

# The Promise Of The Impossible

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**Bible Text:** Luke 1:26-38

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## **Pompton Plains Reformed Bible Church**

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Our Scripture reading for this evening to which I invite you to turn with me at this time is found in the New Testament gospel according to Luke, the first chapter. Matthew, Mark, Luke, John. Luke chapter one. We will begin our Scripture reading at verse 26, a very familiar account, no doubt, to many of us. The early verses of this chapter contain the introduction by Dr. Luke to the authenticity, the faithfulness of what he is about to recount to this one Theophilus. And then, of course, the fascinating account to which we will refer briefly, by the way, the account of the announcement of the birth of John the Baptist to Zechariah the priest and his wife Elizabeth.

But again, brothers and sisters, we begin our Scripture reading in verse 26 of Luke one, reading through verse 38. And I draw your special attention to verses 34 through 38. Verses 34 through 38 will constitute our text for tonight.

Luke one beginning in verse 26. Hear, then, the Word of the Lord.

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. 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 for ever; 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.<sup>1</sup>

Thus far the reading of God's holy Word.

And, as always, dear friends, I ask and urge you to keep your Bibles open and handy to look to God's Word together at the close of this Lord's Day.

Dear congregation of Jesus Christ, perhaps you have read this weekend's very excellent devotional in *Table Talk*, the theme this month, the kingdom of God, the weekend devotional penned by Mr. John M. Duncan, the executive producer for Ligonier Ministries. This weekend's devotional is entitled "Everlasting Promises." Now I would like to read just a portion of this to you at this time.

It writes:

"On a recent morning talk show I saw a wedding ceremony, convened on a side street in downtown New York and televised live. There were myriad peculiarities contained within this ceremony, but I was struck in particular by the vows, as administered by the presiding civil servant. He asked the would-be bride and groom if they would be true to each other's love, accept each other unconditionally and find strength in each other's commitment. There was no mention of God or the purpose of marriage. The vows were based exclusively on what the two would do for one another, in their own strength.

"This pronouncement of marriage, above the din of city buses and taxis, in the presence of hot dog vendors, jugglers, and the lunch hour throng, seemed defeated as it was spoken.

"How many failed promises comprise your existence? What is the basis of the promises you make? Why are you so hurt and offended when people break promises to you, even as you continue to do the same? What human beings desperately need is someone whose word, whose vow, does not fail. We yearn for a promise that will counteract the millions of failed promises inhabiting our daily lives," end quote.

And that is true. Oh, how true that is.

You see, dear friends, that is why, as we turn to the study of our text for today as recorded for us in Luke chapter one verses 34 through 38, we find ourselves being both comforted and encouraged in the fact that just as the angel Gabriel announced to the virgin Mary that she and her relative Elizabeth would both give birth to babies under supernatural circumstances, so, too, today, all Christians everywhere by the grace and

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 1:26-38.

mercy of God through faith in the name of Jesus must also be found resting and rejoicing in the promise of the impossible.

Now think about that. Given all of the circumstances of our lives, given all of the cares and concerns of daily living, we might ask: How could that possibly be, personally and practically speaking? How could we find ourselves resting and rejoicing in the promise of the impossible when we don't even know what tomorrow holds?

Well, as we work our way through our Scripture reading together we are going to find, first of all, we will find ourselves resting and rejoicing in the promise of the impossible if, by the grace and mercy of God, we possess a personal faith. First of all, we must possess by the grace and mercy of God, a personal faith. For, notice. After God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, if you will skim over verses 26 and following with me, boys and girls, again, this is probably an account that you are pretty familiar with. God sends this great angel Gabriel to this little out of the way town of Nazareth to a virgin named Mary. And she is startled. She is a bit frightened by the appearance of this angel as you and I also well would be.

The angel says to her in verse 30:

“Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus.”<sup>2</sup>

Just as the angel told Joseph the child would be named.

“He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High.”<sup>3</sup>

As we saw so powerfully portrayed this morning, did we not, in the Sunday school Christmas program of the way in which Christ came in fulfillment of prophecy from the line of King David.

“The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; his kingdom will never end.”<sup>4</sup>

As pastor Dale preached this morning from Isaiah nine.

“And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”<sup>5</sup>

Now notice verse 34 with me, please.

“How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Luke 1:30-31.

<sup>3</sup> Luke 1:32.

