

Miracle Births

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[0:00] Well, please turn in your Bibles tonight to Genesis chapter 15. It's good to be with you all tonight.

A little bit strange, as Jason said, for me to be here as a guest visiting pastor. But good to be here nonetheless. And to know that some things never change.

The water was exactly where it always is when I reached for it just now. Some of you are sitting in the same places that you always sit. I find comfort in that.

And some things that have changed for you are the same as what I would expect them to be.

There's someone from California that's here, right where I think that she should be. And someone from Seattle that's here, right as I think she should be.

And so, though things change, some stay the same. And our God never changes. And we find comfort from that, and we look now to His Word tonight. Just four days removed from Christmas.

[1:00] And I want to direct our thoughts to an appropriate theme, given the season in which we find ourselves having thought of the Advent, the coming of Christ into the world.

I want to direct our thoughts in that direction one more time. Maybe one last gasp for Christmas before we move on into the new year. There are sometimes things in our lives that seem impossible to us.

Maybe you are facing something like that tonight. Maybe repairing the broken relationship seems impossible to you. Maybe it's paying the bills or trying to find good health care coverage.

Maybe it's planting a church. Raising children well in a wicked world or the salvation of a lost loved one. Is there something today that is so far beyond your reach that you've even given up praying for it?

It seems that impossible to you. If there is, whatever it is, I hope that you will bring it to the God of the impossible.

[2:09] Even tonight as we consider truth from His Word, I hope that as we take a brief trip back through history, that you'll find comfort and hope in seeing how God has worked in humanly impossible circumstances to bring about impossibly good results for His people.

The message of the coming of Christ into the world is a message of hope. And as we'll see tonight, it's a message of impossibly good news coming out of impossible circumstances.

The history of redemption that's contained in the Scriptures is told through various human authors. You know that. Different human authors wrote the Scriptures. But one divine author, God, that history that's told in Scripture reveals for us a striking pattern of God working through remarkable births.

Right? Births. The bringing of a child into the world. There's this pattern of unbelievable in some ways, except that God is faithful and true, and so we believe His Word.

Remarkable births coming to pass. And tonight, just a few days after that day when many people remember the miraculous birth of Christ, we want to survey multiple birth accounts tonight to see how God has worked and why His work is such good news for us today.

[3:27] And so two very simple things tonight. One, impossible births. We're going to do that survey, and then we'll talk about the impossibly good news that is ours because of them. And so we start here in Genesis 15 with the first impossible birth that we'll think of tonight, Abraham and Sarah.

It's a story that's well known probably to all of you or most of you. God calls Abram. I preached this in Warsaw a couple of weeks ago, and I warned them, and I'm going to warn you, I will probably get...

There's people from Arizona that should be here, that are here tonight. You see more as you look around. See, things are as they should be. I'm going to warn you that if I mix up the name Abram

and Abraham, please forgive me.

I know him as Abraham, but when the story begins, he's Abram, and so if I say the wrong name at the wrong time, I'm sorry. But it begins with Abram. God calls him to leave his homeland and to travel to a new land, and he promises that he promises to give him.

And Abram will become Abraham, the father of many nations. One problem, it's hard to be the father of many nations when you don't have any kids. That would be a really quick stop to the plan of God.

[4:41] If they're going to be physical and spiritual children of Abraham, and if Jesus is going to be born, Abram needs a kid. From man's perspective, very early on, the plan of God is in doubt, but that, of course, is to look at things from man's perspective.

So, enter God. You see Abraham's concern about this very issue in chapter 15. Notice the first three verses of Genesis 15.

After these things, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, Fear not, Abram. I am your shield. Your reward shall be very great. But Abram said, O Lord God, what will you give me? For I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus.

And Abram said, Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir. Without a son, another member of the household would be Abraham's legal descendant, the inheritance of his estate.

But fear not, verses 4 through 6, and behold, the word of the Lord came to him. This man shall not be your heir. Your very own son shall be your heir.

[5:46] And he brought him outside and said, Look toward heaven and number the stars if you are able to number them. Then he said to him, So shall your offspring be. And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

Now, here's the promise. You're going to be a father of many nations, many descendants, but there was a delay in the fulfillment of it. It didn't happen right away.

It didn't come immediately. And Abram's faith, along with Sarai's wife, seems to wane. It grows dim. There's the whole episode that follows with Hagar, where they take matters into their own hands, not wanting to wait for God to fulfill His promise to them.

