

The Glorious Impossible

Christmas Cantata - December 10, 2000
The Christ Lutheran Church Adult Choir

Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence (verse 1) - Gerard Moultrie

Reading 1: A Reading from Zechariah; "Wait for it! The Glorious Impossible."

O Holy Child of Bethlehem - Philip Brooks, Mary McDonald

Reading 2: "Immanuel a child? Impossible!"

Break Forth, O Heavenly Light - J. S. Bach

Reading 3: "A lowly maid from a mean town ... *Martin Luther on Mary, the mother of Jesus*

My Soul Proclaims Your Greatness (WOV #730)

Homily: Pastor Geoff Scott

Sing Gloria! - Katherine K. Davis, John Cowley

Reading 4: ". . . an angel ... made them apostles, prophets and children of God"
Martin Luther on the shepherds

Jazz Gloria - Natalie Sleeth

Reading 5: "God has done it!" *Martin Luther on the Glorious Impossible: the Word made flesh*

Holy Is Thy Name - Mary McDonald

The words of Martin Luther in readings 3, 4, and 5 are excerpted from Luther's Christmas sermons, as found in Martin Luther's Christmas Book, Roland H. Bainton, ed., Augsburg Publishing, Minneapolis.

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Music #1: *Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence* (verse 1)

Reading 1: A Reading from Zechariah; Wait for it! The Glorious Impossible,

The Word of the Lord through his prophet, Zechariah: Thus says the Lord of Hosts: "Even though it seems impossible to the remnant of this people in these days, should it also seem impossible to me, says the Lord of Hosts?" . . . I will bring them to five in Jerusalem. They shall be my people and I will be their God, in faithfulness and righteousness."

Wait for it. Wait. Can you hear it? The truth is out there. There, in the hallway or maybe outside these doors. It's a whispering. A soft buzz. A phrase you can barely hear. Can you feel how it charges the air? Words that make the hair stand up on the back of your neck. The glorious impossible. There! Did you hear it? Hold your breath. It may come again. Wait for it. Wait for God. For he is about to perform the Impossible. He is about give us something Glorious. Wait for it! No, not it - wait for Him: The Glorious Impossible.

Music #2: *0 Holy Child of Bethlehem*

Reading 2: Immanuel a child? Impossible!

Such a strange radiance fills the sky. Can dawn break forth at midnight? Or is it a new star rising? Or perhaps a messiah descending?

But if a messiah, where are the ranks of mighty warriors? The row after row of fearsome bronze chariots? And where is the King to lead them? Without a warrior king, how can we be freed from the shackles of poverty and servitude? Without Immanuel, without a powerful God with Us, how can we triumph?

Instead, this strange light brings news of a simple child. A flickering candle when we need a blazing torch. A child to save us? Impossible. A babe to claim us, to unchain us? Impossible! Can this be Immanuel? Or some kind of cruel joke! Is this the light to shatter our darkness? Will a helpless child born in a stable two blocks down from nowhere redeem all Israel? And yet this infant, this son of Mary and Joseph, bums with the glorious radiance of heaven. Can this be possible?

Music 3: *Break Forth, 0 Heavenly Light*

Reading 3: "A lowly maid from a mean town..,"
Martin Luther on Mary, the mother of Jesus

"Among the downtrodden she was one of the lowliest, not a maid of high station in the capital city, but a daughter of a plain man in a small town ... In all likelihood she was an

orphan ... Her age was probably between 13 and 15 years. And yet this was the one whom God chose. He might have gone to Jerusalem and picked out Caiaphas' daughter ... But God preferred a lowly maid from a mean town.

The angel greeted Mary and said, "God bless you dear Mary, or [in German] liebe Maria," for any German knows that this word liebe comes right from the heart.

Had Mary not believed she could not have conceived. She held fast to the word of the angel because she had become a new creature. Even so we must be transformed and renewed in heart from day to day.

Otherwise, Christ is born in vain."

So writes Martin Luther.

Hymn #4: *My Soul Proclaims Your Greatness* (WOV #730)

Homily Pastor Geoff Scott

Music #5: *Sing Gloria!*

Reading 4: "...an angel ... made them apostles, prophets and children of God"
Martin Luther on the shepherds

"That was a mean job, watching flocks by night. Common sense calls it low-down work, and the men who do it are regarded as trash. But when the angels came calling, these sheep herders stood their ground and did the work of their calling: guarding the sheep.

Next to faith, this is the highest act - to be content with the calling in which God has placed you.

Look at the shepherds. They were watching their flocks by night and an angel came and made them apostles, prophets, and children of God. Caiaphas, Herod, and the high priests were not deemed worthy. I would rather be one of those shepherds than that the Pope should make me a saint or the emperor make me a king."

So writes Martin Luther.

Music #6: *Jazz Gloria*

Reading 5: God has done it!

Martin Luther on the Glorious Impossible: the Word made flesh

By this birth, the true significance of all other events is defined. For of every other occasion it can be said that it could have been different. But of this birth, it is the case that it could in no way be other than it is. And by the existence of this Child, the proper value of all other

existences is given.

By Him is dispelled the darkness wherein the fallen will cannot distinguish between temptation and sin. For in Him we become fully conscious of Necessity as our freedom to be tempted, and of Freedom as our necessity to have faith.

Because in Him, the Word is united to the flesh. And because of His coming our redemption no longer hinges on our pursuing God, but of our surrendering to the One who is always and everywhere present," God has done it! Glorious and Impossible. So that by His holy name all things are possible for us -- even life eternal and glorious in Him - in Christ, we receive the glorious impossible of salvation. Holy is the name of Jesus Christ!

Music #7: *Holy Is Thy Name*

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(Cue Sheet)

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Reading 1: A Reading from Zechariah;

Cue: Wait for it! No, not it - wait for Him: The Glorious Impossible.

O Holy Child of Bethlehem - Philip Brooks, Mary McDonald

Reading 2: "Immanuel a child? Impossible!"

Cue: And yet this infant, this son of Mary and Joseph, burns with the glorious radiance of heaven. Can this be possible?

Break Forth, O Heavenly Light - J. S. Bach

Reading 3: "A lowly maid from a mean town..." Martin Luther on Mary, the mother of Jesus

Cue: Even so we must be transformed and renewed in heart from day to day. Otherwise, Christ is born in vain." So writes Martin Luther.

My Soul Proclaims Your Greatness (WOV #730)

Homily: Pastor Geoff Scott

Sing Gloria! - Katherine K. Davis, John Cowley

Reading 4: ". . . an angel made them apostles, prophets and children of God"

Martin Luther on the shepherds

Cue: I would rather be one of those shepherds than that the Pope should make me a saint or the emperor make me a king." So writes Martin Luther.

Jazz Gloria - Natalie Sleeth

Reading 5: "God has done it!" Martin Luther on the Glorious Impossible: the Word made flesh

Cue: ... in Christ, we receive the glorious impossible of salvation. Holy is the name of Jesus Christ!

Holy Is Thy Name - Mary McDonald