<sup>4</sup> Luke 1:32-33.

<sup>5</sup> Isaiah 9:6.

Or, as the Hebrew literally says, “Since I know not a man?” a Jewish idiom meaning I did not know a man in a physical, sexual, intimate way. Or, as the NIV translates it:

“...since I am a virgin?”<sup>7</sup>

How will this be?

My friend, interestingly enough, upon that statement of Mary, a question of Mary, John Calvin relegates her to a lack of faith commensurate with the head of Zechariah the priest. In fact, if you will flip back a page or two in your Bible and skim over verses seven and following of Luke chapter one, in verse seven, speaking of this priest Zechariah, his wife Elizabeth:

“But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren; and they were both well on in years.”<sup>8</sup>

And then in verse 11:

Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John."<sup>9</sup>

Boys and girls, young people, this was a foretelling of the coming of John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Messiah.

It talks about his vows to not take fermented drink and so on.

“... he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth.”<sup>10</sup>

Verse 16.

Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God. And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.<sup>11</sup>

Now notice verse 18.

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<sup>6</sup> Luke 1:34.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Luke 1:7.

<sup>9</sup> Luke 1:11-13.

<sup>10</sup> Luke 1:15.

<sup>11</sup> Luke 1:16-17.

Zechariah asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well on in years."

The angel answered, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their proper time."<sup>12</sup>

And, again, brothers and sisters, to my surprise, Calvin relegates Mary to the level of Zechariah in the sense of unbelief. In fact, writes Calvin concerning Mary, and I quote, "She ought immediately to have risen by faith to the boundless power of God which is not at all fettered to natural means, but sways the whole world," end of quote.

Ah, but notice. With all due respect to the great reformer, do you not agree with me—and I already saw some heads shaking no when I quoted Calvin a minute ago—do you not agree with me that Mary exhibits a much greater faith at the announcement of the angel than did the priest Zechariah. For, brothers and sisters, look very carefully with me, if you would, at Luke 1:18.

"Zechariah asked the angel, 'How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well on in years.'"<sup>13</sup>

In other words, he said, "How can this be?"

But down in verse 34 of this text Mary said:

"How will this be?"<sup>14</sup>

Do you see the difference? She didn't say, "How can this be?" She said:

"How will this be?"<sup>15</sup>

In fact, writes Matthew Henry, and I quote, "This was not the language of her distrust, but, nay, a desire to be further instructed."

And, again, as William Hendrickson writes, and I quote, "Mary was not guilty of a lack of faith, but she was befuddled, bewildered, mystified," end of quote.

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<sup>12</sup> Luke 1:18-20.

<sup>13</sup> Luke 1:18.

<sup>14</sup> Luke 1:34.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

And in support of that statement, Hendrickson draws our attention to verse 45, if you will look further on in Luke chapter one verse 45, where Elizabeth filled with the Holy Spirit declares concerning Mary:

“Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!”<sup>16</sup>

Mary said:

“How will this be?”<sup>17</sup>

She had faith it could happen. She wanted to know how it would happen. Faith. Faith.

What is faith? Boys and girls, what is faith? Young people, what is faith? If someone were to ask you to give a thumbnail definition of faith, what would you say?

Well, Hebrews 11 verse one says:

“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.”<sup>18</sup>

Faith is simply taking God at his Word. Faith, my young friends, is simply believing what God says because it was God who said it, you see. Faith.

The song writer puts it this way. Listen carefully please.

Fear not, little flock,  
From the cross to the throne,  
From death into life he went for his own.  
All power in earth,  
All power above,  
Is given to him for the flock of his love.

Fear not, little flock,  
He goeth ahead,  
Your shepherd selecteth the path you must tread.  
The waters of Marah,  
He will sweeten for thee,  
He drank all the bitter in Gethsemane.

Fear not, little flock,  
Whatever your lot,  
He enters all rooms, the doors being shut.  
He never forsakes,

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<sup>16</sup> Luke 1:45.

<sup>17</sup> Luke 1:34.

<sup>18</sup> Hebrews 11:1.

He never is gone,  
So count on his presence in darkness and dawn.

Only believe,  
Only believe,  
All things are possible,  
Only believe.

Only believe,  
Only believe,  
All things are possible,  
Only believe.

