humble ourselves before him.

Do you notice that with Mary? Verse 38 I am the Lord's servant all her plans quiet life in Nazareth being part of the community there married to Joseph we know what happened with Joseph don't we because we know what happened when he heard that she was pregnant he decided to divorce her quietly she was putting her neck on the block in one sense saying God if you do the things that you've said you will do it may bring me disgrace and dishonour it may bring me being castigated and driven out from my community it may break me off in the relationship I have with the man that I love all these things I'm the Lord's servant she says there's humility there isn't there humbling herself humbling her plans under God's plans again we find the scripture teaches us that truth we commit our ways to the Lord we don't go off and do our own thing we don't reserve judgement that our way is right we say

Lord what do you want I'm your servant fulfill your plan for me now of course that's not easy is it I recognise that for many of us Christmas can be a very difficult situation a very difficult time can't it in fact Christmas can make the difficulties of our lives and the crushing of our plans and hopes greater it may well be that you're in a family or in a situation with your family where you find there's a struggle there's discord in that relationship in that family there's very little support in that family for you as a Christian perhaps or in that marriage whereby Christmas is about family getting together and supporting one another and sharing with one another for you Christmas is actually upsetting how can I stay and honour God in this family in this marriage in this situation in this relationship it's impossible but we can do all things through him who gives us strength says the scripture for with God nothing is impossible for with God nothing is impossible it may be for some of you and I know it is the case forgive me

I don't wish to make it more difficult than it needs to be Christmas is that time when you remember that partner that you've lost or that other person that you've lost and it's a time of great loneliness and in one sense as you face Christmas you want to hide away from it and you say God I can't continue being on my own all these years how many more years will I have to bear this pain and this loss and this sorrow each Christmas I can't carry on and yet the Bible tells us that he is the God of all comfort who comforts us he is the God who has more in store for us in our lives yet for with God nothing is impossible it may be that Christmas is a very hard financial time it may be that you've suffered redundancy cut in your hours it may be that there's a huge debt hanging over you for the mortgage or whatever it may be and there's Christmas it's such a temptation everybody else is able to buy for their children or their family and their friends whatever they want everybody else is able to feed themselves and enjoy abundance and luxury it's impossible for me to have a proper Christmas without going into debt it's impossible for me to face Christmas without putting myself in an impossible situation but God is your provider God is the one who's given you everything that you have and he's the God who continues to supply and provide and meet your needs my God says Paul will meet all your needs according to his riches in glory in Christ trust him for with God nothing is impossible it may be that you're facing all sorts of pressures at work or at school you're surrounded by non-Christians you're under strain to compromise in the way that you speak you're expected to join in with the wicked language or with the sinful actions of your peers and it feels again like a great pressure upon you

[26 : 00] I can't not hold out any longer I want to conform I don't want to stick out like a sore thumb anymore I want to go with the crowd and go with the flow you see God has put you where you are for such a time as this he knows what temptations you are feeling however great they may be however strong they may be because the Bible tells us that Jesus was tempted in every way just as we are yet he did not sin for with God nothing is impossible for others of us it will be something else it may be illness old age maybe infirmity maybe again within our home it may be the fears that no one else sees maybe the troubles that feel like a great weight upon our shoulders in all these things dear friends and more besides the words of God through his angel

Gabriel are the same to us for nothing is impossible with God that unconverted partner that backslidden and wayward child that sin that seems to be set but nothing is impossible with God but you might say well I fail I sin I get it wrong I fall surely that means that this promise is null and void no it doesn't mean at all we are not a limitation upon God's promises we do not restrict him from keeping his word for nothing is impossible takes into account all of our frailties all of our inabilities all of our weaknesses all of our sins all of the circumstances in which we find ourselves there is no loophole to this promise nothing is impossible with God and when we do sin and we do fall rather than wallow in it we repent and we turn back to the

Lord to be restored you see the wonderful center of this promise is the Lord Jesus Christ because we have the very essence of who Jesus is and why he came to this world in those words with God what does Emmanuel mean God with us if we are Christ then God is with us and wherever we go and whatever happens God is with us he is with us in the workplace he is with us in the school he is with us on the building site he is with us in the hospital he is with us at the funeral directors the impossible is made possible with God are you with God walking with him trusting him are you able to say like Mary I'm your servant Lord I want to be where you are and I want to do what you want me to do may it be to me as you've said let's pray together you are you are a faithful and promise keeping

God and for that Lord we give you our thanks our faith and our love we thank you that you have given to us in your word this evening a promise promise that we can try and find reliable on Monday tomorrow and every day of the week thank you this promise is not a Sunday promise it isn't a fair weather promise it isn't a when all things are okay promise it's a down in the depths promise it's a when hard things are before us promise we're so grateful for your word which you back up with action we pray oh Lord that you would grant that this word of your promise may be etched upon our hearts and minds for we know that we will face impossible circumstances and situations when sin is at the door trying to get in when temptation is drawing and pulling when evil surrounds us when so many fears and griefs and sorrows and doubts rise up we ask oh Lord that with the wonderful provision and protection of this promise that we may not be overwhelmed but look to you to accomplish the impossible in us be with us then Lord for we ask it in the name of your dear son the Emmanuel the God with us Amen Gate o fans Amen.

[32 : 10] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.