

"All Things are Possible"
by Rev. Frances Savill
4th Sunday of Advent
December 24, 2023

Luke 1:26-38

Mary's story

It sounds so simple, doesn't it?

Even Mary's words to the angel sounded simple:

"let it be to me according to your word."

But what else do you say to a messenger of the Lord Almighty.

The angel's message must have been like music to Mary's ears – the long-awaited Messiah would come.

The hope of Israel, the one promised through the prophets all the ages long was soon to arrive. Isaiah, Micah, Hosea, had all spoken of the one who would come, who would fill King David's throne, and establish an everlasting kingdom.

She must have been excited to be a part of that coming.

But how would it happen when she had no husband?

She was engaged to be married to Joseph; would he be the father?

He was of the house and line of David, it seemed to make sense.

But no, the angel said the power of God Almighty would come over her, and so the child would be holy.

I'm fairly certain that she didn't really understand.

And maybe when we've been called by God, it's just as well not to understand everything at once.

Teenagers are always ready to give their lives for a great and noble cause.

Part of being young is a willingness to rush headfirst into the unknown and take on the world. "Let it be to me according to your word!"

One of the graces of youth is an exuberant joy when a challenge is given. And her soul cried out in joy:

*"My soul magnifies the Lord,
And my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.
For the Lord has lifted up the lowly,
He has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty."*

Her heart cried out in song, the words flowed, like one of the Psalms of David from of old. God had chosen Mary to be the mother of the Messiah.

After the angel left her, after the songs of her heart had been sung, she had time to ponder the words the angel had spoken.

She would have a child through God, with no husband.

It must have sounded unbelievable.

What would Joseph think?

She knew what the neighbours would think.

She would have to face the scorn and humiliation of the community and maybe her family.

She must have worried what would become of her and her unborn child. All she could do was "*wait and trust*".

It must have been a lonely, scary time of waiting and wondering.

And yet, it must have also been exciting for the child, if he came, was to be the holy one of God.

When the angel appeared to Mary, he also spoke of her cousin Elizabeth, that she who was barren was having a child in her old age. News of Elizabeth's joy and the coming of her child spread quickly and reached Mary's village.

God was indeed acting in mighty ways in that time, as God had acted of old. So she decided to go and see Elizabeth and if she was received, maybe stay with her for a time.

Sharing her joy, having the focus on her, and having someone to talk to about what all this meant would be good. Getting out of range of the cruel gossip of neighbours must also have been good.

Elizabeth met Mary with such gracious joy. Such a devout woman of God, at the meeting she was filled with the Holy Spirit and proclaimed that her unborn child leapt for joy at the sound of Mary's voice. And she honoured Mary by saying; "who am I that the mother of my Lord should come to me?"

Can you imagine Mary's relief that someone else understood, someone else could rejoice with her in the child that was to be born?

We hear the words that with God, all things are possible, but in Mary's life we see those words lived out in truth. With God all things are possible.

Her barren cousin Elizabeth couldn't have a child, but all things are possible with God.

A young virgin could not bear a child, ***but with God all things are possible.***

God could not take human flesh and enter our lives, and yet ***with God all things are possible.***

The greatest miracle of all was that God was born at Christmas. The child, who Joseph named, Jesus, was Messiah. But he was much more than an earthly King, he was God in flesh, God revealed to us, our Saviour.

With Jesus we learned again and again and again, that ***with God, all things are possible.***

Even life coming from death.

Even hope coming from difficult and hopeless situations.

With God, all things are possible.

Mary learned that God was with her in the small things and the great things. God sent an angel to Joseph, to tell him what he would not understand any other way.

God gave Mary confirmation and joy in her meeting with Elizabeth.

God continues to meet us to enter our world and our lives.

God goes before us. God walks with us.

We don't all see angels, but God does send us messengers – people like Elizabeth, people to remind us that we are blessed, that God is with us, and God has called us to Himself.

With God, all things are possible.

These messengers remind us that Jesus is still Emmanuel, God with us, that He is still lifting up the fallen, and bringing His peace to this world and to our lives.

With God, all things are possible.

Thanks be to God.