

3/1/26 (2nd Sunday of Lent): "The God of the Impossible" by Pastor Melissa Logsdon

INTRO

We've heard amazing words of encouragement already in the service: in the welcome, prayer, and scripture.

Honestly, I was so blessed by their words, I'm not sure my words will add anything. So I pray, God use the words you've placed on my heart to add even more encouragement for us towards a deeper hope in you and a trust beyond what our eyes can see. Amen

Something you might already know if you've caught my December pastor's note: part 2 of "faith over fear". I mentioned how "God continues to reassure me—**Our God is the God of the possible in seemingly impossible situations!**"

In light of that, I felt like God was leading me to focus on this theme this year: Possible (specifically possibility where things seem impossible)

(Books & Prayers)

Books "A Passion for the Impossible: The Life of Lilius Trotter" by Miriam Huffman Rockness, "I love the word Impossible" by Ann Kiemel

Prayer focus this year: Praying for the seemingly impossible to be possible in my friends' lives and for the kids

Honestly, I often don't even know what those things are that God wants to change as they are so far away in my mind from the possibility of changing. So I try to pray with an open heart—a heart posture of open hands (even if my mind struggles to be open).

DISCLAIMER

I understand what I'm sharing may be difficult to receive. To hope.

All around us, in our personal lives, the lives of loved ones, our community and our world, we see so much that seems impossible. We have prayed prayers that have seemingly gone unanswered.

Just this week, I had to undergo a dental procedure that is just part of a multi step expensive year long process to remove and replace a tooth that was lost to one of the autoimmune diseases that impact my body.

Also, this week, I looked more closely at one of the eye drops I need in order to read (due to severe dry eyes from this disease). This eye drop without insurance is \$1000/month. And the other one is about \$2500 for 3 months. To which 1) I'm grateful for insurance 2) I'm upset about the inequities in the health care system and 3) I am so grateful that I have this opportunity as just this past summer, as some of you may recall, I struggled to read anything.

Even though there have been thousands of prayers for my healing of this disease, I am still struggling with it every day.

AND YET

This summer I shared about a severe diagnosis of this disease impacting my esophagus. You all prayed for me, and...shockingly, seemingly impossibly, I was 100% healed. My specialist was shocked and couldn't explain all the levels of complete healing I experienced. He kept going over and over the images and the pathology reports making sure he hadn't missed anything. There was no earthly explanation. The only thing I could offer him was that I am part of a community of faith that prayed for me. To which he pulled me in his office and reviewed the evidence again. Still with no explanation and asking me again, I repeated my only explanation, a people of faith prayed for my healing. I asked him if I need to keep coming back every 3 months for biopsies as previously prescribed...he said I never need this procedure again...he never needed to see me again as there was zero evidence of any disease now and complete tissue health. I left as shocked as he was, but maybe I shouldn't have been? Maybe I should have been more expectant?

LECTIONARY PASSAGE/2nd Sunday of Lent

Which brings us to today's scripture from Romans 4 about Abraham's faith. (In the 2nd Sunday of Lent the Rev Lectionary always includes the story of Abraham's miracle God story. Often as recorded in Romans 4.)

Romans 4:1-3, 13-25 MSG

'1-3So how do we fit what we know of Abraham, our first father in the faith, into this new way of looking at things? If Abraham, by what he did for God, got God to approve him, he could certainly have taken credit for it. **But the story we're given is a God-story, not an Abraham-story.** What we read in Scripture is, "**Abraham entered into what God was doing for him, and that was the turning point.** He trusted God to set him right instead of trying to be right on his own."

13-15That famous promise God gave Abraham—that he and his children would possess the earth—was not given because of something Abraham did or would do. **It was based on God's decision to put everything together for him, which Abraham then entered when he believed.** If those who get what God gives them only get it by doing everything they are told to do and filling out all the right forms properly signed, that eliminates personal trust completely and turns the promise into an ironclad contract! That's not a holy promise; that's a business deal. A contract drawn up by a hard-nosed lawyer and with plenty of fine print only makes sure that you will never be able to collect. But if there is no contract in the first place, simply a promise—and God's promise at that—you can't break it. 16**This is why the fulfillment of God's promise depends entirely on trusting God and his way, and then simply embracing him and what he does.** God's promise arrives as pure gift. That's the only way everyone can be sure to get in on it, those who keep the religious traditions and those who have never heard of them. For Abraham is father of us all. He is not our racial father—that's reading the story backward. He is our faith father.

17-18We call Abraham "father" not because he got God's attention by living like a saint, but because God made something out of Abraham when he was a nobody. Isn't that what we've

always read in Scripture, God saying to Abraham, "I set you up as father of many peoples"? Abraham was first named "father" and then became a father because he **dared to trust God to do what only God could do: raise the dead to life, with a word make something out of nothing. When everything was hopeless, Abraham believed anyway, deciding to live not on the basis of what he saw he couldn't do but on what God said he would do.** And so he was made father of a multitude of peoples. God himself said to him, "You're going to have a big family, Abraham!"

19-25 **Abraham didn't focus on his own impotence** and say, "It's hopeless. This hundred-year-old body could never father a child." Nor did he survey Sarah's decades of infertility and give up. He didn't tiptoe around God's promise asking cautiously skeptical questions. He plunged into the promise and came up strong, ready for God, sure that God would make good on what he had said. That's why it is said, "Abraham was declared fit before God by **trusting God to set him right.**" But it's not just Abraham; it's also us! The same thing gets said about us when we embrace and believe the One who brought Jesus to life when the conditions were equally hopeless. The sacrificed Jesus made us fit for God, set us right with God.'

