

FOR WITH GOD NOTHING WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE:

(Sermon Summary)

Reading: Luke 1: 26-38.

We are back at that time of the year when we are once more giving particular consideration to the narrative of events surrounding the birth of Christ. In it we are faced with one wonder following hard on the heels of another wonder.

1. Real events.

We have to recover the narrative of Christ's birth from the world of children's stories which it is in danger of being merged into. It is very much something that belongs in the world of adults too. These events are not an insult to our intelligence. Neither are they ruled out of court by some man-made definition of rationality. These events are the logical outworking of Old Testament prophecy. They are therefore to have been expected as they had been promised in advance by God. For the Old Testament is full of supernaturalism, and it is no wonder that the birth of Christ should be an event saturated with supernaturalism.

And, in the midst of these supernatural events, are real people with real desires and real fears. Mary is a real three-dimensional person with questions and concerns. All those involved in this narrative, including the angel, are real persons.

2. A virgin with child.

This is not the time or the place for a biology lesson, but Mary's question about how she, a virgin, should be able to have a baby, is a reasonable question. God would use an egg from her, especially preserved from sin, and combine this with supernatural power to conceive a baby. In this respect we should not become over-excited about Mary. She is an ordinary woman, herself in need of salvation, but who has extraordinary faith.

The genealogy of our Lord is carefully listed but we might wonder about the differences that are supplied in different accounts in the gospels. But they trace the child's ancestry back to David, to Abraham and then to Adam. This Person is both fully divine and fully human. He is a real Person, self-aware, fully integrated, not someone who is a stranger to Himself, unaware of His real identity. Sometimes it is the divine nature that is to the fore in the narrative. At other times it is the human nature that we are more conscious of. Yet He is a seamless whole, One Person, not two. While being human, He is God and

therefore all-powerful, all-wise, all-knowing. What might seem impossible to us is not impossible for God.

3. Saving sinners is not impossible with God.

There are some things that are impossible for God to do. He cannot lie. He cannot be illogical. Really the possibility of our salvation seems impossible for God. We are so far from, so distant from, His holy character and nature. We cannot please Him fully with anything we can do or say. We are not able to properly assess our wickedness or adequately account for the people we are at heart. There are some many evils locked up in our hearts, so much capacity for evil. We are capable of such cruelty, such jealousy, such vindictiveness, such self-opinionation, such foolishness, such disobedience, such uncleanness. And because we are proud, we back ourselves, vindicate ourselves in our own eyes, make our sins excusable and make ourselves the centre of the drama.

From this it would seem impossible for us to be able to have fellowship with such a high and holy God. When we compare ourselves to our Lord Jesus Christ, who sets before us what is expected, we cannot imitate Him. We cannot love our neighbour like He did, or love God like He did. It is simply too much for us. There is no good news for us here.

But if we fight shy of the severity of our problem, we miss the wonder of God's gift and the moment to learn truly that nothing is too difficult for Him. In Christ, by His life and death, the impossible has taken place. The work necessary to make us acceptable to a holy God has been accomplished. We are to enjoy the fruit of that work, and the grace and kindness it shows us.

God's glory is to be seen in His Son doing the work that He does. He has allowed His dignity to be crushed, His real identity to be both hidden, and yet, truly revealed on the cross. He consigned Himself to ruin and destruction for our sakes, permitting His Person to be ridiculed and abused, to have His holiness derided, His love thrown back at Him. He seems to be refused by God and man, the door of fellowship with both closed to Him. He has his own experience of hell for our sakes. For through this, the seeming impossibility of having our sin forgiven, takes place. The price for our release is paid. We are to agree to the transaction, admitting its necessity and responding with gratitude that God has been merciful to us. He has found a way for us to come to Him, to know Him, to pray to Him, to have fellowship with Him.

In the end, with God, nothing is impossible.