

Christmas family service

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[0 : 00] And we're introduced in this passage to another impossible thing.! Let's see how this passage starts. It's in verse 26. It's in the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy where God sent an angel, Gabriel, to Nazareth, to a town in Galilee.

Some of us were here last Sunday evening and we looked at Zechariah and Elizabeth in the passage before and saw how God in their old age was going to bless them with a child. A child who was going to come to prepare the way for the Lord Jesus himself. And that was an impossible situation. It was impossible for Elizabeth to have a child.

She was old, past the age of childbearing. She'd never been able to have a child before. It was impossible. But God was making it possible. And in this passage, I think we see an even more impossible situation than last time, if that's possible.

Verse 27. We're introduced to this girl called Mary.

[1 : 19] She's not yet married. But is going to marry this man who's descended from King David, by the way. That's pretty cool. She's going to marry this man called Joseph.

But they're not married right now. And actually, it's impossible for Mary. There's no possible way for her to have a baby right now. An impossible situation.

Impossible for Mary to have a baby. But something extraordinary is going to happen. Something extraordinary is already happening.

There's an angel in town. And we see even more extraordinary things from this angel as he comes to speak to Mary.

So have a look there. In verse 28. The angel went to her and said, Greetings, you who are highly favoured.

[2 : 20] The Lord is with you. This is amazing. This is an angel from God. He's standing in the presence of God. But he's come to speak to this little girl, Mary, in this little town of Nazareth.

But an unexpected visitor in Mary's home. And having any sort of unexpected visitor would be a surprise to you. Maybe you'd be as surprised as Becky and I were back in September when we were sitting in our lounge.

An unexpected visitor appeared in the form of a spider. I think that happened twice, actually. We were afraid.

There was an unexpected visitor. We never let the spider in. Where did that come from? And spiders aren't heavenly beings sent from God. They're little.

This is an angel. And angels are heavenly beings from God. And the angel appears before Mary.

[3 : 31] Suddenly comes and visits her at her home. What's going on? And so Mary, rightly, is greatly troubled and afraid by this.

Verse 29. Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. This isn't normal.

It's not normal for an angel to come and speak to you. Really not normal at all. So understandably, Mary's feeling troubled. Wondering what's going on.

Scratching her head. What's this angel doing appearing before me? What's this message all about? And so the angel better explain some more to Mary. So verse 30.

The angel indeed does do that. Have a look. The angel said to her. Do not be afraid, Mary. You have found favor with God.

[4 : 30] You will conceive and give birth to a son. And you are to call him Jesus. Jesus. The angel explains that God is working here.

God is working here in an impossible situation. In a situation that is just as impossible as it is to get water out of a stone.

So it is for Mary to have a baby. But God sent his messenger, Gabriel, to her. And said, you will have a child.

And there's no need to go to the hospital for a scan and find out whether it's going to be a boy or a girl. This is going to be a baby boy. And there's no need to work out between you and Joseph what you're going to call this baby.

Because he's going to have the name Jesus. Now when I set those three challenges to my three lovely volunteers, you may have wondered at one point, how?

[5 : 39] How can you get water out of a stone even though it's impossible? And Mary indeed knows that her situation is impossible.

And she indeed asked that question, how? How, angel, how is this going to happen? Look at verse 34.

How will this be, Mary asked, since I am a virgin? How? How's this going to happen? I can't have a baby. How's this going to happen?

Well, the answer lies with God. God's going to make it happen. Who can do the impossible?

God can do the impossible. And in fact, to help us to really understand that this morning, I would love your help. Every time I say the word impossible, I wonder if you can shout out.

[6 : 40] And you can shout as loudly as you want. You have permission to do that this morning. Shout out, God can do the impossible. Shall we try that? Impossible.

God can do the impossible! That's pretty loud. That's good. Wonderful. So keep your ears open for that.

You won't miss it. Verse 35. The angel answers, The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.

And so the Holy One to be born will be called the Son of God. For Mary, this is completely impossible.

God can do the impossible! So God can do it. Mary can't, but God can. And so the Holy Spirit is going to come on Mary, and she is going to become pregnant.