[So Abraham had faith in... "the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that don't exist into existence."-CEB Romans 4:17]

HOW DO WE REMEMBER?

How do we remember that God is good? that God is the God of the impossible? That we are God's much loved children?

Historically, people have set up stones of remembrance and written down accounts. God encourages us to retell what God does, lest we forget.

What about you? How do you remember?

For me, I do collect stones to remember. They aren't giant boulders that I've erected, they are more like pebbles. Some of which I write a word and date on, lest I forget. I journal. I try to remember to retell the accounts. Because the truth is...I still forget. I still forget that God is good, that I am God's much loved child, that God continues to shift the impossible into possible. And when I forget, that makes it hard to follow God's kingdom way.

SPIRITUAL RETREAT

Walking the Stations of the cross

Am I willing to follow God's way of living, even if it results in death? Physically, verbally?

Not just once, but repeatedly faced with this question.

Answer: Yes, as God is my strength...faith like Abraham...faith like Jesus...in a God of the impossible...the God of the resurrection life

How much Jesus must have wanted to stop it all. How much the followers doubted how this could be the way/the right way. How if God didn't resurrect Jesus, would the followers have had the gumption to continue in the face of the suffering, in the face of upsetting the ruling religious system of their time, or the ruling empire. The real fear of even seen being associated with Jesus. Of being discovered as a known associate?

Am I brave enough to be a known associate of Jesus' words and actions of those that imitate what Jesus modeled. Today? What if the "religious ruling class or the ruling empire" feels threatened by the words/the actions of caring for those vulnerable, of bringing hope, healing, nourishment, forgiveness, of sharing a meal and celebrating with the "wrong people" whoever they say is "wrong".

Jesus asks us to follow through NO MATTER WHAT to model, like Jesus did, obedience to God's way even in the face of suffering.

Mark 8:34-38 MSG

'34-37 Calling the crowd to join his disciples, he said, "Anyone who intends to come with me has to let me lead. You're not in the driver's seat; I am. **Don't run from suffering; embrace it. Follow me and I'll show you how. Self-help is no help at all. Self-sacrifice is the way, my way, to saving yourself**, your true self. What good would it do to get everything you want and lose you, the real you? What could you ever trade your soul for? 38 "If any of you are embarrassed over me and the way I'm leading you when you get around your fickle and unfocused friends, know that you'll be an even greater embarrassment to the Son of Man when he arrives in all the splendor of God, his Father, with an army of the holy angels."

Jesus believed in this same God, that Moses had faith in. So he could say "Don't run from suffering; embrace it". Because Jesus knew that even in the face of the seemingly impossible situations...even to the point of death. That God is the God of the possible. That God's way is not our way. So Jesus asks us to follow what he modeled, embracing suffering. To follow God's way no matter the cost.

To have faith that God has a way to work things out beyond what we can imagine.

CONCLUSION: SUFFERING/NEW LIFE

As I close, I want to read an excerpt from COMMON PRAYER: A liturgy for ordinary radicals. That helps put this Lenten Season we are in, into context for us:

"This is one of the hardest things to learn about following Jesus: his way to real life isn't easy. In the end, it'll get you killed. And most of us don't want to die....The good news of the cross is that dying in Christ, we're raised to a new life, a life that is stronger than death. As Martin Luther King Jr. taught us, unearned suffering is redemptive. Loving your enemies, giving to whoever asks, or turning the other cheek might get you killed, but it will also get you born again. And when we're born into God's life, we know a life that will never end. That's what Easter season is about. Resurrection is such a big deal that we don't take just one day to celebrate it. Every Sunday is resurrection day. But we also set aside fifty days for the Easter season, putting aside

our normal fast and taking extra time to celebrate what God has done in our world. Forty days after Easter we remember Jesus' ascension, when he returned to heaven and told the disciples to wait for the Holy Spirit, so they might become his body in the world. The ascension seals the deal for the disciples. (Up to that point, many of them had headed back to their familiar world of fishing and life as usual.) For us it is a reminder that resurrection isn't just a miracle that happened two thousand years ago. It's a way of life we practice. Pentecost ends the Easter season, reminding us that we don't practice resurrection by our own strength, but have the Holy Spirit's power among us as a community called church. Jesus' story is now our story. And the next chapter begins today."

This is the journey we are on. Together.
With the God of the impossible.

CLEAN WATER

One more story, my heart has been heavy for a long time over the lack of clean water, when there is enough money and resources to make this problem go away and yet it remains due to inequities. It is overwhelming how many people in the world are impacted each day and die each day from something we have the power to fix. And why don't we? Does it seem impossible? Too big? I decided to do something about it. No, I haven't fixed this problem for everyone, yet...But, I decided to do what I could. I like to create artwork, specifically watercolors. So, I started to sell some pieces and donate 10% to water filters in Africa. I informed and invited my customers to join in the efforts and I was able to send money for quite a few. My next "big" project is to save enough for a well. (I understand that there are problems with all of these efforts as well, people fight over resources). However, I am going to do what I can do and not feel overwhelmed that this is all so impossible. And I am not going to wait till I have "enough money" to give. The average American is in the top 25% of the world's wealth. We are already the wealthy ones. All I have to do is say Yes and ask God to help me where it seems impossible. To manage my resources in a way that doesn't just bring about seemingly impossible to reality for me but also to create space in my finances to meet the needs of others as well. To partner with God to see the seemingly impossible, become possible.

LET US PRAY

May we follow after Jesus on this path marked out...even when there is suffering and death.
And may we have the faith of Abraham...of Jesus...to trust you and your way of resurrection.
May we see your healing and resurrection at work over all forms of death in our lives.
And may we continue to faithfully follow and bravely celebrate You at work in our midst! Amen