

**“Luke 1”** (Luke 1)(12.18.22)

*Mary’s Song* **RESPONSIVE READING:**  
**Canticle of Mary #199** (from Luke 46b-55)

<sup>46</sup> And Mary said:

“My soul glorifies the Lord

<sup>47</sup> and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

<sup>48</sup> for he has been mindful

of the humble state of his servant.

From now on all generations will call me blessed,

<sup>49</sup> for the Mighty One has done great things for me—

holy is his name.

<sup>50</sup> His mercy extends to those who fear him,

from generation to generation.

<sup>51</sup> He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;

he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.

<sup>52</sup> He has brought down rulers from their thrones

but has lifted up the humble.

<sup>53</sup> He has filled the hungry with good things  
but has sent the rich away empty.

<sup>54</sup> He has helped his servant Israel,  
remembering to be merciful

<sup>55</sup> to Abraham and his descendants forever,  
even as he said to our fathers.”

<sup>56</sup> Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three  
months and then returned home.

Luke 1:1–4 (NIV84) *Introduction*

**1** Many have undertaken to draw up an account  
of the things that have been fulfilled among us,<sup>2</sup>  
just as they were handed down to us by those who  
from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of  
the word.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, since I myself have carefully  
investigated everything from the beginning, it  
seemed good also to me to write an orderly  
account for you, most excellent Theophilus,<sup>4</sup> so  
that you may know the certainty of the things you  
have been taught.

***The word of God for the people of God.***

Luke 1:5-25 (NIV) *The Birth of John the Baptist  
Foretold*

<sup>5</sup>In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron.<sup>6</sup> Both of them were upright in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly.<sup>7</sup> But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren; and they were both well along in years.

<sup>8</sup>Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God,<sup>9</sup> he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense.<sup>10</sup> And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside.

<sup>11</sup>Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense.<sup>12</sup> When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear.<sup>13</sup> 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>14</sup> He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth,<sup>15</sup> for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth.<sup>16</sup> Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God.<sup>17</sup>

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>18</sup> Zechariah asked the angel, “How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years.”

<sup>19</sup> 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. <sup>20</sup> 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>21</sup> Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondering why he stayed so long in the temple. <sup>22</sup> When he came out, he could not speak to them. They realized he had seen a vision in the temple, for he kept making signs to them but remained unable to speak.

<sup>23</sup> When his time of service was completed, he returned home. <sup>24</sup> After this his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and for five months remained in seclusion. <sup>25</sup> “The Lord has done this for me,” she said. “In these days he has shown his favor and taken away my disgrace among the people.”

## ***The word of God for the people of God.***

### *Luke 1:26-38 The Birth of Jesus Foretold*

<sup>26</sup>In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee,<sup>27</sup> to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary.<sup>28</sup> The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

<sup>29</sup>Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be.<sup>30</sup> But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God.<sup>31</sup> You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus.<sup>32</sup> 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,<sup>33</sup> and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."

<sup>34</sup>"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

<sup>35</sup>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.<sup>36</sup> 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>37</sup> For nothing is impossible with God.”

<sup>38</sup>“I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May it be to me as you have said.” Then the angel left her.

### ***The word of God for the people of God.***

#### *Luke 1:39-45 Mary Visits Elizabeth*

<sup>39</sup>At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea,<sup>40</sup> where she entered Zechariah’s home and greeted Elizabeth.<sup>41</sup> When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.<sup>42</sup> In a loud voice she exclaimed: “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear!<sup>43</sup> But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?<sup>44</sup> As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.<sup>45</sup> Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!”

### ***The word of God for the people of God.***

#### *Luke 1:56-66 The Birth of John the Baptist*

<sup>57</sup>When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son.<sup>58</sup> Her neighbors and

relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they shared her joy.

<sup>59</sup> On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him after his father Zechariah,<sup>60</sup> but his mother spoke up and said, "No! He is to be called John."

<sup>61</sup> They said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who has that name."

