

Sunday 14 December 2008 - King's Centre Christian Church, Sheffield, UK

**8pm Carol Service**  
Nick & Marjorie Allan

I want to take us back to some of those bible accounts we've heard read tonight – to listen & think again about one person in particular – Mary.

- And to take our attention beyond the detail of the accounts
- There is something quite profound in Mary's **reaction, her attitude**.
- In the midst of a sudden series of bizarre events which invade, what was until then, a quiet life as a teenage virgin respectably engaged to be married.

I believe that if you and I can **mimic Mary's response** in our modern lives, we too can experience the **touch and power of God in our everyday existence**.

- **I really do.** Because personally, in my life and my wife's, and in other Christians I know, that's what is happening to us.
  - This year we've seen God's power break into normal people's lives
    - Women conceive after prayer when doctors said they wouldn't
    - Sick children get dramatically better far quicker than hospitals predicted
    - Sick adults get better after prayer – AND MORE!

It requires looking again at the Christmas story, at the accounts of Jesus throughout his life, death & resurrection.

- looking at these not with the filters of post-modernism over our eyes or the blinding lights of Hollywood sensationalism
- It requires that, like Mary, we **take these facts on board with simple eyes and hearts of faith**. Of hope.
  - And we choose to respond with an open mind.

Here's why Mary is such a good example...

- In the reading from Luke 1 Mary is visited in a small town in northern Israel called Nazareth, by an angel who told her his name is Gabriel.
- "The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you." Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be."
- **Which is hardly surprising, is it?** I think that would be yours and my reaction too, at the very least. We might even run out of the room at that point!

But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God." He goes on to explain how: "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. 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."

- He says, you will be visited by God himself through the Holy Spirit

- the same spirit who is here, with us, right now.
- He says, this is a season of miracles – even your cousin Elizabeth who up till now has been unable to have children and is getting well on in years –
- she too is now pregnant **by the power of God breaking into what appears to be an impossible situation.**

And the angel concludes with 6 awesome words: **“For nothing is impossible with God.”**

“For nothing is impossible with God.”

- That should **set the tone for each of us.**
- That is **the key** to accessing a life effervescent with the presence of God, overflowing with an experience of the power of God.
- That is why is it possible **not just to read about miracles** in 2008, **but to see them** first hand.

If ‘nothing is impossible with God’ **then you and I can grasp hold of a tangible hope in life – even in life’s hard and challenging situations –**

- that God is not defined or restricted by our circumstances,
  - by our credit card bill, our difficult boss, our failing health,
  - our marriage problems, our shortcomings and disappointments.
- God is not defined or restricted by our circumstances
  - If you’re facing up to impossible situations tonight – don’t hold onto them! Let God take over the reigns of your life, because with him, there is no situation that can’t be redeemed, turned around.

Mary’s attitude in response to hearing that ‘nothing is impossible with God’ is **what we should mimic. She didn’t understand it, but she received it and believed it.**

She says to the Angel "I am the Lord's servant, May it be to me as you have said."

She didn’t understand it, but she knew what happened to her **physically** – you can’t deny a baby growing inside apparently against the laws of nature!

**I don’t think she understood very much in those first few years.** But Luke 2 says: “The child's father and mother marvelled at what was said about him.” And also that “Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.”

Mary held these things in her heart....and **believed.**

- In response to an astonishing turn of events, she saw beyond the natural – like being a virgin - into what, through Almighty God, was possible.
- She chose to align herself with extra-ordinary instructions from God, rather than the ordinary opinions of man.
- She heard what was decreed in the heavenlies, spoken out by angels
- and she chose to stand on those truths, not on her own understanding.

- **She couldn't see it in the NOW**, but she chose to say 'yes' to it **in the now**, in hope, in faith.

**That is why Christmas is a season of hope.** That is why we've all got a booklet about HOPE to take away this evening.

Because **Jesus' birth, life, death and resurrection** means that nothing is impossible for God,

- and that same **Jesus invites you** and me into a life of friendship with him,
- walking in his divine ways,
- and ultimately, into the hope of life after death in the beautiful presence of our loving, creator God.

Don't believe everything you're told to be true.

- **The media** may tell you that there is no God, or that religion is worthless and dangerous.
  - But I'm telling you that if you come to King's Centre and many other churches,
  - you will encounter and experience the **living God**.
    - And you'll find **not a religion, but a relationship with God** that is **vibrant, alive and life changing**.
    - A God who changes lives
- The doctors may tell you your relative has cancer, or your leg is broken, or you will never have a child
  - But **Jesus spoke out words decreeing the impossible into being**.
  - Everyone he prayed for was healed, and it's God's will that none of us stay sick.
    - And in 2008 alone, as a community in the King's Centre we have experienced the power of Jesus physically healing people we know too.
    - Because nothing is impossible with God
- **TESTIMONIES**
  - Fiona & Lucia
  - Madeleine – friend healed of pancreatic cancer

Let me ask you a question: what is your 'impossible' situation tonight?

- Do you have something which just seems like it won't shift, or basically won't ever improve?
- Do you feel far away from God, and not at peace in your life
- **Then mimic Mary** and take hold of the fact that, if we come to God and ask Him, nothing needs to be seen as impossible. He is the God of the impossible.

Intro candles

We're going to have space & time for reflection in a few moments, and to light candles in prayer.

- If you have an impossible situation
  - perhaps you or someone you know needs healing physically or emotionally.
  - Perhaps someone in your family or friends is very sad, lonely, anxious...
  - Perhaps it's something else.
- I'd encourage you to bring it to God in prayer
  - PRIVATE PRAYER – light candle
    - **We symbolise that we Light these candles for hope**
    - For people's 'impossible'
  - PRAYER FROM MATURE CHRISTIANS of KC
    - Healing, come alongside you, for you or another
  - **WORDS OF KNOWLEDGE**

### Conclusion

As you experience Christmas again this year... With the credit crunch at the back of our minds, with the TV specials and the shopping lists...

- **Take a brave step back and mimic Mary.**
- She didn't understand it all, but she held in her heart the truth that "Nothing is impossible with God."
- **And because she was willing to be open to that idea,**
  - that God can break into everyday life in the most unusual ways –
  - because He is not bound by the human laws of behaviour or even the natural laws of physicals (why should He be – he invented them in the first place?!).
- Because she chose to believe beyond the possible, beyond the reality staring her in the face,
  - she became one of the most highly favoured ladies ever to walk the earth.
  - She was used by God, she experienced the divine in everyday life.
  - She knew her saviour and she is remembered forever more
  - Because she encountered the offer of divine life in all its fullness with the words:
    - "I am the Lord's servant," "May it be to me as you have said."

My encouragement to you is to do the same.

- God is real and he loves you deeply,
- and nothing in your life or past or present, or anyone else's
- is impossible for him to turn around.