



HOLY NIGHT

S E R M O N M A P

WEEK 1

“NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE WITH GOD”

COME
And SEE

The
CHOSEN

Dominant Thought

The second coming of Jesus is never to be thought of as an impossibility, because all things have been proven possible for God.

Key Passages

- Luke 1:26b-36
- Matthew 1:18-24
- Assorted Old Testament prophecies about Jesus's coming (chosen by you)
- Assorted New Testament prophecies about Jesus's second coming (chosen by you)

Introduction / Section One

Suggested Teaching Point for Section One

Because the coming of the Messiah was a *long time* coming, it was easy for God's people to start to think of it as an impossibility.

Suggested Approach for Establishing Teaching Point

While it's pretty standard to use the introduction of the first sermon in a series to introduce the series as a whole, we'd suggest saving that for the Conclusion, so that you can jump right into the meat of the message. This means your introduction serves as the first true section of the sermon body. The goal of this first section is to:

- point to Old Testament promises of God sending along a Messiah
- note how long it took God to send his Messiah
- reflect on what it must have been like for Israel to wait

Reading a few of the Messianic promises in the Old Testament might very well be the most powerful way to start your sermon, and you can lead into the readings in simple fashion: "Again and again in the Old Testament, God promises a broken and pained world that he will send a Messiah – that is, a Deliverer – to start to renew and restore all things. Let me read just a few of these promises for you..." As to how many passages you read is up to you, but you can probably accomplish what's needed via just two: Isaiah 9:1-7 (which speaks of the Messiah's far-reaching rescue *and* his coming as a child) and Micah 5:1-4 (which speaks of the Messiah's

work and his being born in Bethlehem). Once the promises have been read, you could then transition into sharing how there was a marked delay in God fulfilling these promises. This is where you can share how most scholars agree that by the time we enter the period of the New Testament, nearly 400 years had passed since the last messianic promise had been given by God — and the Messiah *still* hadn't come. You could even add that if the first promise of a coming Messiah is, in fact, found in Genesis 3:15, then the world had been waiting *thousands* of years for the Messiah to come (and he still hadn't). From here you can explore what this wait must have been like for Israel — mainly that it would have stirred hopelessness. Maybe start by playfully talking about the hopelessness we feel when we're forced to wait mere *seconds* for something — for an item in the microwave or for a text to send — emphasizing, then, just how deep Israel's hopelessness would have been after *400 years*. You could then explore how Israel's hopelessness would have been all the deeper because of how much she suffered as she waited. (Maybe even offer a brief survey of her history of war and loss, including the brutal Roman occupation at the start of the New Testament?) And in this 400 years of silence (and suffering), wouldn't it have been easy for God's people to curate a long list of reasons as to why the Messiah might not come at all? Thoughts like these had to have been rolling around in Israel's head: "Maybe the powers of the world hold too much power for the Messiah to topple them. Maybe the powers *beyond* this world hold too much power. Maybe we've sinned too much, and we're undeserving. Maybe too much is needed by way of miracles to pull this off." Explore all of this with your listeners, and all of *that* can lead right into this section's suggested teaching point: *Because the coming of the Messiah was a long time coming, it was easy for God's people to start to think of it as an impossibility.*

Extended Transition to Section Two

Suggested Approach

The goal of this extended transition in the sermon is to:

- read two messages that broke the 400-year silence — the angels' messages to Mary (Luke 1:26b-36) and Joseph (Matthew 1:18-24)
- set up the scene you'll be showing from *The Chosen's* "Holy Night"
- introduce Joseph and Mary, pointing out their stunning resolve
- Introduce *how* Joseph and Mary were able to show such stunning resolve as you make your way *out* of showing the scene

