

Weekly Encouragement

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Incorporated non-profit in New Jersey, USA

Make This Christmas Special - Part 2

By Rev. Peter Eng

Day 9

Nothing Impossible (Luke 1:37)

From: [Announcing the Birth of Jesus](#)
([Luke 1:26-38](#))



For with God nothing shall be impossible.
(KJV)

For nothing is impossible with God." (NIV)

The angel Gabriel ends his message to Mary with an incredible statement. He did not say "God can do anything." Instead, he used the double negative, "nothing is impossible with God." This adds up to a powerful positive. A double negative leaves no room for qualification.

This text tells of God doing two impossible things at the same time. Gabriel tells Mary that God will somehow overshadow her and the Holy Spirit will come upon her, and she will conceive. Without a man. And to strengthen her further that this is God's doing, he tells her that her relative Elizabeth

is six months pregnant. Yes, Elizabeth the barren is now Elizabeth the pregnant.

We benefit from God's miraculous work in the life of people around us. Even Mary's faith was strengthened by God's miracle for Elizabeth. The message is clear. If God wants to do something, nothing can stop him.

When we think of God giving us the impossible blessing, we normally limit our thoughts to the least creative things. For instance, if we are in pain, our desperate desire is a miracle of healing. This is no more than feeding our fixation on our pet problems. We might see and understand that anyone can do the impossible if we step back from our own pain and look at ourselves as God's agents of life.

This Christmas, give the greatest blessing impossible, and receive the eternal reward. Set aside your pain so you can give another person life. Pray for the God-type impossible in your life. Ask God to teach you to deny yourself, take up your cross daily and follow Jesus. Herein is the first impossibility, to gladly take up the cross. The second impossibility is the repentance of a sinner. No one can repent except God draws him. When a person repents we are immediately humbled and awed by its human impossibility.

Seek the impossible blessing: to deny ourselves and to bless another with the gift of Jesus Christ.

Day 10**Yippie Happy (Luke 1:41)**

From: [Announcing the Birth of Jesus \(Luke 1:39-45\)](#)



The babe leaped in my womb for joy. (KJV)

The baby in my womb jumped for joy. (NLT)

There is a time for joy!

Christmas is that time.

God wants us to know that John, in the womb of Elizabeth, jumped for joy at the sound of Mary's voice because she was carrying Jesus. What an awesome response to the child Christ. This is the type of joy we ought to have at Christmas.

There is something strange. Most people know Christmas is not the real date of the birth of Christ. But that does not stop us from celebrating, and nothing stops the world from celebrating with us. Resurrection Sunday (Easter) on the other hand, is a date we know for sure, and it is the real climax of the Christian faith. If we take away the birth narrative of Jesus, we are missing three chapters in the Gospels. If we remove the resurrection, there is no meaning in the Gospels. Despite the centrality of the resurrection, we don't have the same ability to invite

pre-faith people to come listen to the wonderful story.

Why?

I think it is because at Christmas we are yippie happy; but on Resurrection Sunday, it is an in-house straight-laced happy. There is nothing wrong with the happiness that elicits no more than a smile and a nod. Yet, it is not a happiness that draws people. Christmas is a yippie happy time, so John the Baptist tells us even as a fetus. And it is such jumping happiness that makes Christmas so desirable for our pre-faith friends.

This Christmas, we have an easy calling. We want the unrestrained childlike joy that jumps up and down. The happy clappy type of joy. It's easy and it is good. Keep thanking God for his goodness, and we will find joy overflowing.

Day 11**Blessed (Luke 1:42)**

From: [Announcing the Birth of Jesus \(Luke 1:39-45\)](#)



Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. (KJV)

"God has blessed you above all women, and your child is blessed." (NLT)

There is only one time when God became a baby born of a woman. Mary would be that woman. There will never be another woman with that honour. That position is filled. Sorry ladies.

No other woman will ever carry Jesus, the Living Word of God, in her womb. No other man will ever provide for Jesus, the Living Word of God. We will never have the same blessing as Mary and Joseph, but there is still a blessing in store for us. The blessing we have is to carry the Word of God in us in our hope, our peace, our joy, our love. And to present this Ever-living Word of God to the world.