Chapter 16, verse 2, And Sarai said to Abram, Behold, now the Lord has prevented me from bearing children. Go unto my servant. It may be that I shall obtain children. By her and Abram, listen to the voice of Sarai.

But God doesn't do away with the promise or the plan because of their failures of faith. Because of their trying to circumvent the plan of God and do it their own way. God doesn't forsake the plan.

[6:53] He's not shocked by that. As Jason mentioned earlier, He hasn't had to change His plans in the past year. He didn't have to change His plan here either. Because of their shortcomings.

No, He comes and He makes a covenant of circumcision with Abram, which means exalted father. And He changes His name to Abraham, father of a multitude. And with that came the reiteration of the promise of a son.

Turn over to chapter 17. And notice verses 15 and 16. God's made the covenant and then God says to Abraham, As for Sarai, your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarai shall be her name.

I will bless her. And moreover, I will give you a son by her. I will bless her and she shall become nations. Kings of people shall come from her. Not Hagar, but from your wife, who is too old to bear children.

Now sadly, Abraham laughs at this promise. Despite his earlier faith, he says something like, I'm a hundred. And my wife is lovely, but she's ninety. Okay?

[7:59] And to God, he suggests right after God has said, by Sarah you will have a son. He says, how about Ishmael? We've got him. Can he just be my heir?

So God repeats. Verse 19. God said, No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son. Abraham is about as hard-headed as we are sometimes.

Needs to have things repeated over and over again. Sarah your wife shall bear you a son and you shall call his name Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him.

Verse 21. But I will establish my covenant with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this time next year. It's repeated. And then over in chapter 18. Picking it up at verse 10.

The Lord said, I will surely return to you about this time next year and Sarah your wife shall have a son. And Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years.

[8:57] The way of women had ceased to be with Sarah. So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, After I am worn out and my Lord is old, shall I have pleasure? The Lord said to Abraham, Why did Sarah laugh and say, Shall I indeed bear a child now that I am old?

Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time, I will return to you about this time next year and Sarah shall have a son.

But Sarah denied it, saying, I did not laugh for she was afraid. He said, No, but you did laugh. God reiterates the promise.

And Sarah, with whom the way of women had ceased, she had undergone the change. Okay? She laughs. But God gets the last laugh over to chapter 21 with me now.

The first seven verses, the Lord visited Sarah as he had said. And the Lord did to Sarah as he had promised.

[9:59] And Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age. At the time of which God had spoken to him, Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him whom Sarah bore him, Isaac. And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old as God had commanded him.

Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. And Sarah said, God has made laughter for me. Everyone who hears will laugh over me. And she said, Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children?

Yet I have born him a son in his old age. The impossible. The impossible son is born. And God's people and plan are preserved for another generation.

Now maybe Abraham's responses to you seem somewhat contradictory. He believed. Then he laughed. Then he believed again. But they seem a lot like me to me. Believe with great faith.

Then doubt. Confidence. Then worry. Have you ever been there? I don't think I'm alone in that.

[11:05] You ever felt like you have solid and movable faith only to later find that you not only doubt God's promises, you doubt God Himself. His existence. His reality. The whole thing.

It's not unknown in the Christian experience. It may be more common than you think. But thank God that even when we doubt Him, He doesn't forsake us. And our doubt doesn't make Him any less real.

Amen. And doubt doesn't mean that we don't have faith. Jesus says to the disciples after they're afraid in the boat, a storm, He says, O you of little faith, why did you doubt?

Not O you of no faith. It doesn't mean that you don't have faith. And the reality of your previously strong faith is a sign that God is at work in you. Only God can give the gift of faith.

And if you have enjoyed strong faith, it's only because God gave it. And that is a sign that He is real. That's real and true. And you can take your doubt and you can throw it in the tempter Satan's face.

[12:06] He wants you to doubt. You can throw it back at him and remind him of your faith that God has given something that you couldn't have conjured up on your own. I can't work myself up to have faith.

It's a gift from God. But also go to God with your doubts and pray for grace to believe. Confess your doubt to Him. He won't be surprised. He already knows.

Look at Abraham and remember his ups and downs and how God did not abandon him and He'll not abandon you either. So Sarah and Isaac are our first miracle mother and son.

One more note before moving on. I wouldn't want someone here to draw a really poor application of this text. Abraham and Sarah were fools for trying to circumvent God's plan.