<sup>62</sup> Then they made signs to his father, to find out what he would like to name the child.<sup>63</sup> He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone's astonishment he wrote, "His name is John."<sup>64</sup> Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue was loosed, and he began to speak, praising God.<sup>65</sup> The neighbors were all filled with awe, and throughout the hill country of Judea people were talking about all these things.<sup>66</sup> Everyone who heard this wondered about it, asking, "What then is this child going to be?" For the Lord's hand was with him.

## **The word of God for the people of God.**

***RESPONSE: Canticle of  
Zechariah***

**#208**

<sup>67</sup> His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:

<sup>68</sup> "Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel,  
because he has come and has redeemed his  
people.

<sup>69</sup> He has raised up a horn

of salvation for us

in the house of his servant David

<sup>70</sup> (as he said through his holy prophets of long  
ago),

<sup>71</sup> salvation from our enemies

and from the hand of all who hate us—

<sup>72</sup> to show mercy to our fathers

and to remember his holy covenant,

<sup>73</sup> the oath he swore to our father Abraham:

<sup>74</sup> to rescue us from the hand of our enemies,

and to enable us to serve him without fear

<sup>75</sup> in holiness and righteousness before him all our  
days.

<sup>76</sup> And you, my child, will be called a prophet of  
the Most High;

for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him,

<sup>77</sup> to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins,

<sup>78</sup> because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven

<sup>79</sup> to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death,

to guide our feet into the path of peace.”

<sup>80</sup> And the child grew and became strong in spirit; and he lived in the desert until he appeared publicly to Israel.

LET US PRAY.

Title: **“NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE WITH GOD”**

INTRODUCTION:

Our memory verse should be so simple for us this week. There are several places in the Bible where it is repeated exactly and other places where different words are used to express the same thought.

The angel Gabriel tells Mary that her barren elderly Aunt Elizabeth is going to have a child. This is in answer to Mary's amazement, that she, a virgin, will conceive Jesus the Savior of mankind. And then Gabriel says, "Nothing will be impossible for God.

In a similar fashion, we have the case of Abraham and Sarah. They are both old and have never been blessed with children. The LORD asks Abraham in Genesis 18:14 (NIV84) **Is anything too hard for the Lord?** I will return to you at the appointed time next year and Sarah will have a son."

Paul also references the miraculous conception of Isaac by Abraham and Sarah. Romans 4:19–21 (NIV84)

<sup>19</sup> Without weakening in his [Abraham's] 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.<sup>20</sup> Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God,<sup>21</sup> **being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.**

Matthew, Mark, and Luke all use the parallel phrase, What is impossible with men is possible with God, in different circumstances. Jeremiah, Job, and Zechariah all express the same thought of

the LORD's undeniable power to accomplish anything God wishes. It is a recurring theme and we should take notice. More than that, we need to embrace and claim this truth in our Christian walk. If we believe this in our hearts, it will empower us in our faith, and permeate our lives.

BODY:

In the birth of Jesus, the incarnation of God, we have a miraculous story. Just pause for a second to think about the fact of the LORD of ALL Creation being born as a tiny baby into this broken and dark world. Emmanuel, God with us is a sublime thought. And, it was prophesied in the Holy Scriptures 700 years earlier. The Messiah would be born to a virgin in the tiny town of Bethlehem.

Not only Jesus' birth, but the birth of John the Baptist is incredible. And in the proclamation that nothing is impossible with God, it points us back to Abraham and Sarah, the parents of The Chosen People. And, it was through this Chosen People that the Savior would come. Through them, all peoples of the earth would be blessed.

We have heard the Christmas Story so often, many of us kind of take it for granted. We have ceased to be in awe of God and His greatness and His grace. We read about God's messengers communicating with people and it doesn't phase us

at all. We find Gabriel showing up in scripture talking to Daniel, Joseph, and Mary. And we are like, yawn. In the next chapter of Luke, we learn that on Christmas Eve the night skies were filled with the heavenly hosts of angels singing praises to God. And yet, we are not astonished.

The Holy Spirit filled John the Baptist from birth Dr. Luke informs us. Then when Mary arrives to visit Aunt Elizabeth, the preborn John the Baptist leaps in his mother's womb. And as a result of that, Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit. After John the Baptist was born, his father Zechariah is filled with the Holy Spirit and he prophesied John would be a prophet of the Most High and prepare the way for the Lord.