Now, some may ask the question, “Well, is this just wishful thinking that we are talking about? Wishful thinking? Or is this the sort of name it, claim it false gospel that so many television preachers are preaching and propagating? If you have strong enough faith you will get it. Just name it, claim it, take it home and frame it, as some people say.”

No. Friends, that is not at all what we are talking about. What we are talking about tonight is the very same thing concerning which our Lord Jesus was talking about when he said to Jairus the synagogue ruler after he had just been told that his 12 year old daughter had died, Jesus said to Jairus in Mark five verse 36:

“Don’t be afraid; just believe.”<sup>19</sup>

We are talking about the same kind of faith Jesus challenged Thomas to possess when showing him his nail pierced hands and his wounded side in John chapter 20 verse 27.

Jesus said to Thomas:

“Stop doubting and believe.”<sup>20</sup>

We are talking about what the sacred Scripture author is talking about if you will turn with me, please, to the book of Hebrews the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter. It is near the end of the Bible before the book of James. In Hebrews chapter 11 verse six in this great passage of the heroes of the faith, the faith hall of fame as someone has described it.

In Hebrews chapter 11 verse six we read:

“And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Mark 5:36.

<sup>20</sup> John 20:27.

<sup>21</sup> Hebrews 11:6.

Bring that biblical information to bear now in the words of our text in Luke chapter one verse 34.

“How will this be,’ Mary asked the angel, ‘since I am a virgin?’”<sup>22</sup>

Not, “How can this be?”

“How will this be?”<sup>23</sup>

“Lord, I believe you can do it. How are you going to do it?” You see.

And, friends, if you and I, like Mary, desire to live each day resting and rejoicing in the promise of the impossible and by the grace and mercy of God we, too, must first of all, possess a personal faith, a personal faith.

Ah, but now notice. Our text in Luke one goes on to teach us that while we must possess a personal faith, such faith, secondly, is not in ourselves. And it is not even in our faith. We don’t have faith in our faith. We must, by the grace and gift of God possess a personal faith in a powerful God. We must possess a personal faith and then, secondly, in a powerful God.

Look at Luke one verse 35 with me, if you would, please.

“The angel answered, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power...’”<sup>24</sup>

The δυνάμις (doo’-nam-is). It is where we get our English word “dynamite” from.

“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the [δυνάμις (doo’-nam-is)] of the Most High will overshadow you.”<sup>25</sup>

Or envelope you. In fact, it is the same word used in the original language as is used in the account of the Mount of Transfiguration where the cloud enveloped Jesus, Moses and Elijah, Peter, James and John. It means to be enveloped as in a cloud, if you will.

“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.”<sup>26</sup>

Now, friends, look over that text because right there in that single verse we have the three persons of the blessed trinity mentioned: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

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<sup>22</sup> Luke 1:34.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Luke 1:35.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.



“The angel answered, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High [almighty God] will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God [the second person of the blessed trinity, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ].”<sup>27</sup>

One God who has revealed himself in three persons. Think about this.

And so is it any wonder, for example, that in Genesis 1:1 we read:

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”<sup>28</sup>

And in John one verse three concerning Christ the Son John writes:

“Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.”<sup>29</sup>

And finally on this score in Psalm 104 verse 30 we read:

“When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth.”<sup>30</sup>

And, indeed, also at the very dawn of creation Genesis 1:2 declares:

“...and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.”<sup>31</sup>

And so on. And so, again, we see the trinity at work in creation. We see the Holy Spirit especially at work in the holy, in conception and in carnation of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Verse 35, again, look with me, please.

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."<sup>32</sup>

Now think about that. You know, many commentators say that that highlighting of the sixth month is very significant. Why so? Well, I don't know why so from personal experience. I have never been pregnant. It is true for the men here this evening, so I spoke to someone who has been, my wife Margaret. And, as many of us know, the Lord

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Genesis 1:1.

<sup>29</sup> John 1:3.

<sup>30</sup> Psalm 104:30.

<sup>31</sup> Genesis 1:2.

<sup>32</sup> Luke 1:35-36.

has blessed us down through the years with seven children and five pregnancies. So I though if anybody knows about the sixth month, Margaret would probably know. So I spoke with her about this.

And, ladies, tell me, if you have been blessed with children, tell me if this is not so.

Margaret said often in the fifth month—and I hope, honey, I am quoting you correctly—she said in the fifth month you can often feel flutters. I don't know if that is a medical term or not, but she said you feel flutters in the fifth month, generally speaking. In the sixth month you really feel the baby.

