

The title for tonight's message is: **Believing The Impossible**

The angel of the Lord said: *“Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.”*

Grace and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Is it good, or bad, to be doubtful? This seems to be the big question in our society today?

Sometimes, it's good, For example, when you receive an email from someone you don't know. First, you think, should you even open it?

Let's say you did, and that someone says to you that they want to help you, but they need some information first.

They ask if you could just hand over your social security number, your credit card number, and your bank account number, all so they can help you.

Right! Its very doubtful this person wants to help you. Instead they want to take your money, identity and more, not to help you.

Or, what about those times when you hear something that “seems to good to be true”, you know, something unbelievable.

Like every year around this time, you hear the story of Jesus' birth, but there are certain things about His birth, that seems too hard to believe.

Should you be doubtful? The Bible tells us that the birth of Christ was in fact something which was planned even before the world was created.

Do you believe that? God's Word tells us that the little infant that was lying in a manger was actually God Himself, who had come in the flesh.

I don't know, that's a pretty outrageous claim, do you believe that, or are you doubtful?

And then there's the part about how Mary being a virgin gave birth to Jesus. The bible tells us that Mary had never been with a man.

You have to think this has to be impossible. Is it true? Is it something you believe, or is this something you disbelieve?

Well let me say this; if you're not ready to believe those things that seem impossible, then you're not ready for Christmas.

Look, the Christmas story, and the meaning behind it, are both filled with amazing claims, impossible promises, things that seem too good to be true.

Are you ready to ponder these things? Are you ready to believe the impossible? Think about it!

This evening, we're going to look at the birth of Christ from Joseph's point of view seeing how Joseph, finally believed the impossible.

And we're going to see how God blessed Joseph and we're going to see how these same blessings can come to us today.

That is as we lay hold of the amazing claims, and impossible promises of God Himself.

Here's the story. Joseph was a carpenter who lived in Nazareth, an extremely small town, maybe no bigger than a few acres, a few hundred people.

Joseph was now engaged to a young girl named Mary. Now in their culture, engagement meant a little more than it does in our culture today.

You see, back then, once you were engaged, you were legally bound to your fiancée. That's right you were married.

Of course, You still would have to go through the ceremony before you start living together, but once you were engaged, that was it, you were legally married.

But something happened to poor Joseph. His fiancée, Mary started to act strange, she seemed rather nervous and excited.

And one day, she took off to visit one of her relatives, staying away for some 6 months. Something that in those day's wasn't too unusual I suppose.

Well, the Bible tells us that Mary had gone to visit her relative Elizabeth, an older woman who was also going to have a child, **John the Baptist**.

When Mary returned home, Joseph noticed something else that was strange about Mary. She looked like she was pregnant.

Now, Mary told Joseph the whole story, you know about how the angel had visited her, and how the Holy Spirit had caused her to conceive.

And not only that, but the child was going to be a Boy, and how He was to be the long awaited Messiah to be named "Jesus."

Well, according to the Bible Joseph didn't believe Mary's story at all. It was just too good to be true.

What Joseph knew for sure was that Mary left for six months, and came back pregnant. And now, she's going to have the Messiah. He didn't buy it.

Well, according to the Bible Joseph didn't believe Mary's story at all. It was just too good to be true.

What Joseph knew for sure was that Mary left for six months, and came back pregnant. And now, she's going to have the Messiah. He didn't buy it.

Remember now, the Bible describes Joseph as a good man, a righteous man to be sure, so, if he was going to get married.

It certainly wasn't going to be to someone like Mary. Yet he didn't want to make a public example out of her. He still loved her.

Don't forget, they were legally united, and back then, he could have dragged her into court, putting her on trial, and had her stoned as an adulteress.

But he wasn't going to do that to her, so he planned to fill out some paperwork, and divorce her, quietly.

Now, before we go on, you have to ask yourself this question. Would you have believed Mary, if you were Joseph?

Look these were hard things for anybody to believe. And so, Joseph resisted. He didn't want to believe the impossible.

But then, one night, we're told that an angel from God appeared to Joseph in a dream, and said: *“Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.”*

Yep, Mary's story was true, it wasn't too good to be true, she had not been with another man.

The angel then continued to say: *She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus,*

Interestingly, there wasn't such a thing as ultrasound back then, yet both Mary and Joseph knew the gender of the baby before its birth.

And they didn't have to run to Barnes and Noble to get a book on baby-names either. God took care of that as well. His name would be Jesus.

Another interesting thing is what the name Jesus means. In the Greek the name Jesus means "The Lord Saves."

Both having the same meaning: "The Lord Saves." That would be his name, "The Lord Saves".

And listen to the explanation the angel gives, for why Joseph should name his son Jesus: *for he will save his people from their sins.*"

That's right, this baby that would be born in three months, would save the world from all its sin, yes, seems too good to be true, but it is true.

My friends every Christmas, you and I are put into a position where were asked to believe impossible promises.

"I promise you," God says, "that because of my Son, born on Christmas, I promise you that I will forgive you all the sins you have ever committed in your life."

That's an amazing promise. "I promise you," God says, "that the moment you die, I'm going to take your soul to be with me forever in heaven."

Do you believe that? "I promise you," God says, that this is my body, this is my blood, and these were given, and shed for you, for the forgiveness of all of yours sins."

How can that be? It seems impossible! But that's Christianity, isn't it? The essence of Christianity is believing the impossible.

Believing that the virgin gives birth to a child, believing that this helpless infant is God, believing that this child takes away the sin of the world.

Yes, that's Christianity, believing the impossible. Do you believe? Are you ready for Christmas? Ready to believe the impossible?

My friends, we all struggle sometimes, with doubtfulness, but don't worry, you're not alone. God may not send an angel to you to help you.

But He has sent you, and me His Word and Sacraments, this is where God speaks to us today.

Here is where we can spend time with God, and as we do, God will work on us taking away our doubts and giving us what He gave Joseph.

Do you know what that is? Faith, that's right strong faith, and the ability to trust in the impossible promises of Christmas.

That's faith, and that's what God gives to us all here, through His Word and Sacrament.

May God be with you this Christmas. May God give you the same heart that He gave to Joseph.

A heart that believes things that seem to good to be true, and yet, they are. Then you're ready for Christmas.

Then you're ready to welcome the Christ child, God's gift to you, to Joseph, and to all.

Amen.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all. Amen.