

²⁶ 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. (NIV 84)

Theme: Grace is possible with Jesus

1. He is fully God and fully Man
2. We gives us faith in Christ.

The famous boxer Muhammad Ali, once said, "Impossible is just a big word thrown around by small men who find it easier to live the world they've been given than to explore the power they have to change it. Impossible is not a fact. It's an opinion. Impossible is not a declaration. It's a dare. Impossible is potential. Impossible is temporary. Impossible is nothing." This quote has been used in the last 5 years or so by an athletic clothing company because it embodies the way we naturally look at life.

By nature we think that we are better than we really are. That we can do whatever we want, if we only try hard enough. We think we can do what only God can do.

Today we see that God does the impossible. And his grace is possible only through Jesus. For Jesus is fully God and fully man, and God gives us faith in Christ.

We first see God's grace in this story when he sent Gabriel to this earth. He sent him to a small town in Galilee. Nazareth wasn't an important city by any stretch of the imagination. It was a town everyone made fun of. Nathanael, one of Jesus' disciples once asked, **Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?** It was a small country town. Full of unimportant and unsophisticated people. And God graciously chose this town to be the hometown of his Son. By grace, from Nazareth would come the world's Savior.

The angel Gabriel was sent to a meek and lowly girl. And he said to her, **Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.** She was favored because God sent an angel to talk to her. She was favored because God chose her out of every other Israelite girl. There was nothing that attracted God to her. She wasn't greater than anyone of us. She was a sinner who needed to be saved, just like you and me. And yet God chose her by his grace. He graciously chose her to give birth to Jesus.

The reason the angel was sent this lowly place was to announce this pregnancy. Gabriel told Mary, **you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus.** This young girl is going to have a baby boy. And this baby's name would be Jesus. Jesus the Greek form of the Hebrew name, Joshua. And both of these names mean, "The Lord saves." This baby's name depicts what this baby would go to do. He would grow up to pay for all our sins. He would save us from our sinful nature and give us the gift of eternal life in heaven. We needed a Savior because we are sinners. We constantly sin against God day after day. We fail to live up to the level of perfection God demands of us. We cannot keep his word like we are supposed to. We lose the fight against our sinful nature daily. It is impossible for us to do anything to save ourselves. It is not possible for us to contribute anyway to our eternal life. We cannot do anything to make God save us. This is not my opinion, this is a fact from God.

Impossible is nothing? Not when it comes to saving ourselves. That is something we can never do no matter how hard we try.

And for this reason God graciously sent Gabriel to Mary. His message wasn't simply that she was going to have a baby. But that her baby would be the Savior of the world. The Savior would be a son of Mary. And Mary was a human. So this one who would be born in nine months was a human. Born as a baby, like everyone else. Jesus had to be a human so he could live under the law—so he had to keep the law just like everyone of us. He had to be a human so that when he died he could serve as our substitute. So that his perfect life and death meant something for us.

But Mary's baby wouldn't just be a human. Mary was a virgin. So it was impossible for her to be pregnant. So Gabriel explained to her how it was going to happen. **The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.** As we confess every week in the Creed, Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit. And since the Holy Spirit is God, so is Jesus. And as God Jesus will reign over the world forever. **The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.** Jesus had to be God so he could be without sin and keep the law perfectly. Jesus, referred to as **the holy one** and **the son of God**, had to be God so that his life, death, and resurrection could be given to us. **For no man can redeem the life of another** we are told in Psalm 49. Jesus is both fully God and fully man. The impossible is only possible for God.

It is only by God's grace that he came down to live on this earth. That the all powerful, glorious, and eternal Lord decided to live in a womb. That he wanted to be born as a helpless little baby. That God would trade the riches of heaven for a lowly body here on earth. It is by grace that God gave this promise to Adam, Abraham, David and countless others. He didn't need to promise them a Savior, yet he did. No one could possibly make such a promise and keep it. It is impossible to make a promise and thousands of years later have it come true. And yet we God today is making good on his promise. God's grace is possible with Jesus.

God showed grace to Mary. He did the impossible by creating a son in the womb of a virgin. It is impossible that he be God and man at the same time. God does many things that are impossible. And because they are impossible we can't understand them. And yet, God has given us faith to believe in his grace.

When Gabriel first came to Mary, she was afraid and confused. What did I do to make an angel come to me? And why did he call me highly favored? Luke tells us, **she was very perplexed at this statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was.** Why would God send his angel to talk to me? Later on we see Mary confused once again. How can I get pregnant since I am a virgin? It doesn't make sense. It's not as if Mary didn't believe Gabriel, she was simply astonished that it was going to happen to her. So she pondered how all these things were going to happen. She was curious as to how all of this was going to work.

And the more she thought about it, the more confused she became. How is it possible that my son is both human and divine? How can the Holy Spirit conceive a baby in me? Why would God choose me? I'm not any more special than anyone else. How can this son be a king? I'm just a regular peasant? How can he reign forever? That would mean he is eternal.

Like Mary we too are confused by much of God's word. There are many things that it is impossible for us to understand—even in this story. How can someone be God and man at the same time? How can a virgin have a child? How can a baby yet to be born be eternal? How can a little boy reign forever? How can this be the fulfillment of a prophecy made for thousands of years before? How can a baby be God? All of this is foolishness to our human reason.

And why would God want to do this in the first place? We are nothing by God's enemies. By nature we hate God. We want nothing to do with him. We hate his word by nature. We were constantly sinning against him. We couldn't do anything to please him. God originally created us in his own image. But we rebelled against God, trying to be like him. We rejected his grace and sinned against his will. So why would God save us? Why would he forgive us and send his Son to die for us? It seems impossible.

All of this seemed impossible to Mary as well. She didn't understand everything. She couldn't possibly understand it all. She was a sinner just like us. And because our minds are so filled with sin, we can't understand God. We can't begin to comprehend God and everything in his word. As Paul says in Romans, **Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!** Mary's feeble mind couldn't comprehend or understand everything that was going on. They were impossible to her.

And yet she believed they were going to happen. Why? Because God sent his angel to tell her so. Because Elizabeth, her relative, was pregnant. And she was too old to have kids—and barren. It was supposed to be impossible for her to have kids. But with God, nothing is impossible. So Mary told the angel, **I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said.** Mary said, I may not understand what is going on, but I believe it and I will follow your words. Mary said that I am here to do your bidding. She understood that she was God's servant, to do his will. She didn't have to understand, she just followed.

We strive to follow Mary's example. We may not understand everything. And it all seems foolish to us. But as Paul says in 1 Corinthians, **The foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom.** God knows better than we do. And we don't dare question him. So through faith we believe his word. And we strive to obey him. We confess with Mary, although I don't understand I believe. And even though I don't see clearly, I follow.

This is done through faith. And faith is given to us as a free gift from God. We would never choose to believe in God. If it was up to us, faith in Christ would be impossible. So God graciously brought us to faith through the gospel. He caused us to believe in the one he promised Mary. He led us to have faith in something that is foolishness. He did this not because he liked us. But by his grace alone we believe in him. And through this gift of faith we will receive all the benefits of what the baby born of the virgin would win for us.

“Impossible is nothing.” It's what the world thinks. They can do whatever they want. If they try hard enough they can be whatever they want and they can earn their way to heaven. But we realize that is an

impossible dream. But with God, all things are possible. Through his grace he sent us Jesus, who was Mary's son and God's son. And he caused us to believe in him as our Savior. It's impossible for us to save ourselves, but not impossible for God. Amen.