Why am I looking at Mike?

In the sixth month you really feel the baby move. You really grow and show as they say in the sixth month.

Scriptures highlight the sixth month. Why? I believe and many commentators believe that under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Dr. Luke here highlights the sixth month because they wanted Mary and they wanted God's people to understand in no uncertain terms that even though Elizabeth was elderly, even though Elizabeth barren though she be, she was going to have a baby.

How could this possibly be? Reason, verse 37.

“For...

Because, since, if you will, nothing... If you have got your own Bible, underscore that.

The Greek word is ρημα (hray'-mah). You would transliterate it R H E M A, ρημα (hray'-mah). And it means something, some word, some promise. Put it all together, you see, nothing.

Think of this. Nothing is impossible. A, negation, δυνατος (doo-nat-os') power. Nothing is impossible with God. Think about that. Nothing is impossible with God.

John Calvin the great reformer writes, and I quote, “The argument will be God hath promised and therefore he will accomplish it. For we ought not to allege any impossibility in opposition to his Word.”

Let me say that again, quoting Calvin. “The argument will be God hath promised and therefore he will accomplish it. For we ought not to allege any impossibility in opposition to his Word.”

And that is true.

You know, friends, I once read or heard it said that Christians ought to pray the promises of God. Think about that. We as Christians individually, we as a congregation corporately, we as Christians ought to pray the promises of God.

You say, “What do you mean?”

For example, let’s say there is someone who believes that they are such a horrible, horrendous, horrific sinner that they could never be saved, that their sins could never be forgiven. They have sinned so fast and furiously and fallen so far from God, they could never be saved. Their situation is impossible, they say.

By the grace and mercy of God they need to pray, for example, the promise of God as it is set forth in Isaiah chapter one verse 18 where we read:

“‘Come now, let us reason together,’ says the LORD. ‘Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.’”<sup>33</sup>

You see.

Let’s say someone is going through financial fears or financial failure and they are really afraid, maybe some of us here tonight. And the new year scares us and we say, “I am in an impossible financial situation.”

Friends, by the grace and mercy of God we need to pray the promise of God as it is set forth, for example, in Psalm 37 verse 25 where we read:

“I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread.”<sup>34</sup>

You see.

There may be someone who says, “I have wasted days. I have wasted months. I have wasted years not living for the Lord that can never be regained. My life has been impossible.”

Such a one needs to pray the promise of God as set forth, for example, in Joel two verse 25a which states:

“I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten.”<sup>35</sup>

You see.

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<sup>33</sup> Isaiah 1:18.

<sup>34</sup> Psalm 37:25.

<sup>35</sup> Joel 2:25.

“I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten.”<sup>36</sup>

Somebody here tonight says, “Well, our problem is familial. It is relational. It is marital. We have fractures in our family. The situation is impossible.”

My dear brother, my dear sister in the Lord, you need to pray the promise of God as set forth, for example, in Isaiah 43 verses one through three where we read:

But now, this is what the LORD says—he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour.”<sup>37</sup>

You see.

Somebody else may say, “Oh, we have suffered a catastrophic loss. Family members passed away even after an extended illness or someone else was stricken suddenly and they are gone. My heart is broken. I feel as if I will never heal. It is impossible.”

My dear friend in the Lord, you need to pray the promise of God as set forth, for example in Psalm 147 verse three which states:

“He heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds.”<sup>38</sup>

It is God’s promise to us in Christ.

Let’s say someone is surrounded by enemies, physical foes, spiritual forces, emotional distresses, those who seek our destruction or to cast us down.

My friend, if that is true of you tonight you need to pray the promise of God as set forth, for example in Psalm 91 verses seven and following and I invite you to turn there with me. I am just going to read a few verses in the book of Psalms, Psalm 91 verses seven and following where the psalmist can identify with you if you are in that kind of situation.

And in Psalm 91:7 and following we read:

A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked.

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Isaiah 43:1-3.

<sup>38</sup> Psalm 147:3.

If you make the Most High your dwelling—even the LORD, who is my refuge—then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.<sup>39</sup>

Verse 14.

"Because he loves me," says the LORD, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation."<sup>40</sup>

The promise of God, you see.

