

**Nothing is Impossible: More Peace**  
**December 8 and 9, 2019**  
**Luke 1: 26-56**

*Don't be afraid*, the angel says. As we learned last week, angels are always saying this – from the Old Testament all the way through to the New – they begin with “Do not be afraid.”

Don't be afraid, Israelites. Walk into the Red Sea with an army at your back.

Don't be afraid, Zacharias, you're prayers have been answered. Your wife, Elizabeth, is going to have a son at her old age who will be the forerunner for the Savior of the world.

Don't be afraid, Joseph. Marry a pregnant girl, scorn societal rules, parent this child to be named Jesus.

Don't be afraid, shepherds. I bring you good news! Go and see!

Don't be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here! He is risen! Go and tell all the others.

Don't be afraid, Paul. Your ship will be wrecked and I will send you to stand before the emperor of Rome.

When angels speak a word from God, they have to begin with the words “Do not be afraid”, because they're about to offer a life-altering message that may send the recipients of that message into terrifying situations!

Don't be afraid, Mary. You are favored by God. Give birth to the child of God.

Mary is called “favored” by the angel – but what the angel is telling her is far from what we usually expect to be a “favor” – she's put in a precarious position -- Mary was likely between the ages of 13-15, was from Nazareth, a poor village with few people. She's a virgin. She's engaged to be married. And, she's pregnant.

And she wondered: How could this be?

The angel answered that very question, “The Holy Spirit will come on 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. For nothing will be impossible with God.”

If I were to paraphrase Gabriel's words: “Leave all the details up to God, Mary, leave it all up to God”.

And she did: “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; ***let it be*** with me according to your word.” She agreed to go through with God's call on her life.

Unlike her biblical ancestors she didn't try and wiggle out of it. Unlike Moses, she didn't try and say that she had a speech impediment. Unlike Jonah, she didn't hop on a boat in the opposite direction. Unlike Abraham and Sarah, she didn't laugh.

Rather, she said “*yes, let it be.*”

What changed?

How could Mary go from “how could this be” to “let it be”?

Mary’s acceptance of a life-altering message that would send her into a terrifying predicament is extraordinary. Being pregnant before marriage could have resulted in a severe and humiliating sentence, even death, if Joseph rejected her.

But, Mary moved from “How can this be” to “Let it be” and allowed God to use her in a powerful way. “Let it be with me according to your word”. She accepts God’s purpose for her life as her own path of grace. And with that acceptance comes peace.

Mary was indeed in quite the predicament, but rather than sticking with “how can this be”, she “Let it be” and opened herself to the radical, peaceful acceptance of God’s purpose for her life.

I wonder how many of us are in the midst of undesirable situations and predicaments, and are wandering about in a “how can this be” state -- wishing things were not the way they actually are, using all our energy waiting for things to change.

Life is a series of problem-solving opportunities. The problems we face will either keep us waiting and static or move us forward - depending on how we respond to them.

Most of us spend a whole lot more time in a How Could This Be state and a whole lot *less* time in a “let it be” state.

Unfortunately, most of us fail to see how God can use undesirable situations for his purpose in our lives. We react foolishly and resent our problems and difficulties rather than pausing to consider what God will do in the midst of challenging situations.

That’s mostly because God’s amazing work to bring purpose to an undesirable situation isn’t easy. Sometimes God’s path of accomplishing what we deem impossible, leads us *TO* the difficult. And as we lament “how can this be” we allow that enemy called “fear” to creep into our lives and keep us stuck, unable to “let it be” and move forward into God’s purpose.

Fear, some have said, is the enemy of Peace. Fear paralyzes. Worst of all, it brings an acceptance of the status quo. Our fears are the single biggest thing that keeps us from actually moving forward and accomplishing great things in our lives.

When the angel comes to Mary, with those very first words – Do not be afraid and the life-altering message afterward -- we would expect any young woman to run for the nearest exit!

But when Mary realizes God was giving her a sacred -- but hard mission – when Mary realizes God was giving her a purpose in life that would expose her to ridicule, pain, and family rejection, Mary simply chooses to move away from

the fear that went along with “How can this be” to say, “Let it be... May your word to me be fulfilled” (Luke 1:38).

I’m fairly certain Mary would not have chosen this path in life. What she would have thought to be best for her would be to marry Joseph and live the “normal” life of first a wife, and then a mother.

The quickest way for us to get frustrated and irritable with life is by holding tight to our own assumptions about what would be “best” for us. You see, if we had our own way, we’d never be hurt, or stretched, or uncomfortable; our patience would not be tried nor our faith tested. Our default desire is to be comfortable, not to have to face any challenges or struggles. We want the perfect life.

Many, many...many of my best laid plans have been thwarted, and I’ll admit I didn’t always handle the disappointment with grace and dignity.

As hard and scary as it is to surrender our longings and expectations to Christ, “letting it be according to God’s purpose” brings with it the opportunities to lay aside “How can this be,” rise-above the fear, and trust Christ to provide not what we want but what we need in order to fulfil his plans and purpose for our lives.

Peace can only come when we accept what is and are able to use our energy to live into the what’s next. Peace means we can be in the midst of difficult situations and still be calm in our hearts.

Peace means moving from “How can this be” to “let it be” trusting God’s plan and purpose even when circumstances might suggest otherwise.

Living a life of more peace comes down to choice... our choice. Choosing to hear and take to heart the words from God the Angel shared with Mary – Do not be afraid; you have found favor with God; the Lord is with you; nothing is impossible with God. Choosing to trust God no matter what, choosing not to be fearful, choosing to believe that even in the midst of challenges we can “let it be” and trust that God is working out his plans and purposes.

The peace God offers is lasting, real, breathing deep reassurance in the midst of all that we face – past, present, or future. Rising up against the fear that would seek to stop us in our tracks.

God sent His only Son, the pure essence of Peace, to give us the lasting freedom and peace that only He can give. And he used the message of the Angel to a young girl who would forever teach us the wisdom of “let it be.”

Surprising God, your word set wonder in motion. We give thanks for the message you setd through the angel -- that we should not be afraid, that we have found favor as your children, that you are with us, and that nothing is impossible with you. Help us join with Mary as we respond “let it be according to your Word;” and with Mary, let us give birth to hope, to love, to peace for all creation. Amen.