The whole thing with Hagar. Taking matters into their own hands. It showed a lack of faith. It was foolish. It was contrary to God's Word. And I wouldn't want someone struggling.

[13:05] Someone here. Someone you know perhaps. Struggling with infertility. Unable to have a child. To think that it was unspiritual or a lack of faith to pursue other avenues of having children like adoption or ethically appropriate fertility treatments.

Of course not. You don't have a direct promise from God like Abraham and Sarah did. Their circumstances were far different. Now of course, we pray and trust in the Lord, but that's not to say that you don't seek to make use of the legitimate avenues available to you.

If you or a loved one struggles with infertility, you may find hope in the reality of a God with whom nothing is impossible. Even if He doesn't ever choose to reverse your most painful circumstances. But I want us to come now to a second miraculous birth. Turn over to Genesis 25 with me. This one doesn't get as much press as Abraham and Sarah. Just a brief notice of it, but only one generation. One generation into the descendants of Abraham, we come to the miracle son Isaac, and his wife too is barren. Have you noticed that before? You probably have reading through, but it's just mentioned so briefly that it's easy to forget that Rebecca too was barren.

[14:26] We're not going to recount Isaac's adventure of finding a wife. Eventually, he and Rebecca are married. One problem, she is barren just like her mother-in-law. But that is no obstacle to God.

So notice with me verses 19-21 of Genesis 25. These are the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son. Abraham fathered Isaac, and Isaac was 40 years old when he took Rebecca to be his wife, the daughter of Bethuel, the Aramean, of Paddan Aram, the sister of Laban, the Aramean.

And Isaac prayed to the Lord for his wife because she was barren. And the Lord granted his prayer, and Rebecca, his wife, conceived.

Of course, the children conceived were twins, Esau and Jacob. You know them well. Miraculous hand of God is at work. The generations of Abraham could have ground to an abrupt halt with no future, no Messiah eventually down the road.

But God intervenes upon the prayers of Isaac, who must have known the impossible circumstances of his own birth. We assume that his parents had told him about that, how he was a miracle child.

[15:33] He prays to the God of the childless to grant him a child and God answers. Let's run ahead to the next one. Jacob. Genesis 29.

Again, we don't have to wait long for the next barren woman to give birth to a child without reciting the whole saga of Jacob and his wives. You'll remember that he ended up marrying two sisters, not by choice.

Leah, who he didn't want to marry, and Rachel, who he did want to marry. Leah, who he didn't love, and Rachel, who he did love. Now, you think you've got conflict in your home. Genesis 29.31.

When the Lord saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren. Now, maybe you think this is no big deal. Jacob still has descendants by, and one of his sons by Leah was Judah, the tribe from which would come the Messiah, so Rachel's barrenness isn't such a big deal.

Well, infertility is always a big deal. Ask someone who has gone through it or is going through it, but this case is particularly significant. While Jesus did come through the line of Judah who came from Leah, all the descendants of Jacob might have died in a famine if it wasn't for Joseph, who was the son of Jacob, and Rachel, who was barren.

[16:54] So, turn over to Genesis 30. Notice verses 22-24. Then God remembered Rachel, and God listened to her and opened her womb.

She conceived and bore a son and said, God has taken away my reproach. And she called his name Joseph, saying, May the Lord add to me another son. And then turn over to Genesis 35, verses 16-18.

Eventually, we're going to get to the New Testament and we're going to stop turning. But until then, we've got a lot of passages to look at. Genesis 35, verses 16-18.

Then they journeyed from Bethel when they were still some distance from Ephrath. Rachel went into labor and she had hard labor. And when her labor was at its hardest, the midwife said to her, Do not fear, for you have another son.

And as her soul was departing for she was dying, she called his name Ben-Oni, but his father called him Benjamin. Joseph and Benjamin are born to her who had been barren. Joseph, of course, is the one sold into slavery in Egypt where through a remarkable string of providences that could only be orchestrated by a sovereign hand of God, Joseph arrives in a position to deliver his family from the devastating famine that would later ravage that region.

[18:17] And all of this wouldn't have happened except for the divine opening of Rachel's womb. So the first three generations, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, all had wives unable to pay her children and they all had children.

It's hard not to see God's hand at work, but now I want you to fast forward through Israel's history to the days of the judges and turn with me to Judges 13. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers,

Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, and Judges chapter 13.