[7 : 48] And we'll be expecting a baby boy. Of course, God has already done this kind of thing. He's done that with Elizabeth.

In her old age, for her, when it was impossible. God can do the impossible! For her to have a baby. But God made it possible, as you've said.

God can do it. Verse 37. This is the angel's last words to Mary. Listen to them.

For no word from God can ever fail. No word from God can ever fail. The angels come to announce God's words to Mary.

And God can do it. No word of His can ever fail. And that amazes me, because I say lots of things, that do fail. I think almost every year, I will say at some point, I think it's going to snow at Christmas.

[8 : 53] And every year, so far, where I've lived, it's not snowed. It might have snowed somewhere else in the country, or somewhere else in the world, but it's never snowed where I've lived. And looking at the weather for Brighton on Christmas Day, doesn't look likely this year either.

I might also say something like Brighton and Hove Albion will win the Premier League this season. But looking at the table, that's not going to happen, is it?

They're in eight. Something amazing will have to happen. But God can do everything. I say I will clean the bathroom on a day.

And about three days later, maybe I've done it. My words fail, but God's words do not fail. And you know what?

Jesus, he's the son born to Mary. When he's all grown up, there's an amazing story where he's on board a boat.

[9 : 55] And there's a storm howling, a violent storm. And his disciples are up and they're worried. But where is Jesus? He's down on the boat and he's asleep.

And his disciples go and wake him up. How can you possibly sleep in this storm? Wake up, Jesus. And Jesus gets up, looks at the storm and shouts, Quiet, be still.

And if I was to go outside on a stormy day and say that, you'd think I'm mad. But for Jesus, who is God, no words of his can fail.

And when he says, Quiet, be still. The storm is still. This morning, we are celebrating something that seems absolutely crazy, impossible.

Mark's still awake and us, Emma is still awake. But this is God's work. And no word of his can ever fail.

[11:04] And so we can trust his word this morning. It is amazing. And it sounds impossible. God can do the impossible.

But God can do the impossible. And we'll see more in just a moment. But first, we're going to sing this lovely song, Silent Night, Holy Night.

Let's stand and sing. Amazing so far in this story. Mary, who couldn't possibly have a baby, is told she will give birth to a son.

Now we're going to find out a little bit more about this son. And we're going to see an amazing baby. And all babies, let me be clear, are amazing, I think.

They are precious gifts of life. And we've had in our church family, news of two births, of two baby girls. And we're rejoicing with them and their families.

[12:05] But this baby is surely the most extraordinary and the most amazing baby ever to be born in this world. And the angel tells us more about this baby who is to be called Jesus.

Verse 32, have a look. What does it say? It says, He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High.

This baby is going to be the Son of the Most High. That's amazing. You see, this baby who Mary is going to give birth to is not like you and me.

He is a human baby. He's coming from Mary, a real life human being. It's a human baby. But this baby is also God.

He is the Son of the Most High God. This is a great baby. The greatest baby ever to be born.

[13:14] For this is God in human flesh. God who's always existed. Even before this world began, God existed.

That's so hard to imagine, isn't it? God who dwells in heaven, who is great, was coming to be made small.

to be made like one of us. And he's going to be given the name Jesus. That name is significant.

It means God saves. God was coming down to be with us, to save us, to save human beings.

because we need to be saved. And maybe you sit here thinking, why do I need to be saved?

[14:16] I'm quite happy actually. I'm quite comfortable sitting here, Daniel. I don't need to be saved. I'm fine. Life is comfortable.

I've got a nice family. I'm looking forward to Christmas. But you know what Christmas shows us? Jesus shows us.

As he comes into this world, as one of us, he shows us that we need to be saved. You see, we do wrong things and the Bible calls that sin.

And as a church, we often say that sin, it's when we say to God, shove off God. I'm in charge. Life's about me.

I can lie if I want to, God. I'm going to ignore you. Shove off God. I'm in charge, not you. That's what we're doing when we sin.

[15:14] But you know what? God loves this world so much. This world that he made. You, who he made. He loves you so much that he says, I am coming into this world.

