

***The angel said..... “For nothing is impossible with God.”
“ I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered, “May it be to me as you
have said.”
Luke 1: 37-38***

As one commentator recently remarked, we live in uncertain times and we're moving into uncertain territory. As the UK faces uncertainty of the outcome of Brexit negotiations, the ever-changing political landscapes and ongoing disputes in countries across our world mean that fears of potential division and conflict between and within nations are very real.



In our personal lives we often face times of change as we encounter new experiences for the first time; perhaps becoming parents or grandparents for the first time, or empty-nesters; maybe starting a new job, school or college; facing a new diagnosis or course of treatment, or the pain of separation after the death of a loved one - all of these situations involve trying to find a different way of being in the face of significant change in our life circumstances.



So it's comforting to be reminded of the amazing courage of Mary as she was faced with the choice of whether to accept God's call upon her life, a call that would mean stepping out into the unknown territory of motherhood in a context that carried a serious risk of social ostracisation, ridicule and rejection, given her personal circumstances and lack of a husband.

Mary could have resisted God's unexpected call on her life, but her faith in the God who makes the impossible possible enabled her to choose to say yes, to embrace God's plan for her life, and trust Him to reveal what the outcome of those plans will be. Luke's account of Jesus' nativity makes clear that the path was not going to be an easy one: birth in a shed among animals, a series



of strange visitors with puzzling tales of angels and stars, a sudden outpouring of praise from an aged prophet in the Temple, and within a matter of weeks or months, a flight from home to a strange land, as a refugee escaping from the threat of death.

And we know the story didn't end there; Mary watched her son Jesus grow and his ministry develop as he began the journey towards the cross that was his mission on earth. I imagine Joseph too must have wondered what the future held, as he cradled the tiny child in his arms on that first Christmas night. And yet he and the many other people whose lives Jesus has touched over the centuries since have found deep comfort from the truth of God's presence in our world and our lives.

And that's because that first Christmas changed history forever. God, the creator of the universe and everything in it, chose to come to earth as a vulnerable human, to live as we do and die as we do, and then to rise again. He chose to send his Holy Spirit to live within us as a constant reminder of his promise in Jesus to "be with us always to the end of time". (Matthew 28:20)

For me, the real reason for celebrating Christmas is the amazing life-changing truth that God is not some distant being who watches from afar, but a real, living presence – Emmanuel – God with us – right now and right here!

So however uncertain our lives and our world may feel, and whatever the future may bring, we know that God is with us, that he is in control, that in Jesus he goes ahead of us to prepare the way for us, because he loves us more than we can imagine.

So my prayer for all of us this Christmas, and during the year ahead is that we will celebrate the wonder of God's love for us and be able to say from the bottom of our hearts, with Mary: *"My heart praises the Lord; my soul is glad because of God my Saviour, for he has remembered me, his lowly servant! From now on all people will call me happy, because of the great things the Mighty God has done for me!"* (Luke 1:46-49)

May you be filled afresh
with the love of God,
the peace of Christ,
and the comforting presence of the Holy Spirit
this Christmas and always.

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