We're now in the days when there was no king and the people did evil in God's eyes and what was right in their own eyes and there was a man named Manoah. And guess what was true of his wife? She was barren. And so notice the first seven verses of Judges 13. And the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. So the Lord gave them into the hands of the Philistines for forty years.

There was a certain man of Zorah of the tribe of the Danites whose name was Manoah and his wife was barren and had no children. And the angel of the Lord appeared to the woman and said to her, Behold, you are barren and have not born children, but you shall conceive and bear a son.

[19:37] Therefore be careful and drink no wine or strong drink and eat nothing unclean for behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. No razor shall come upon his head for the child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb and he shall begin to save Israel from the hand of the Philistines.

Then the woman came and told her husband, A man of God came to me and his appearance was like the appearance of the angel of God. Very awesome! And I did not ask him where he was from and he did not tell me his name, but he said to me, Behold, you shall conceive and bear a son.

So then drink no wine or strong drink and eat nothing unclean for the child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb to the day of his death. And Manoah and his wife, given the day in which they lived, where people did evil in God's eyes and what was right in their own eyes, this couple responds with, I think, remarkable faith.

Given the day in which they lived. They wanted to know how to raise him. Look at verse 8. Then Manoah prayed to the Lord and said, O Lord, please let the man of God whom you sent come again to us and teach us what we are to do with the child who will be born.

You see how he accepts what God has said. We're barren, but we're going to have a child. How should we raise him? And look at verse 12. He assumes the messenger's message will come to pass. And Manoah said, Now when your words come true, what is to be the child's manner of life and what is his mission?

[20:59] And indeed, a child was born to them and that child was Samson. Look at verse 24. And the woman bore a son and called his name Samson and the young man grew and the Lord blessed him.

Now Samson has a pretty spotty track record, but he was used of God to deliver his people from the oppression of the Philistines in those days. Again, a miraculous birth and the one born was key in the history of Israel.

preserving them and bringing to pass God's perfect plan. Come ahead now to 1 Samuel 1. Joshua judges Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel.

1 Samuel 1. Closer to the days of the kings, we find Elkanah and Hannah, a sweet story of a dear godly woman who desperately wanted a child.

She was mocked by the other wife in the house who was apparently quite fertile. And in her sad and desperate state, she prayed a prayer and she made a promise. Notice it with me in verse 10 and 11 of 1 Samuel 1.

[22:06] She was deeply distressed and prayed to the Lord and wept bitterly and she vowed a vow and said, O Lord of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your servant and remember me and not forget your servant but will give to your servant a son, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life and no razor shall touch his head.

It's a prayer that God was pleased to answer. It's interesting, isn't it? I assume Hannah had prayed before this for a son. Why had God not answered her prayers in the way that she wanted up to this point?

Why hasn't he answered your prayer? If you're hoping for me to answer that question, I can't.

I don't know. But his timing is his timing. His plan is his plan and they are often quite different from ours.

And I don't want you to walk away tonight with unrealistic expectations of God immediately working in the way that you want him to. But I do want you to walk away with realistic and well-founded confidence that he will work in just the right way and at just the right time as he did for Hannah.

[23:35] Well, after clearing up a little confusion with Eli the priest, we read in verses 17-20, then Eli answered, Go in peace and the God of Israel grant your petition that you have made to him. And she said, Let your servant find favor in your eyes.

Then the woman went her way and ate and her face was no longer sad. They rose early in the morning and worshipped before the Lord. Then they went back to their house at Ramah and Elkanah knew Hannah his wife and the Lord remembered her.

And in due time Hannah conceived and bore a son and she called his name Samuel where she said, I have asked for him from the Lord. Samuel would go on to be another key figure in the history of God's people leading Israel into the age of the kings and eventually anointing King David himself who would be the great, great, great, great, great, great, and so on, grandfather of the Christ. The man who sat on the throne that belongs to Jesus forever. Impossibly difficult circumstances for Hannah.

Impossibly good outcome for God's people because with God nothing is impossible. And now we come to the days of the New Testament. Come with me to Luke chapter 1. Years have passed. [24 : 58] Still there is no Messiah but with a visit to Zechariah comes a glimmer of hope. Luke 1, notice with me verses 5-7.

In the days of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah of the division of Abijah and he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron and her name was Elizabeth.

And they were both righteous before God walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord but they had no child because Elizabeth was barren and both were advanced in years.