Somebody else says, "Well, my situation in life is not that dramatic and I am just tired. I am stressed. I am strung out. I am exhausted. I am pressurized to the point of collapse. [?] I just can't make it. It is impossible."

My dear brother, my dear sister in the Lord, you need to pray the promise of God's Word as set forth, for example in Isaiah 40 verses 29 and following where we read:

He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.<sup>41</sup>

You see.

Under grace and mercy of God we have got to name the problem and then claim the promise. We have got to name the problem and then claim the promise. You see.

Writes Matthew Henry—and if you are taking notes, jot this down. He says, "No word of God must be incredible to us as long as no work of God is impossible to him."

I am going to say that again. "No word of God must be incredible to us as long as no work of God is impossible to him."

You see, just as the angel Gabriel said to the virgin Mary so many years ago:

"For nothing..."

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<sup>39</sup> Psalm 91:7-11.

<sup>40</sup> Psalm 91:14-16.

<sup>41</sup> Isaiah 40:29-31.

My friends, fill in your trial. Fill in your tribulation. Fill in your concern. Fill in your care. Fill in your worry. Fill in your fear. Just put it in there.

“For nothing is impossible with God.”<sup>42</sup>

By his grace and mercy we need the gift of personal faith in a powerful God and then, thirdly and finally, to perform his good pleasure. We need a personal faith in a powerful God to perform his good pleasure.

Look at verse 38 of Luke one with me one last time, please.

“‘I am the Lord’s servant,’ Mary answered.”<sup>43</sup>

King James says:

“...handmaid of the Lord.”<sup>44</sup>

New American Standard says:

“...bondslave [bondservant] of the Lord.”<sup>45</sup>

“‘I am the Lord’s servant,’ Mary answered. ‘May it be to me as you have said.’”<sup>46</sup>

Literally, according to your Word may it be to me.

As difficult a journey as such obedience would oblige Mary to take, William Hendrickson accurately summarizes Mary’s response when he writes, and I quote, “She made a complete surrender. She placed herself, body and soul, at the disposal of the God who loved her and who by means of this promised pregnancy and childbirth was bestowing upon her an inestimable blessing,” end of quote.

And in similar fashion writes Calvin, “She is convinced of the power of God, follows cheerfully where he calls, trusts also in his promise and not only expects but eagerly desires its accomplishment,” end of quote.

And, thus, having completed his heavenly mission and having delivered his Holy Spirit inspired message our text concludes simply by saying:

“Then the angel left her.”<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Luke 1:37.

<sup>43</sup> Luke 1:38.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

You know, as I was reflecting this past week upon the marvelous and miraculous conception and incarnation of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, I got to thinking about another marvelous and miraculous conception and birth of an Old Testament child, the child born to the father of all believers, the patriarch Abraham and his wife Sarah, the promised child Isaac. In fact, in Romans the fourth chapter—and if you would turn there with me as we close—Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans chapter four verses 18 and following the apostle Paul under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit speaks of that historic event and he proclaims the following, Romans 4:18 and following. He said:

Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be." Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah's womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. This is why "it was credited to him as righteousness."

The words "it was credited to him" were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness— for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.<sup>48</sup>

Question. Like Abraham and Mary of old and by the grace and mercy of God are you, my friend, fully persuaded that God has the power to do what he has promised? Not simply to the point of the holy conception and birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ just as we celebrate at Christmas, but also to the very point of delivering him over to death for our sins and raising him to life for our justification.

If so, then by the grace and mercy of God through faith in his holy name let us go forth into this new week and let us be found living our lives each and every day resting and rejoicing in the promise of the apostle. Amen.

Let's bow our heads and our hearts together in prayer.

“How will this be,’ Mary asked the angel, ‘since I am a virgin?’”<sup>49</sup>

The angel answered:

“For nothing is impossible with God.”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Romans 4:18-25.

<sup>49</sup> Luke 1:34.

<sup>50</sup> Luke 1:37.

*Oh Lord, our Lord, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, as we look forward to celebrating the coming of Christ at Christmas and as we consider all of the unknowns and uncertainties of the dawning of a new year, graciously grant to each and every one of us, we pray, a personal faith in thee and in thy power to perform thy good pleasure so that individually as Christians and corporately as a congregation, like Mary of old, we, too, might rest and rejoice in the promise of the impossible. In Jesus' name we pray and praise thee. Amen.*