



Apartment of the Grand Prelate



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There is a familiar story in the Scriptures I would like to share with you for Christmas this year. It is found in Luke 1:26-38. God sends the angel Gabriel to Mary. Gabriel says to her, "Greetings, you are highly favored! The Lord is with you . . . Don't be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and will give birth to a son and you are to give him the name, Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High."

Mary then responds, "How can this be? How can I have a child when I am still a virgin? I have never known a man. How can this happen?"

The angel meets Mary's astonishment with these words, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will over shadow you. So the Holy One to be born will be called the Son of God."

Suddenly Mary's amazement changes to faith. Mary speaks one of the most beautiful lines ever uttered in the history of humanity, "I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said."

Do you know what gift Mary gave on that very first Christmas? She gave the gift of herself. The children have sung about how the wise men gave the gift of themselves, and Mary's story is in keeping with theirs. Faced with a seeming

impossibility, and troubled by the startling invasion of God the angel represented, Mary responded in faith and submitted herself to the purpose of God. As the angel finished the divine pronouncement, he declared to Mary, "Nothing is impossible with God." Mary had the audacity to look past her virgin state and believe God might just pull something off. The Holy Spirit was hovering. A new creation was brewing. Salvation was coming. Impossibilities suddenly seemed small in comparison to the God who came to her in startling activity. So Mary offered herself to the Lord, "I am the Lord's servant."

Would we do the same? If God broke into our closed worlds with saving intent and startling new possibilities, would we give ourselves to His purpose? Would we give the Lord the gift of ourselves?

Or would we clamor about the impossibilities? We can never break from the grip of the past, from the shame held over us, from the bitterness that eats at our hearts. It is impossible. Why bother? We can never overcome the habits and broken life patterns that plague us. We have tried repeated New Year's resolutions, but found too often failure in the pursuit of freedom. It is impossible to change. Why bother?

Why bother? Bother because the Spirit of God is hovering over us in creative power. The same Spirit that hovered over the waters of chaos when God said, "Let there be light," even now is hovering over us. The agent of God's creative activity that took barren wombs and infused them with life, which took a virgin womb and filled it with salvation, is hovering over us. Impossibilities are nonsense in light of the Spirit's presence. Possibilities are endless in the presence of the coming Jesus.

God has taken the initiative to come to our lives again this Christmas with a gift of salvation. The ribbon and paper are adorned with the name Jesus. Does anyone want a gift like that? Are we willing to offer the gift of ourselves in return, so our impossibilities might be exchanged for God's possibilities?

Again this Christmas the question comes, will we give Him our hearts?

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