Barren and advanced in years. Remind you of anyone? Abraham and Sarah? Perhaps? But while Zechariah is serving before the Lord jump down to verse 11 and there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense and Zechariah was troubled when he saw him and fear fell upon him but the angel said to him do not be afraid Zechariah for your prayer has been heard and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son and you shall call his name John and you will have joy and gladness and many will rejoice at his birth for he will be great before the Lord and he must not drink wine or strong drink and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb and he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just to make ready for the Lord a people prepared.

He would be the father Zechariah would be the father of the one promised who would make ready the way for the Messiah not the father of the Messiah but the one who would make the way ready for him not only was this son coming that meant that the Messiah was coming too and this one who would be the messenger the one who would prepare the way was coming into the world through an old and infertile couple.

[27 : 04] Now Zechariah doubted verse 18 and Zechariah said to the angel how shall I know this for I am an old man my wife is advanced in years. He was punished but his small faith again like Abraham didn't prevent the promise of God from coming true.

Look at verses 24 and 25 after these days his wife Elizabeth conceived and for five months she kept herself hidden saying thus the Lord has done for me in the days when he looked on me to take away my reproach among people.

And then verse 57 now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth and she bore a son. And notice what Zechariah prophesies about this son who was born to him.

Verses 76-79 And you child will be called the prophet of the Most High for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways to give knowledge of salvation to his people and the forgiveness of their sins because of the tender mercy of our God whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death to guide our feet into the way of peace.

He recognized the significance of this miracle baby. He would prepare the way for the Christ who was born about six months later and Christ would bring salvation.

[28 : 22] Miracle baby miraculous good for God's people which brings us to the last miracle birth. The one that's most often remembered at this time of year. The greatest miracle of them all.

In some ways given what we've seen we shouldn't be surprised but this one is different. So stay here in Luke chapter 1 but look at verses 26 and 27. In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph of the house of David and the virgin's name was Mary.

Now with Mary you never get to find out if she was barren because she had never been married. She had never known a man. She had never been intimate with a man.

With all of the others there was still a human father involved but even here with no earthly father. Read what the angel says in verses 28 through 33.

Follow as I read and he came to her and said greetings O favored one the Lord is with you. But she was greatly troubled at the saying and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be and the angel said to her do not be afraid Mary for you have found favor with God and behold you will conceive in your womb and bear a son and you shall call his name Jesus he will be great and will be called the son of the most high and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever and of his kingdom there will be no end.

[29 : 55] Mary's initial reaction follows in verse 34 and Mary said to the angel how will this be since I am a virgin and that's quite an understandable reaction. I don't think necessarily this is a lack of faith on her part.

You notice she's not punished like Zachariah was but asking for an explanation of something that has never happened before in history. Barren women giving birth yes.

A virgin? No. And so the explanation comes verse 35 and the angel answered her the Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the most high will overshadow you therefore the child to be born will be called holy the son of God.

Mary would be the earthly mother of the son of God. It's not wise to speculate beyond what we've just read but Jesus would come and have no biological earthly father miraculous birth indeed.

Verse 38 is her response of faith and Mary said behold I am the servant of the Lord let it be to me according to your word and the angel departed from her. Joseph 2 responds in faith Matthew 1 you don't have to turn there when Joseph woke from sleep he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him he took his wife but knew her not until she had given birth to a son and he called his name Jesus.

[31 : 21] Mary and Joseph's response are really amazing reactions to truly unbelievable news. And this is what all the other miracle births have been moving towards the story of redemption reaches its pinnacle in the birth life death resurrection and ascension of the God man Jesus Christ.

in him is our salvation our righteousness here is our sin bearer and punishment bearer our forgiveness here is our entrance into glory and apart from the divine plan and providence of the almighty God it could not have happened.

Do you see that in a miraculous way that it came to pass? And so our survey of impossible births in scripture ends with the most impossible and the most important of all yet each one preceding it advances the story of God's people they're integral in the plan of bringing Jesus into the world which is impossibly good news and that's what I want us to think on with the time that we have left this impossibly good news because of these impossible births.

This was the fulfillment of what may have seemed like impossible promises. Will Abraham really have descendants as the stars in the heavens? Will there be a people of God preserved even through famine?

Will they survive a period of repeated attack after taking the promised land but then falling into sin? Will there be any godly leader in Israel? Will the forerunner to the Messiah ever come?

