

impossible God

introduction

This morning we are going to embark on a new series we're calling **Impossible God**. It's not going to be a really long series, 5 or 6 weeks, but I'm excited about it because I'm hoping it will get us really motivated about different aspects of our Christianity.

The Biblical starting point comes from a verse that most of us are probably familiar with in the Gospels. In fact, it's a statement that Jesus makes to His disciples and it's repeated in all the Gospels but John's. We'll read it out of Matthew. The guy we know as the Rich Young Ruler came to Jesus, asking what he needed to do to follow after the Lord, Jesus said, "Sell all you have and give it to the poor." The man went away sorrowful, and then here's what Jesus said:

Matthew 19.24-26 - And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?" But Jesus looked at them and said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

That story and that statement are given to us 3 separate times in God's word. But there's another time where this statement is made, it's over in the first chapter of Luke. An angel appears to Mary and explains to her that she will become pregnant with the Messiah. And here's what Mary says:

Luke 1.34-37 - Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible."

In each of these Gospel passages we see God connecting this statement, "with God all things are possible" to the life or the calling of a Christian. Whether it's with the disciples, where they question the calling of Christ for every believer, or there with Mary, where the angel explains the specific calling God has for her individual life, we find that what God wants for us is something eternal and supernatural and impossible. Things that we *cannot* accomplish in our own power or strength or wisdom as God overshadows us.

This has been God's pattern throughout the whole of Scripture. Empowering His people to do impossible things. Those miracles and those great histories in the Bible weren't recorded simply so that we could have good bedtime stories for our kids. They were recorded because they are the demonstration of God's intention for His people. And God does some *amazing* things in Scripture. He makes the sun stand still. He parts the seas. He creates something out of nothing. And He did those things to either reveal Himself or to work in and through His people in different situations.

And, here's the thing, God still does impossible things today. They might not happen as often in our neck of the woods as they do elsewhere, which we'll talk about in a minute, but it is a sure fact that God is busy making possible the impossible all over the world as He continues revealing Himself and as He continues to work in and through His people.

Now, the Bible explains this to us. It explains that God intends to give His followers power to do the ministry of spreading the Gospel.

We remember when Jesus sent His 12 disciples out 2 by 2 to go and preach. The text says:

Mark 6.7 - He called the twelve to Himself, and began to send them out two by two, and gave them power over unclean spirits.

They were given a power that would accompany their message of repentance and salvation.

Or if we go a little further in the New Testament, after the Lord rose from the dead, what did He say to the disciples? He told them to wait in Jerusalem because:

Acts 1.8 - But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

Then, to us in the Epistles, Paul writes:

1 Thessalonians 1.5 - For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake.

So God speaks to His people and He says, "I've called you to a life that you can only accomplish by My power and I'm going to fill you with that power so that when you go out and carry this message, I will overshadow you and you will have the backing of heaven." He says, "The things I did on the earth, you're going to do as I fill you and direct you. You're going to do these things to an even greater degree than I did because I'm going to pour out this power in each and every one of my people." It all might seem impossible, but God's pretty public about the fact that He's in the business of the impossible. It's what He wants to do.

But, here's the problem. The problem is, we can live quite comfortably without anything miraculous or supernatural happening in our lives. I mean, it's not that we're just looking for manifestations of miracles, but because of the time and the place and the culture we live in, we're able to accomplish most things to be physically comfortable without the Spirit of God. And that's a problem. The abundant blessings that we receive are the same sorts of things that caused God's people Israel to become complacent and idolatrous in their walk with the Lord. They forgot that God intended to overshadow their lives with His influence and direction and filling.

There's a sense in which we don't really *have* to share the Gospel, because someone else is out there doing it. There's lots of other Christians around, doing Christian things. I saw a little

update from one of the church's Gospel For Asia missionaries. It talked about how in this one region that they're ministering, there's 28 million people in 19,000 square miles. 60% are Sikh. 37% are Hindu. 1% is Christian. In a place like that, you can't train missionaries fast enough. They need more people to go out with the Gospel because so few believers are there in the field!

But *here*, we don't have that. We don't have that terrible urgency and need for God to show up in our daily lives. At least, it doesn't *feel* like we do. And our culture says, "We don't really mind your Christianity as long as you conform to look like us. Don't get too zealous. Don't get too excited. Don't get too involved. Don't get too focused on Christianity. Have your faith, but stay at our party." And what we find in our nation is a lot of Christians who aren't bearing much fruit. They're like the fig tree there at the end of the Gospel of Mark that we saw. They're all grown up, but they're not serving their purpose because their connection to God has been interrupted and they've become detached from God's daily will for their lives.

