

The Truth of Christmas: Nothing Is Impossible with God

Isaiah 52:7-10
Luke 2:8-20

December 24, 2018 6:00pm
Faith Community

Back in 1997, the state of Iowa, the entire country, and even the world were all sent spinning on their collective heels by the birth not of twins or triplets or quadruplets but septuplets. Seven of those critters. Bobbi and Kenny McGaughey all by themselves boosted the population of Carlisle, Iowa, from 3,400 to 3,407.

And as the world watched, the world cheered and also chipped in. These are some of the gifts that the new family received:

- All-they-can-eat offer of baby food from the Gerber Company
- A new home from local businesses - their current one had two bedrooms
- Seven years of cable TV from TCI of Central Iowa
- Scholarships to Hannibal-LaGrange College in Missouri
- Chevrolet kicked in a brand new 15-seat van
- Sixteen years' worth of apple juice and applesauce were given by Mott's
- Cribs, changing tables, car seats and strollers came from Toys "R" Us
- They also got a kitchen with two of every appliance from Maytag
- And perhaps the greatest gift of all: a lifetime supply of Pampers from Procter and Gamble.

As spectacular an event as it was, and as wonderful as those gifts were, I still offered a prayer of thanks that such blessings were not visited upon my house.

You don't need to crack a Bible open very far to see more miraculous things than that going on, but in some ways there's a special place reserved for surprise births. Did you ever notice how many of them there are, and what a central place of importance they're given in Scripture? Think of the very first one, the son born to Sarah and Abraham who were childless at an advanced age.

One night old Sarah
Looked out at the trees
And swallowed the last of her

Fig cakes and cheese,
And broke into tears,
Wailing six 'dreary-meees!'
'I'm so very unhappy!
Abraham please
Would you pray and ask God
If maybe....just maybe
He'd answer our prayers
And give us a baby?'

'Now honey,' said Abraham,
'Don't make a fuss.
In April you're gonna be
Seventy plus.
You're getting so old
That you barely can hold
Your plate or your bowl
Or your saucer or cup.
It takes you an hour
Sometimes to stand up.
Forget about babies;
I'll buy you a pup.

Anyway, why
Do you want a baby?'

'Maybe, just maybe,
I'd like to sing softly,
'Sweet rock-a-bye baby.
Momma loves snookums,
Kitch, kitchie koo!
Patty-cake, patty-cake,
Peek, peekaboo!'

Then God sent an angel
With bright curly hair
Who came down and cried,
'Hey Abe, are you there?
I must tell you true;
God's gonna create a great nation from you.'

Abe scratched his head
And looked rather blue.
'You'd best hurry up;
My life's nearly through.
I'm old as the hills
And my Sarah is too.'

'Oh, yeah?' said the angel.
Now listen to me.

Your grandkids will be
Like the sands of the sea!

‘Yeah,’ argued Abie,
‘Just how can that be?
I’ll sure have to bounce them
On bony old knees.
Besides, my sweet Sarah
Is all wrinkled up.
She sleeps every night with her teeth in a cup.
I tell you the woman
Is babyproof now.
She’s old-I say old.
Her joints have grown cold.
And if she had a baby,
Then what would I do?
Coach Little League ball
At a hundred and two?’

The angel just smiled.
He started to leave
And then turned to speak:
‘Tell Sarah to check with her doctor next week.’

When the angel had gone,
Sarah saw her physician,
A Mesopotamian
Old obstetrician,
And said to him, ‘Doctor,
I’ve been feeling dizzy.’
The doctor turned white
And then fainted away
And when he revived
He said, ‘My, what a day!
Sarah, believe me, you’re not going to die,
But you *will* have a baby
This coming July.’
Old Sarah stood gasping
With nothing to say!
She, too, clapped her forehead
And fainted away.

And when she got up
She ended her stress
And bought a Chaldean
Maternity dress.

And months hurried by,
And at last came July,
And Sarah and Abie

Sang, 'Rock-a-bye baby.
Momma loves snookums,
Kitch, kitchie koo!
Patty-cake, patty-cake
Peek, peekaboo!¹

And so it goes. Isaac was indeed born to Sarah and Abraham when they were both, as Scripture says, old and full of years. And there were other babies born to parents who by any stretch of the imagination were way out of the running.

Jacob and Esau were born to Isaac and Rebekah. Joseph was born to Jacob and Rachel. Manoaah and his wife were unable to conceive, but through supernatural intervention Samson entered the world. Hannah gave birth to Samuel. Zechariah and Elizabeth became the parents of the baby who would become John the Baptist.

And of course there were Joseph and Mary and Jesus. When Gabriel announced the coming birth to Mary he couched it in the wonderful affirmation that "Nothing is impossible with God." And the point was proved nine months later.

And could it be that there are so many stories like these in Scripture because childbirth is such an intensely human event, touching us at a profoundly deep level, and Scripture takes it and makes eternal points every time. And let me suggest to you that one of the finest points of them all is what the angel said to Mary: nothing is impossible with God.

Friends, the birth of Christ is the birth of hope. It's important that you understand that. And it's important that you apply it to your life.

You may very well be a member here and attend regularly. You may be a regular visitor, or you may have wandered in here looking for a Christmas Eve service and wanting to let it go at that.

Whoever you may be, and why ever you may be here, I want you to leave this place a person filled to overflowing with hope.

"Nothing is impossible with God," the angel said to Mary. I want you to know that too. Almighty God can enter your life, if you allow him, and transform you. The situation may

¹ Calvin Miller, "Two-Part Invention" Preaching, May-June, 1994, pp. 6-7.

or may not change, but you will, and that's far more important.

What did you bring with you tonight? What baggage came with you?

- A health crisis in you or someone you love?
- The loss of a loved one?
- A relational heartache?
- A problem with your job?
- A personal issue that no one knows about but you?
- A dreadful secret you're afraid to share and yet is tearing you apart?

Whatever it might be, listen to the angel and take his words to heart: "Nothing is impossible with God." Even a rebirth of hope.

In 1809 a war-ravaged world watched warily as Napoleon marched across Europe. People were discouraged, hope was scarce, and desperation was universal. All the while, though, babies were being born. Alfred Lord Tennyson, Edgar Allan Poe, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Felix Mendelssohn, William E. Gladstone, Abraham Lincoln were all born that year. While one age was dying, another was being born. That's the way God works. Sometimes quietly, steadily, always with purpose.

Understand that there can be a purpose in you even as whatever it is that concerns you races across the landscape of your soul and threatens to undo you.

"Nothing is impossible with God." Mary learned that first hand. You can too.