[32 : 49] Will the Messiah ever come? Absolutely yes. Not in the way men would have planned it but through unassuming moms who wanted children but couldn't have any until God intervened.

Why is that good news? Well it means that God is exactly who he says he is. Only the sovereign of the universe could bring this remarkable plan to pass. Only God could decree and accomplish the salvation of his people using the weakness of men as a key component of his plan.

You remember what Paul writes to the Corinthians. 1 Corinthians 1 27-31 But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise. God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong and what weaker is there than a woman unable to have children in the eyes of men?

God chose what is low and despised in the world even things that are not to bring to nothing things that are so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus whom God made our wisdom and our righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

Therefore as it is written let the one who boasts boast in the Lord. This is how God works and he gets the glory that way and not us.

[34 : 08] These miraculous bursts mean that there's good news to share. There's a gospel to proclaim. It means the Son of God became man. Think about that. I know you've heard it many times.

The Son of God became man. God entered our world perfectly obeyed and had the weight of our sin placed on him and was punished for it on the cross died the death that we deserve to die and rose from the dead conquering that evil enemy death demonstrating his divinity and he ascended to God's right hand where he now sits ruling and reigning over all until he comes again to bring the glory of the not yet right into the brokenness of the already in which we live.

And if you think that this is all too good to be true or beyond the bounds of what is possible you're absolutely right if your perspective is merely human.

But we serve and worship the God of the impossible. No situation outside of his control. You know how you feel helpless sometimes to intervene in a situation.

You see something happening and you want to stop him but you can't or you're looking at a set of circumstances and you're wondering what in the world you should do. You have no idea. You know how you feel in those situations.

[35 : 28] God never feels that way. Think of the story of the rich young ruler when I think of the God of the impossible. Jesus talks about and remember how hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven.

It's like a camel trying to get through the eye of the needle and disciples say who then can be saved and Jesus responds in Matthew 19.26 with man this is impossible but with God all things are possible.

It's wonderful truth. But you know before that episode ever took place with a rich young ruler the angel who appeared to Mary affirmed this very truth and the birth of Jesus is one of the most clear demonstrations of it.

A baby born to a virgin that's impossible. But Luke 1.37 the angel said to Mary for nothing will be impossible with God. It's repeated there and with the rich young ruler and long before that in the Abraham and Sarah story in Genesis 18 verses 13 and 14 the Lord said to Abraham why did Sarah laugh and say shall I indeed bear a child now that I am old?

Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you about this time next year and Sarah shall have a son. God himself says is there anything too hard for the Lord?

[36 : 45] And the answer is of course not. Psalm 113 verses 5-9 Who is like the Lord our God? Who is seated on high who looks far down on the heavens and the earth?

He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap to make them sit with princes with the princes of his people. He gives the barren woman a home making her the joyous mother of children.

Praise the Lord. Who is like him? No one. No one. No one but the Lord God Almighty can accomplish such wonders among men.

Do you see the wonderful working of the providence of God? Can we read accounts like this and have any doubt remaining that a sovereign God sits at the helm of the universe guiding all things according to his perfect plan?

To suggest a world that's governed by chance happenstance is to mock the reality of the fulfilled promises of God carefully planned and executed by him should be deeply comforting truth for God's people.

[37 : 50] For us. Do you believe that God is able to work for good in your trying circumstances? Don't leave it with Abraham and Sarah and Manoah and Hannah and all the ones we've considered.

Do you believe that he's able to work for good? If the answer to that question is no or even and I'm not sure a chorus of witnesses from God's word rise up to shout otherwise.

God says is anything too hard for me? The angel says to Mary nothing will be impossible with God. Jesus says to his disciples that with God all things are possible and that includes working for good in your circumstances.

These miracle children. Isaac says that it can be done. He can work for good for you. Jacob and Esau say that it can be done. Joseph and Benjamin say it can be done. Samuel says it can be done.

John says it can be done. Jesus says it can be done. Fear not child of God. These miracle children testify to his power. The reality is that we will face painful circumstances.

[38 : 57] Some of you are right now. At least I assume that. While Jesus' first coming inaugurated his kingdom.

It brought it. It won't come in fullness until he comes again. We live between the two comings of Jesus. And so we live in a tension of the already where we enjoy blessings of being God's children. And don't we enjoy those blessings? But not in fullness. We don't have the full reality of that. It's not yet. Yet, we still live in a broken world and look forward to the not yet.