Just after you've spoken the suggested teaching point at the end of Section One, you could simply pause and then say, "But then suddenly the 400-year silence was broken. Broken by news from God that the seemingly impossible was becoming a reality. Broken by an angel's message to a young girl named Mary, and another angel's message to a man named Joseph. Let me read them for you..." Once you've read these two messages, though, you're going to need to acknowledge that the details of how God was going to bring Jesus into the world would have made it seem even *more* impossible. Maybe playfully look at how wild all of this is: "God is going to employ the help of a teenage girl and a fella in his twenties to serve as the mother and the stand-in father? Two folks deeply impoverished and without any real religious or social merit? And the girl will conceive the Messiah *while she is still a virgin*? And she'll remain a virgin until after the Messiah is born? And people are going to believe this and want to follow this Messiah? *This is how God is going to do it? Really?*" At some point, though, it would be wise to weave your way toward making this deeply personal for Mary and Joseph. Briefly think aloud about what might have been going through *their* heads as they weighed whether or not this could even be possible. (Just one example: Mary had to have wondered if Joseph was going to leave her, which in the ancient world would have been as good as leaving her — and the supposed Messiah — for dead.) All of this sets the stage for you to set up and then show a scene from *The Chosen's* Christmas episode, "Holy Night," and a suggested script for how to do so is just below.

Suggested Script for Introducing Scene from "Holy Night"

Despite all the questions and concerns nipping at their heels, Joseph and Mary relentlessly pressed on, believing in the work God said he was going to do. Even when all seemed impossible, they were faithful. <Pause> And it begs a question that demands an answer: *how on earth were they able to do so?* How were they able to relentlessly press on, believing, when everything seemed so impossible? <Pause to make a hard break in thought.> Have you seen any episodes of *The Chosen*? It's a television series that explores the life of Jesus. There's a Christmas episode in there, titled "Holy Night." We're going to watch a few scenes from it throughout this sermon series, and for this first sermon, I want to show you a clip that finds Joseph and Mary slowly making their way to Bethlehem. They're making their way there because of a census that is being taken by Rome. What we're going to watch is an imagined scene — not a scriptural one — but I love how it shows Joseph and Mary relentlessly pressing on, while *also* showing all those questions and concerns that we *know* had to be plaguing them. And if you pay attention, just at the edges of the scene you can see *how* they were able to relentlessly press on. Let's watch it together...

Show clip from "Holy Night": Mary and Joseph on the Road to Bethlehem

Suggested Script for Just After Scene from “Holy Night”

It’s so subtly presented by the creators of *The Chosen* that it’s easy to miss the answer to the question we’ve asked. How on earth were Joseph and Mary able to relentlessly press on, believing in the work God said he was going to do? *Because they relentlessly remembered.* And as to what they remembered? Well, let’s start with that moment when – just after Mary has been rehearsing all the reasons Joseph could have left her – Joseph purposefully points to the heavens and simply says, “God told me to.” He relentlessly remembered there was an authority behind this – *the* authority – so he pressed on. And soon after, Mary mirrors this. When Joseph says with a sigh, “This all seems impossible,” she replies, “Yes, yes, but remember what the messenger said to me...” Like Joseph, Mary relentlessly pressed on because she relentlessly remembered that she’d been called by God himself via his angel, his messenger. She ever and always remembered there was an authority behind this – *the* authority – so she pressed on. But this is key: their relentless remembering wasn’t limited to merely remembering the authority behind their calling; they also remembered that they were heeding the call of an *accomplished* authority. They were heeding the call of *the* God who had a proven track record of accomplishing the impossible.

Section Two

Suggested Teaching Point for Section Two

The coming of the Messiah, Jesus, was never to be thought of as an impossibility, because all things had already been proven possible for God.

Suggested Approach for Establishing Teaching Point

The goal of this section of the sermon is to:

- show what the angel/messenger was inviting Mary (and Joseph) to do in light of his message to her (he was inviting them to ever and always think on all the seemingly impossible things God has accomplished in the past to help them step into the future)
- offer examples of what Joseph and Mary surely would have taken time to remember from God’s work in Israel’s history

Perhaps you noticed in the script we provided for just after you show the scene from “Holy Night” that we didn’t have you offer up the entirety of Mary’s reply to Joseph. *This* is what she says in full just after he’s confessed everything seems impossible: “Yes, yes, but remember what the messenger said to me: nothing is impossible with God.” (See Luke 1:26b-36; this is lifted right from the scripture.) These words are a declaration, for sure. But hidden within the declaration is an invitation – an invitation to Mary and Joseph to consider whether or not the declaration is true.