In other parts of the world we hear reliable reports about God doing these incredible, miraculous things. Places where the governments are trying to wipe the Church out and places where people are suffering and in want. Places where there is so little exposure to the Gospel and the Word. But here, things are very different. We don't live in a very miraculous part of the world.

And, again, it's not that we're miracle hunters. But it's interesting to see that in the Bible God delights in accomplishing impossible things *through* the lives of His people. It's what He loves to do.

Listen, whether you're a Christian in Hanford or a Christian in Iran, whether it's 2011 or AD 11, God says that your life and your relationship with Him is meant to be full of impossible transformation and eternal use. Our lives are like a seed. And, if you were with us a couple Wednesday nights ago you learned a little bit about how God has engineered seeds. How they are these perfect, uncopiable, warehouses of life. That within each seed is the potential for an incredible, specific plant. Some that are small, some that are massive.

God takes your life and He fills it with His Holy Spirit and a plan for fruitfulness. The type of fruit is His business and His doing. Different fruit for different people. Some having a great crop in evangelism. Some producing much generosity. Some producing heavenly exhortation. That's His business. He plans the fruit and He packs it away into your life. But the seed has to respond to the light and the water and the soil. The seed has to allow that work to grow and expand. And God says that we have an active influence on the amount of growth and work that He is able to do in and through us. He *wants* to do incredible, impossible things, that is clear, but our willingness and our participation are essential if we want all that fruit He has planned.

We need to recognize that it's easy for us to become fruitless trees if we're not careful. It's easy for us to look the part and seem like we are what we're intended to be, but if there's no fruit, if there's no power in our lives, if there's nothing impossible about our relationship with God, then there's something wrong.

What we want to do over the next few weeks is take a couple examples from the Old Testament and a couple examples from the New Testament where we see God doing impossible things for and through His people. And we're going to look at each of those

examples in light of 4 or 5 different callings that we all have as disciples. We're going to look at how our God makes the impossible possible in our **devotion**, our **outreach**, our **discipleship** and our **faith**. We'll see the way that God demonstrates His intentions for those things in our lives through individual stories involving His people.

But here's the thing: This isn't about miracles. So much of what we think about when we hear people talking about God's power and Him making the impossible possible gets all wrapped up in just miracles. And miracles are great. They glorify God. They accomplish His will. They still happen today.

What we're talking about is the fact that God calls His people to an impossible life, then plans an impossible work for them. And because of His power, He is able to accomplish in us and through us and for us things that could never have happened without Him. So the question is: Is there anything supernatural about my life? Anything impossible? Am I living at the potential that God has placed in me or am I a fruitless, comatose Christian, who looks the part, but has no activity to show for myself? Since God has given me power to overcome sin and given me power to know His word and given me power to do His will, is that power being utilized and exercised, or is it tucked away somewhere far away from my daily life?

Sometimes when we think about being a fruitful Christian or a faithful Christian we can get discouraged that there are people out there who seem to be more successful in their discipleship. They seem to do things we're never going to do. They speak to thousands. They write books. They do these 'big' Christian things.

The good news is that even though we think about success in numeric terms, God doesn't. He doesn't. He called Daniel to a specific life and He called Jeremiah to a specific life. They each had the same God overshadowing them and the same backing of heaven. Their tasks were different. And that's fine. That's the Lord's business.

Charles Spurgeon once said, "Our littleness does not alter God's promise." And I like that. Because I think sometimes we feel little. And that can influence us to lay down in our Christianity or discount what God wants to do in us. Thinking I'm little and insignificant can make me shy away from steps of faith. But God looks at your life and my life and He has *made* us significant. Perhaps one He makes like a sequoia seed and another an apple seed. But each tree is important. Each tree is needful. Each tree must produce.

God intends for your life a fruitfulness and an impossible power so that His Gospel and His grace can spread around the world, from heart to heart. Maybe you and I won't ever be asked to speak in a stadium to thousands of people, but isn't it just as significant to be used to save a marriage? To raise children who themselves go out and serve God? To reveal the Gospel to one person in our family or on the street? Those things are just as significant. Those things are just as needful. Those things are just as much a part of God's work as planting a church or starting a missionary school. And those things are right in front of us.

God wants to do impossible things through you. He's made that clear. What we need to do is check our hearts to see if we've made space for the impossible in a time and place where it's easy to live a fruitless life.