Our worth is determined by what we do. Warren Buffet, the famed investor, was moved when he saw men in China manually towing the boat he was on as they moved up river. And he saw how privileged he was. Might one of these men be able to do what he was doing if given the opportunity? Indeed, if Buffet's job was to tow the boat using his muscle,

he would not be worth very much. And one of these men may be no less capable than Buffet. What we do determines our worth.

People who proclaim the good news of Jesus don't have a self-worth problem. Their emotional balance stems from the realization they are carrying Christ in their actions, in their words, in hope, peace, joy and love. People struggle with self-worth because they do worthless things. They have low self-esteem no matter how good they may be because they are not blessed with a high-worth job.

This blessing is yours for the taking. This Christmas, do the worthy that gives you worth. There is no work of greater worth than when you carry Jesus to the unreached, because there is no greater value than the one for whom Christ died. Let's upgrade our job, and enjoy our worth.

Day 12**Magnificat** (Luke 1:46-48)From: **The Magnificat** ([Luke 1:46-56](#))

*And Mary said,
My soul doth magnify the Lord, ...
For he hath regarded the low estate of his
handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth
all generations shall call me blessed.
(KJV)*

*And Mary said:
"My soul glorifies the Lord ...
for he has been mindful of the humble
state of his servant.
From now on all generations will call me
blessed, (NIV)*

Today's meditation is the Song of Mary, commonly called the "*Magnificat*." This name is based on the first word of the song, "*Magnificat*," in Latin meaning "magnify" or "glorify." It is Mary's heart cry to the great goodness of God. She is overwhelmed by God's grace to her and she bursts out in praise.

The reason is simple.

Mary is of a "low estate." She is materially poor and of low social standing. In today's vocabulary, we would say she is from a "humble" background. This tends to give a bad meaning to the word "humble," but it also describes a reality. Those who are poor and of low social

standing learn humility by necessity and not by choice.

In an instant, God turned her around. From her low estate, she will bear the Christ child, and "from now on, all generations will call me blessed." God has given her the high honour of serving him, and that made all the difference.

Maybe, we will never be called blessed by generations. But are there people who will bless us because we bless them with the good news of eternal life? The paradox of faith is that we can never strive to be blessed. We can only strive to bless others. And it is in blessing others that we are blessed.

The greatest blessing we can give to our friends is the blessing of LIFE. Life after life. In blessing others with life, we are blessed. This Christmas, bless, and be blessed.

Day 13**Even as he said** (Luke 1:54-55)From: *The Magnificat* ([Luke 1:46-56](#))

*He hath helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy;
As he spake to our fathers,
to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.
(KJV)*

*He has helped his servant Israel,
remembering to be merciful
to Abraham and his descendants forever,
even as he said to our fathers." (NIV)*

There is nothing wrong with reaching the rich and powerful with the good news of Jesus Christ. These who awe us in life are as needy and filthy before God as those in humble circumstances. But what is true is that the rich and powerful rarely feel the need for God. This holds true even in the spiritual realm. The Pharisees were mostly well-to-do. They were also spiritually scrupulous. They think they lead clean lives. They live out a cruel justice and exact their pound of flesh from sinners.

The rest of the population struggle to make ends meet. This leaves them little energy or willpower to keep all the ceremonial laws. They are hungry for spiritual feeding even though their physical exhaustion often kills their appetite. The rich and knowledgeable Pharisees have the luxury of physical ease

and engage in religious scruples. But Jesus changes that.

Jesus reaches out to the poor, the hungry, and the moral outcasts. He rejects the religion of the Pharisees that has no place for these people. He rejects their self-righteousness and their exclusive-purist type of religion.

In our day, the poor and needy are often the most receptive to Jesus. The rich and religious do not feel they need mercy. They are harsh towards others, and self-righteous towards God. They grow richer with each passing year, but remain stingy towards God and others. They are proud, and boastful.