And I'm going to come and be born like one of you. Come as a little baby. And I am going to come and die on the cross to take that anger of God that each one of us deserves for our sin, take that on myself so that you don't have to face it anymore.

And maybe to you that sounds completely impossible. God can do the impossible. And this baby who Mary would give birth to is God.

The son of the most high God and he has come to save us. This is the son of the most high.

And this is the forever king. The forever king. In the last five years in this country we have had lots of people being prime minister.

[16:35] We've had four prime ministers. And we've had a queen and now we have a king. It shows us that nobody who rules lasts forever. And if you want to think about it a little bit differently here's another way to think about it.

I've been introduced in the last year to Frozen. Frozen. I've even seen the musical in London It's Great You Should Go. Do you know what Frozen shows us?

Right at the beginning in the kingdom of Arendelle there's a king and a queen. There are two little there are two girls Elsa and Anna.

But they a few minutes later they're not king and queen anymore. And queen Elsa becomes queen and then the kingdom is in threat it's in danger because of her powers to make everything icy cold.

No kingdom no king no queen no president no prime minister will last forever. Apart from one.

[17 : 51] And that king is Jesus and his kingdom is the kingdom of heaven. Have a look at verse halfway through verse 30 the little 30 the lord god will give him the throne of his father david and he will reign over jacob's descendants forever.

His kingdom will never end. this baby that Mary was going to give birth to is the forever king.

And today you can be part of his forever kingdom because though humans do sin though we do say shove off god I'm in charge not you Jesus has still come down to die for us so that we can live life under his rule under his good rule which will never end.

And so how do we respond to such good news? Well I think a couple of ways that we see in this passage that we've read together firstly we can respond by trusting God.

Have a look verse 38 this is how Mary responds to all of this that the angel says verse 38 I am the Lord's servant Mary answered may your word to me be fulfilled.

[19 : 30] She trusts in God's words. She believes in God's words. that it's going to be fulfilled.

But this is a hard thing for Mary to do I think. Such a scary thing she's so young. She's meant to be getting married to Joseph. What will Joseph think?

Being pregnant with a child that's not his? But she says I'm the Lord's servant. I trust him. Even though it might be scary for her.

I trust him. And that reminds those of us who are following Jesus today that following God may not always be easy. But he is God.

He is our God and our king. And we are his servants and we trust him and his words. Knowing that no word of his can ever fail.

[20 : 30] God. And this morning as you've been hearing these things maybe you can't see how this could possibly be possible. But you also see maybe actually this is God at work.

Only he can do it. Well the best thing about this good news is that this forever king invites you into his kingdom today.

You can come and you can say sorry for all the ways you've not lived for him for all the sin. And he offers you forgiveness.

And that's why he's come. So you can trust him to save you even this morning. Respond in trust and finally respond with joy.

Respond with joy. Have a look at verse 41. There's lots of joy going on as this passage ends.

[21 : 39] Mary went off to see Elizabeth. Remember she was old and she was pregnant. Elizabeth is there at home and Mary goes down to see her.

And verse 41. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting the baby in Elizabeth's room leaped with joy. Leaped in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

In a loud voice Elizabeth exclaimed hear the joy blessed are you among women and blessed is the child you will bear. And verse 44.

As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Lots of joy going on. Joy for Elizabeth.

She exclaims blessed are you Mary. Joy in Elizabeth's womb as John who comes to prepare the way for Jesus leaps with joy.

[22 : 41] the news has come. And you know what? You can have that joy too. Maybe this morning you're hoping that Christmas day is going to fill you with great joy.

And I pray it does. But nothing can fill you with joy like this Jesus, this child who was born to Mary. joy. Because in him you can have a joy even in this broken and troubled world. The joy of knowing that God would come down.

That he would do all that is needed for our sins to be forgiven to bring us life, hope for the future as we come into the kingdom of his son which will never end.

Life under the rule of God, the forever king. That's what can bring us real lasting joy beyond Christmas today.

[23 : 45] Joy through the good and the bad things that we go through in life. Joy that will last even beyond the grave. And we're going to sing a song filled with joy now.

Joy ending ending ending ending ending ending ending ending ending ending