
Ignite

Dear Lord, may we lay down our own plans, desires, and goals. We replace those right now with total surrender to Your will. We are grateful for the guidance of the Holy Spirit and in knowing that Jesus never stops pursuing a deeper relationship with us. May Your will be done in our life, Lord. We will follow where You lead us. In Jesus' name, Amen.



SERMON SUMMARY

Note to Word Facilitator: The sermon notes below is a summary of the sermon. You may choose to further summarize it according to the needs and context of your CG members. The goal is not just to go through it “verbatim” but to prepare well, allowing members to recall and engage the message in the best possible way.

Advent Series, In the Waiting #2: :

Surrender in the Impossible

Pastor Adrian Chong

Reading: Luke 1:26-38

(Full text: Luke 1:26-56)

In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. 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. But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favour with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”

“How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”

The angel answered, “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. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail.”

“I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.” Then the angel left her.

Introduction

Life is filled with impossibilities. Twenty years ago, Pastor Adrian was driving from

Kepong hurriedly because his sister was in critical condition. He prayed, "Lord have mercy" all the way. When he reached the hospital, she was bleeding badly. Sadly, she passed away. The family was broken because Pastor Adrian's mother had passed away a few years ago. He prayed for mercy but to no avail. Yet, he would always kneel before God and pray. God has a plan for impossible situations. We may say, "It is impossible," but God can do the impossible. It happens!

Impossible can be defined as, not able to occur, exist, or be done - "a seemingly impossible task", or not able to be reached or achieved - "an unattainable goal".

BIG IDEA: Surrendering to God is imperative in our impossible disposition.

We need to learn to surrender to God in the midst of our impossible situations.

Mary's impossible disposition/situation:

- It was impossible for Mary to be pregnant.
- It was impossible for Joseph to take her as his wife if she were.
- Impossible for them to make a life together in Nazareth.

1. Mary was willing to listen to God's message and respond. *Luke 1:31-34*

Mary tried reasoning. Human reasoning is not wrong if we apply biblical principles to them. Pastor Adrian used to be very naughty as a student. He would be caned every week in school. There was once where he stuffed mops inside the toilet bowls and caused the toilets to flood. When the school knew about it, he came down and removed the mops like a hero. He was then given a letter of commendation by the same headmaster who punished him.

When Pastor Adrian was having their first child, despite all the preparation and the back up plans, the water suddenly broke and he was still in panic while his wife remained calm.

The Posture of Mary's heart *Luke 1:18, 34, Psalm 145:18, Hebrews 13:5*

Both Mary and Zechariah were presented with an impossible situation, and both stated to the angel their impossible dispositions.

- Zechariah says in Luke 1:18 that "I am an old man, and my wife is well along in years"
- Mary reminds the angel in Luke 1:34 that she was a virgin

Both however responded differently. Zechariah further sought clarification by asking if what the angel spoke of was true and certain. Mary in contrast, responded in surprise and awe, asking how the prophecy would come about.

Mary had the right posture of her heart toward God, which is humility and surrender as opposed to pride and control.

Prayer is not a monologue but a dialogue. God can also use people to speak to our lives. The psalmist mentions that “The Lord is near to all who call on Him, to all who call on Him in truth” (Psalm 145:18). Hebrews reminds us to keep our life free from love of money, and be content with what we have, for He has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”

2. Mary was willing to believe. *Luke 1:31-38, Romans 10:17, Hebrews 11:6*

Faith is a key ingredient

Without having faith, it would be impossible to believe what God was saying and what He was going to do. Faith comes and increases by the Word of God. The more of God’s Word that we believe and obey the more faith grows in us. The more of His written Word that we learn, understand and obey, the more we are able to discern and identify the many voices that we hear today.

In Romans, it is said that “Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.”

Hebrews says, “without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.”

It is one thing to listen and respond. It is another level to believe. We need to believe what God says and that we are part of His plan. Mary was a part of God’s plan. The more we believe in God’s written Word, the more our faith will grow.

