

Natalie Ford  
 December 12, 2010  
 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent

***Good News!***  
***Luke 1:26-38***

One mother in Michigan asked her children what the *candles* of the Advent wreath symbolize, and 7 year old Luke started out right...love, joy, peace....and 6 year old Elise finished the sentence...peace, ***and quiet!***

That would be nice this time of year.  
 Instead we find ourselves surrounded by lights, cameras, and action!  
 Plenty of preparations and celebrations....  
 even if our hearts, even if deep down inside our hearts  
 we have no peace and quiet.  
 Even if life is really ***very hard*** for us this Christmas.

Jeremy Basset of OKC tells about his 5 yr old niece, and her nativity play. Niece Olivia was an angel, her friend Claire was playing Mary....and before the show a young boy was walking around behind the stage saying 'I'm a sheep what are you?'. Olivia proudly declared, "I am an angel". To which he said, "it's hard being a sheep, you know" and he went on to Claire, and repeated the question to her, "I'm a sheep, what are you?". Claire said simply, "I'm Mary."

"It's hard being a sheep you know", he said, with all the seriousness of a 5 year old amateur actor.

Claire's equally serious response was humorously profound.

Yes, said Claire, innocently, 'but it's ***also hard*** being a virgin, you know.'

We smile, but she is right.  
 Mary is a real ***hero***,  
 And she has received too little attention from us Protestants,  
 For Mary is an ultimate example of faith and trust in God!

Talk about ***difficulties*** in life....here she was a young merely engaged girl,  
 Told she will soon become pregnant...by the Holy Spirit....with the Son of God!  
 If that doesn't get the neighbors talking, I don't know what will.

She was in danger of being stoned for adultery,  
 of being tossed aside by family and friends,

of being not a blushing bride, but a forgotten old maid—  
the crazy one who thought she had a vision from God.

What she was hearing was simply—*Impossible*.  
A virgin birth?  
The Son of God?

Have you ever had those moments?  
When life presents you with the *impossible*?  
Are you facing some right now?

The holidays seem to make hardships much more painful,  
There's so much pressure to have everything look and feel good at Christmas.  
When in reality no one's life is perfect.

We all have those hurts that *hurt even more* this time of year....  
The empty seats at the table,  
The bad news at the office,  
The marriages that are strained,  
the families that are struggling,  
The checkbooks that can't stretch to the end of the month.

And some situations just *seem hopeless*....

I remember having to *commit* my loved one to a facility during his addiction to  
meth. It was the best and hardest thing we had to do for him, heartbreaking,  
devastating....wondering if he could get clean this time....

I remember hearing the news that my *girlfriend* in college had late stage breast  
cancer....and a friend in seminary needed surgery for a brain tumor.  
Overwhelming to say the least....

We all face those *impossible situations*—the moments when we think  
There's no way out....no way to make it through....no hope.....

These were surely the thoughts running *through Mary's mind*  
After the angel told her the plan....you a virgin will give birth,  
Your barren aunt is now 6 months pregnant,  
No way, impossible, it can't happen!

Maybe that's why the angel started with those famous words,  
 The same kind of comforting words we hear throughout God's word  
 Greetings...*the Lord is with you*....  
*Do not be afraid*....*you've found favor* with God....

The angel gave words of reassurance *before* the situation truly sank in....

And *after* she knew the impossible situation,  
 Then came *more important* words from God  
 words we all need to hear and believe when faced with our own hard times.

Listen to them again:

*For nothing will be impossible with God.*  
 So often we get stuck at the impossible impasse.  
 We give up right in the middle of the mess,  
 giving into the depression, the desperation, the despair....and we go no further.

But Mary didn't stop there.  
 She heard what God had to say next.

Do we?  
 Do we hear what God has to say to us, next?  
 Do we even hear what God says to us, *first*?

Amidst all the hustle and bustle of the holiday,  
 All the worry and hurry of our lives, our jobs, our families,  
 That voice of God can easily be drowned out by chaos,  
 And we just might miss it....*Greetings, the Lord is with you*....  
*Do not fear, you have found favor with God.*

It's there for us, that voice of God.  
 And when we too are faced with the impossible,  
 The very same words.....are waiting there for us.....  
*Nothing will be impossible with God.*

Will we stop to hear those words?  
 Will we trust in them, and believe?

Miracles happen every day,  
 And not just for other people.

My loved one *addicted to meth*, went through rehab twice, and now is the most sober, fun, successful and thoughtful man you'd ever meet. He helps teens and adults get into the workforce and turn their lives around.

My *girlfriend* in college had a double mastectomy and is alive today.  
My friend in *seminary*, after weeks of tests and prayers, found her tumor mysteriously disappeared on the final MRI before brain surgery.

I just heard from another pastor that a young *troubled couple* that I married 11 years ago, is now still happily married with a 5 year old precious daughter, and they have now become active in church.

Will we hear and believe the words we need?

Listen to the good news:

***Nothing will be impossible with God.***

Mary heard and believed.

She believed it enough to say,

Here am I, the servant of the Lord, let it be with me according to your word.

Maybe it's something we should incorporate into our *daily prayers* this Advent,  
Something to say in the *car* as we drive,  
or with our *children* when they go to bed.

***Nothing will be impossible with God.***

Friends, this is the ***Good News*** of the gospel for us today,

The Good News of the gospel for us this ***Advent***.

God's message to Mary....is God's message to ***us***.

Nothing will be impossible with God. That's Good News we can all use. Amen.