Then of course, there is the conception of Jesus. Luke 1:35 (NIV84)<sup>35</sup>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. <sup>37</sup>For nothing is impossible with God." The Holy Spirit is God the Holy Spirit, the third person of our Triune Godhead. Do we really believe this incomprehensible story?

## CONCLUSION:

It is crucial to our faith that we do. I will use an illustration to bring the point home.

Matt Damon plays the lead role in the movie *Good Will Hunting*. He is Will Hunting, a once in a generation mathematics genius. A childhood in a broken foster system has ill equipped him for life. He has emotional problems making it difficult to form relationships and with a propensity to violence. This leads to legal charges that will lead him to prison. At the intervention of an MIT professor, a judge gives Will one last chance with mandatory psychological counseling. The court-appointed psychologist, Dr. Sean Maguire, is played by the late Robin Williams.

Near the end of the movie, there is a dramatic climax in a breakthrough session in Sean Maguire's office. While their relationship got off to a rocky start, Will has been making slow progress and has begun to trust the doctor.

Sean is holding in his hand the case file from Will's foster care. It contains the graphic details and pictures of the injuries he suffered at the hands of his foster father. They are quite disturbing.

Will asks Sean, "Do you have any experience with that?" Sean replies, "Yes, in my 20 years in counseling I have seen some awful stuff (using a more descriptive word)." "No," Sean continues, "do you have any experience with that?" It turns out that Dr. Sean Maguire has had personal experience

with abuse at the hands of his alcoholic father, who was a real mean drunk.

Let me pause here to make a point. There are many people that have been going to church for 20 years, but they have not truly experienced the Christian life. They may not have been born again. They don't know God's promises and will for their lives because they don't spend time in God's holy word and in true prayer. They do not truly understand or believe that **"nothing is impossible with God."**

Let me continue with the climatic scene. Sean holds up the file. "You know Will," he says, "none of this in this file is your fault." Will just nods and shrugs, while he quietly whispers, "I know." Sean takes a step closer – "It's not your fault." A little louder, Will says, "I know." Sean steps closer, and the call and response is louder – "It's not your fault." "I know." Sean steps closer. The intensity is building. Their voices are rising. Will is getting quite distraught. They are standing face to face and Sean says, "It's not your fault." Will breaks down in tears. They embrace as Will sobs and he clings to Sean. He finally believes...It's not his fault.

First, let me say that the sin, sickness, darkness and depravity of this world are why Jesus came. He heals the broken hearted and binds up their

wounds. He sets the prisoners free. Jesus is the true light that gives light to every man. Isaiah 9:2 (NIV84)

<sup>2</sup> The people walking in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
on those living in the land of the shadow of death  
a light has dawned.

Second, I tell you that many Christians are like Will Hunting when he softly and casually said, "I know." I have done this with people. When I say, "Nothing is impossible of God," they nod their head in agreement and say, "Yes, that's true." Here's the thing: I don't think they truly believe it. I mean deep down in their bowels, their guts, do they believe, nothing is impossible with God?

In Matthew 17:20 (NIV84)

[Jesus] replied, "**Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.**"

Let's be honest with each other. That's just an exaggeration right? Jesus is just making a point. C'mon, really?" Move mountain, and it moves.

Maybe for Jesus. Maybe for the Apostles. I don't know. It's a lot to ask of us to have that kind of faith.

Jesus meant exactly what he said. Nothing will be impossible for you because nothing will be impossible for God. I have already given you the scriptures earlier. So, what is the link or weak link in this equation? [pause] We have so little faith.

God has already demonstrated his power in Creation. In the amazing fulfillment of Bible prophecy, the miraculous inspiration of the Scriptures is revealed. Through the virgin birth, the only virgin birth, God has done an impossible thing. Throughout scripture God is victorious time and again. The great plan of redemption, sending His only begotten Son, the incarnation of God, demonstrates an unfathomable mind.

Let me use Dr. Sean Maguire's technique.

What is your response when I say,

Nothing is impossible with God;

Nothing is impossible with God;

Nothing is impossible with God;

Nothing is impossible with God.

Amen and amen. Let us pray.