Not yet do we have perfection. Not yet do we have freedom from trouble. And so in the midst of brokenness, I hope tonight that thinking about the first coming of Jesus gives us sure hope as we look to his second coming.

If God could work all things to bring Jesus into the world the first time through all of these things that we've seen, then he's going to come again. And he's going to complete what he began.

[39:54] And that's good news for you and me. Until that day, because of what we've seen from God, we can have confidence that God is working.

He's working in your infertility. He's working in your unemployment. He's working in your doubt. God is working in your fear and uncertainty. God is working in a nation that rejects him. God is working in your physical sickness and disease.

He is working in your loneliness. God is working in your poverty. God is working out of the ashes of the abuse that you have suffered. God is working in your sexual brokenness. God is working in your sorrow.

He is at work. And he will finish his work that he began in you. His word promises it. Don't misunderstand. I'm not promising fertility to the infertile, financial solvency to the bankrupt, healing to the diseased.

We don't know what God's good will is for you. God may or may not work in that particular way in your life, but he will work for good. And there is nothing too hard for him.

[41:00] And so as we face those circumstances, what do we do? How do we respond? Well, learn from Abraham and Sarah and Manoah and his wife and from Zechariah and Elizabeth to believe and not to laugh at the promises of his word.

even when it seems like there is no way the promise could be true for you. Do you read promises in God's word sometimes and go, that can't be true.

How do you think Abraham and Sarah felt? We're beyond the age where it's possible to have children. And they laugh. Learn from Abraham and Sarah and these others to trust him.

To not laugh at his promises. Learn from Isaac and from Hannah to pray. to do so fervently to this God who acts for his people. Let me encourage you to learn something from Elkanah, Hannah's husband.

To be exceedingly sensitive with those who struggle with infertility. In some ways, Elkanah was great. He made special provision for his wife.

[42:05] He took good care of her. Treated her with special care but in other ways not so good. He said things we didn't read this earlier but he said am I not more to you than ten sons?

I'm sure he was a really good husband. But it's a pretty insensitive thing to say. Things like that not generally helpful. And neither are sometimes well-meaning friends and family who flippantly suggest adoption or some other solution as though that takes away the pain of their inability to have their own biological children.

Oh, well then you can adopt. Well, that's true and they may well do that and find great joy in it. But there's still great pain and so be sensitive. Learn that from Elkanah. Learn from Rachel and find comfort that God does not forget those in affliction.

God remembered Rachel. He opened her womb. Learn from Joseph and Mary's sweet submission to unexpected providence. You remember initially for Joseph this wasn't exactly good news that he got.

That the woman he was engaged to was with child. But they sweetly submit. And I don't know about you but in trouble I tend to think yes but my situation is different.

[43:27] It really is impossible. There's not been anything quite like what I'm facing before. And to voice that sounds absurd but I think that way sometimes. I think my problem is bigger. It's like and we do that.

The realities that we've seen tonight cut right through all of it. God is able. Praise Him for that. Trust Him for it. And let me ask do you believe?

Elizabeth the mother of miracle baby John says to Mary the mother of miracle baby Jesus and blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the

Lord.

You need this Jesus. You need this miracle baby. And you need a response of faith to Him. And when you respond in faith you'll be blessed.

It may seem too good to be true but that's the glory of our God and His good news. It's impossibly good. Rebels against God can become His children and friends all because of a babe born to a virgin.

[44 : 32] you come to Him in repentance and faith and you'll find in Him sure salvation. The message of the coming of Christ is a message of fulfilled promise.

It's a message of forgiveness of sins. It's a message of impossibly good news and impossibly difficult circumstances. And therefore it's a message of hope for us.

May we remember that message that truth as we remember have remembered the miraculous birth of Christ and may we enjoy living in the reality of that hope in every circumstance of life that comes our way.

Let's pray together. Our Father we thank You for the truth of Your Word. We thank You for Your faithfulness to fulfill Your promises.

We pray that You would strengthen our faith to not doubt the promises the truth of Your Word. We pray that You would work in the midst of difficult circumstances for different ones that are here tonight.

[45 : 39] We pray that You would bring good for them even as You have promised. And we pray that You would give us grace to trust to not fear to live in hope confidence not doubt and worry.

We thank You most of all for Jesus our Savior in whom we have salvation the forgiveness of sins and in whose name we pray. Amen.