"Even as he said to our fathers," God will reverse their fortunes. The rich would reject Jesus and go away empty, and the poor will be filled.

This Christmas, as you think about who to invite into God's kingdom, don't look only at the well-dressed, educated, or rich. Look for the humble, the needy, the reject of society. God remembers to be merciful to those in need.

Day 14**Beyond Tradition (Luke 1:63)**

From: *The Birth of John* ([Luke 1:57-66](#))



And he asked for a writing table, and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marvelled all. (KJV)

He motioned for a writing tablet, and to everyone's surprise he wrote, "His name is John." (NLT)

I am not sure why God wanted the child to be named John. While it is a good name, there is nothing in the life of John that makes his name important, and there is no special meaning in the name that he had to be called "John."

Perhaps it is like the tree of knowledge in the Garden of Eden. There was nothing magically evil about that tree. It was just designated as being forbidden. The point was not the tree but the obedience of Adam and Eve. I suspect the naming of John was the same. The name itself may be meaningful, but the greatest importance was the obedience of John's parents.

When we obey God in the traditional way, there is nothing to suggest we are obeying God and not tradition. To ensure clarity that God wants obedience from Zechariah and Elizabeth, God had them move out of tradition, out of their comfort zone, to name the child "John".

We have our comfort zone in the things we do. Occasionally, God calls us out of our comfort zone so we learn to obey him away from what comes naturally for us. When obedience calls us to go beyond our comfort zone, we need to obey. There is great blessing waiting for us when we obey.

Most of us have a routine in life or in Christian practice. Some are routinely contemporary, some routinely traditional, some routinely critical. Routines are mostly good because they enable us to do things quickly as we establish default decisions and don't deliberate at each activity. But routines also limit new opportunities. If we find ourselves not having people to bring to Christ this Christmas, one possibility is that we need to vary from our routine as the Holy Spirit may lead us. We must intentionally reach out within our routine and outside of it.

In obedience to the prompting of the Holy Spirit, let us engage in the holy work of spreading the good news even if it means creating new opportunities by moving beyond our routine.

Day 15

God's Hand (Luke 1:66)

From: **The Birth of John** ([Luke 1:57-66](#))



And all they that heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, What manner of child shall this be! And the hand of the Lord was with him. (KJV)

And everyone who heard these things deliberated in their hearts saying, "What will become of this child?" For the hand of the Lord was also with him." (PE's own)

When Zechariah and Elizabeth obeyed God and named their son John against all advice and against the family tradition, Zechariah could speak again. Here we see a miracle of healing in obedience. This confirmed to the people that something is happening beyond the usual. This old couple having a child under these circumstances made the people ask, "What will become of this child?" "For the hand of the Lord was also with him" describes how as John was growing up, this question, "What will become of this child?" persisted in the hearts of the people who watched him grow up.

This is quite remarkable. We are so used to the idea of a person needing a conversion that we don't know how to handle someone like John. He was born in the true faith, grew up in it, and was always clear about his life purpose. He was remarkably blessed in that he never

had to ask, "What does God want me to do with my life?"

Some people grow up in the Christian faith and never had to convert. We seem to tell these people they must say the sinner's prayer, perhaps more for our comfort than for their salvation.

John's life is remarkable in that his entire life, from birth, made people wonder about God's work in him. He made God real – and desirable. His life showed God's hand on him in every way. This was the start of John's witness to the watching world.

You don't need to have a conversion story to tell. You can have a life story to tell. As we ponder how we can reach others for Christ this Christmas, we should not limit our thoughts to what we can say, but also ask how we should live that others would say, "The Lord's hand is with him/her." Do others say that of our life? Can you say that of your own.

2011.12.04



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Rev. Peter Eng is an ordained minister from the Reformed Tradition, but he is truly global in perspective. He served the Lord in various capacities starting from his teenage years in the 70s. His undergrad studies were done in Singapore, his grad studies in the USA, and post-grad studies in the United Kingdom, with additional post-grad research in Germany.