3. Mary was willing to be used by God *Luke 1:46-50*

Mary’s Song

And Mary said: “My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for He has been mindful of the humble state of His servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me — holy is His name. His mercy extends to those who fear Him.”

Mary was able to be used by God because she accepted the circumstances she faced.

Sacrifice

Mary's acceptance freed her to be obedient in the face of difficulty. In this way, denying reality does nothing to change reality. Accepting the reality of painful and difficult situations open the doors to options that are before us. The only option is GOD.

Denying reality causes suffering and raises anxiety, and we begin to fear the worst. When we fear the worst, we set ourselves up for a self-fulfilling prophecy. Anticipating the worst can often cause the worst to happen.

Conclusion

In our impossible situation, we must be willing to listen to God, willing to believe and willing to be used by God - only then can we see HIS miracle in our lives.

Earlier, Pastor Adrian shared about his sister and mother passing away. Even though he was broken, he started kneeling before God regularly. This created a very close relationship with God. He started crying and seeking comfort from God. As time went by, he healed from his hurt and started to look forward to spending time with God through the good times and the bad and he found joy in praying. When we pray we become a weaponized vessel for God to use.

Sermon summary by Abbey T



APPLICATION

Note to Word facilitator:

As you prepare for this session, this is a great time to pray that the Holy Spirit will

guide you to use the questions efficiently. You can select, modify or entirely create your own questions, according to the needs of your CG, especially if you feel that there are too many questions than required for the allocated time. The questions below are crafted with a certain flow in mind. You could use these towards the end or insert them in between your own sermon reflection and summary.



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Suggested Questions linked to the Sermon:

- In an impossible situation, what do you do? After this sermon, would you change anything?
- Do you truly believe that God is near and that He's here for you? How can you rely on Him more today?
- Why is surrendering and sacrifice difficult? Take time to pray to God, and ask Him to help you surrender more each day.

Question Bank *(Extra questions that you can use to bring your discussion further as you see fit):*

- Would you allow yourself to be used by God when circumstances are impossible? Give some examples of how this can happen.
- We have a tendency to ask God if He listens to our prayer, but consider asking

yourselves, do you listen to everything that God tells you to do? What is the posture of your heart - do you usually accept what He says and obey accordingly, or have you turned Him down/ran away from His will?

- What if things are going well with you and you thought that the promotion was in the bag, or that you would definitely marry the man/woman that you have been dating for years, or that you have saved enough to put a downpayment on the property or car (etc), when God says, "No." or "Wait." What would your response be? How would it affect your desire to "surrender wholeheartedly" to God then?



SERMON REFLECTION

The Ignite team is taking a break from sermon reflections this Advent till the end of the year.

Alternatively, we encourage you to spend time in daily reflection throughout Advent with the devotionals revealed daily on DUMC's "In the Waiting: An Advent Series" page: <https://dumc.my/christmas2022/>.



PRAYER



Photo by Kelly Sikkema at Unsplash

Note to CGL: You (or someone you assign this portion to), may lead by praying OR reading these prayers together as a CG during worship.

Surrendering to God

“I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.” Then the angel left her.” (Luke 1:38)

Mary was not fearful about what was to happen to her, and trusted God completely. Mary could have questioned what is to happen to her and the impossibility of it, but she let go of her own understanding and accepted God’s will be done. This applies to us too. Complete surrender to God is about letting go and trusting in Him completely, obeying His Will and His Way. It will require us to relinquish the control we have over our own lives and let it go into the hands of God. In other words, surrendering to God does not consider our knowledge, education, analysis of possibilities and opportunities, or any other understanding that is of our own will. It warrants complete trust in God and letting God lead. Be a Mary, do not fear when surrendering to God. Lean on Him and trust that God will share the burden with you. One way to encourage ourselves to surrender, is to reflect on the times God has carried us through and answered our prayers. As prayers are answered, faith grows, and our spiritual life will bear fruit and impact others around us. There is more goodness in seeking His will rather than our own.

Prayer: Thank you, Lord, that surrendering to Your will and ways have made me a Spirit-filled person living a life according to Your sovereign plans!

By Adeline Ting