

## Sermon December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2020

### *With God Anything is Possible*

In our gospel this morning, God needs someone to play a significant role in God's plan for the world. So, God sends an angel to this teenage girl named Mary to give her an opportunity to play this role **(Image)**.

Mary's initial response to this opportunity God gives her is fear. "What are you doing here? Am I in trouble?" When the messenger tells her not to be afraid, and goes on to tell her more about this opportunity. Mary doubts. "But how could this be for I am already committed to someone, and will not be able to conceive a child with this person for at least a year?"

In response to Mary's doubt, the angel puts her doubts at ease by first telling her that with God anything is possible. Then the angel cites an example of where God's miracle is at work in her relative Elizabeth who conceived a child in her old age, and is now six months pregnant.

In response to the angel's words, Mary's fear and doubt turns to hope and belief in God's promise. Mary accepts this opportunity, and becomes the mother of Jesus **(Image)**.

Like Mary, God needs us to play important roles in God's plan for the world. Like Mary, God presents us with opportunities to be in these roles. Like Mary, our first response more often than not is one of fear and doubt. "Why God do you choose me when I'm sure there are way more qualified people to take on this role? What if I mess it all up? What about all these obstacles that stand in my way?"

For example, someone comes to you, and says "you would really do well in this role at the church. Would you consider volunteering for this position?" You think to yourself. "Really. I don't know if I'm qualified enough to volunteer for this opportunity. Don't you know who you are talking to?" You start to list reasons in your head why you think you are not good enough to fulfill this role. "For one, I'm not present enough in the church to take on this role. Second, I'm too busy with other things **(Image)**. Third, I don't think I have the gifts to do this job. Fourth, I don't want this to take up all my time. Fifth, I don't know if I have the motivation or passion to do this job. And Sixth, as I thought before, what if I mess it up **(Image)**?" More often than not, we respond to God's opportunities with fear and doubt.

Or another example, you see someone on the route you normally walk, really fighting back the tears. They are sitting in the grass, and seem to be wrestling with something in their minds **(Image)**. You feel a sense that God wants you to go over there and talk with them, but you are afraid. Now, some of this fear is legitimate, as you don't know who this person is. And you do have to think about your safety. However, this route is a very busy route with a hundred people before you walking right by this person.

Once you convince yourself that it is probably safe to go over there you still have other doubts and fears. "What if I say the wrong thing? What if I can't help them? Maybe the next person will be better suited to stop and help." More often than not, we respond to God's opportunities with fear and doubt.

Or, a final example, you are reflecting on making a big transition in your life, whether it is changing careers, or moving to a new place, or getting married, or having a baby. Every major decision comes with a time of reflection on whether you feel this decision is where God is leading you **(Image)**. "If I decide to do this is this part of God's plan for me or is this part of my own self-motivated plan? Is God's plan for my life and my own plan for my life in sync?" More often than not, we respond to God's opportunities with fear and doubt.

So, from these examples we see that we are given opportunities to play a role in God's plan for the world, and also, to play a role in God's plan for us.

Now some of us think God's plan for our lives is more rigid and structured, and some of us feel it is more flexible and open to change. Whatever way we see this plan, we know that throughout our lives God gives us opportunities to walk in God's ways. God gives us opportunities to live out the life God has in store for us. God gives us opportunities to be God's hands and feet in our world. Revealing God's healing and redemptive love to those we meet.

For Mary, she decides to accept this opportunity, and become a major player in God's plan for the world. Like Mary, in response to our fear and doubt, God reassures us that with God anything is possible. God points us to the scriptures **(Image)**. To the experiences of others and ourselves **(Image)**. To show us that God's miraculous love is at work in our lives and in the world.

That even though we might think we are not good enough to take on this opportunity God thinks we are good enough. Why? Because God will provide what we need to be good enough. Whether it is the gifts we need. Or the knowledge we need. Or the motivation and passion we need. Or the words we need. God will give us the tools we need to be God's hands and feet in our world. Revealing God's healing and redemptive love to those we meet.

Like Mary, when we feel this reassurance from God that with God anything is possible. That God can take whatever we have to offer, and make miracles out of it. Then we too accept these opportunities. Believing that God's promises will be fulfilled.

We too see that when we accept these opportunities, we bear witness to miracles. To God's healing and redemptive love touching the lives of our neighbours and ourselves.

As we transition from Advent to Christmas we transition from hope and belief to being witnesses of God's promise fulfilled. On the eve of Christmas, we will stand in the Shepherd's field with the Shepherds, hearing the angel's testimony of the birth of a saviour. We will walk with the Shepherds to the manger to see God's miraculous love at work in the baby Jesus. We will stand with the shepherds, the angels, the animals, Mary and Joseph, in awe of all that is possible with God (**Image**).

**Let us pray**, loving God, we give thanks that you give us opportunities to play a role in Your plan for the world, and for our lives. When we fear and doubt these opportunities give us the reassurance and faith we need to accept these opportunities. Being your hands and feet in our world. Revealing your healing and redemptive love to all we meet. Becoming witnesses of your miraculous love. **Amen.**

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