

## Jesus: Mary's Son

### Isaiah 7:13-14

*I believe in Jesus Christ*

*God's Only Son, Our Lord -*

*Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary*

There's a beautiful verse in Ephesians 3 that, in a cry of adoration and praise of God in all God's wonder and mystery cries out;

*"now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we can ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus, throughout all generations, forever and ever! Amen" 20-21*

Sometimes, it is utterly mind-blowing that Jesus appears among us as an actual human baby, and is the Son of God.

Sometimes, we find it on the edges of our belief that the baby is God, the Immanuel. Those who like to weigh risk and decide that it's all a bit much would no doubt have offered God cold counsel regarding his plan to have a small baby, born into obscurity as the means of being among us ... what's your plan B, God?

And then, just to top it all off, this baby is "Born of the Virgin Mary", which resonates with the Isaiah prophecy and this in itself will be a sign...

It is Alice in Wonderland who refuses to believe impossible things and whose claim to this nonsense is refuted by the red queen who "sometimes believes as many as 6 impossible things before breakfast" ... but are we in the realms of Wonderland?

or are we firmly in the cynical and miserable year that is 2020 in which impossible things are grim and joyless and faith in God is merely a lovely idea or a fantasy?

You know what? I've always found "it's not possible" to be something of a challenge...

Really? I ask? Why? I don't think it is impossible and let me show you how!

And this part of the creed is one which I really enjoy stating with utter conviction which sniffs at impossibility and says "The God who I know and love can".

He is the God of possible.

The God of promises and the God of unassailable power and might...

And that for me, as he invites us deeper into Advent to share in the mystery of incarnation, is the most wonderful affirmation.

God can. God did. God will.

The mystery, for me is why would he bother?

Looking at the prophecy about Jesus, Immanuel being born to the Virgin as a Sign right there in Isaiah 7, it's about more than waiting for a saviour.

Ahaz and the Kingly line of David along with the people of the nation had fallen into sin and away from God.

Ahaz refuses to check in with God that he is on the right track — he says in a way that seems 'reasonable' that he won't test God... but that isn't what's being asked of him... remember how Gideon asked for a sign so that he could be completely certain that he knew what God's

purpose was... in refusing, although Ahaz makes it seem as though he is being humble and holy... which makes me think:

- it is the things that we don't bring God into that cause most strife in our lives...
- when we are so sure of ourselves or so dismissive of God's interest in them - that we lose our way.

Israel had lost her way badly and Isaiah's prophecy was a moment of judgement on the unbelieving hearts... the nation would have to await a sign of God's favour for many many generations... wait for a sign of hope... wait for a sign of the impossible being made real.

The sign God would offer would be of intervention into a world of unbelief. The sign would be delivered into the unbelief in an unbelievable way. God would be present in an unbelieving world, Immanuel born to a young woman who believed and visible in the care of a righteous man who believed, to shepherds who also believed, and to Anna and Simeon who kept faith that God would send the Messiah... To those who are actively looking for God, they find him in Immanuel... To those who reach out their hearts, seeking God's purpose, looking for God's sign, they discover that Immanuel - God is with us.

Immanuel is a sign. A sign of God's salvation. A sign of God's intervention, of God's favour and of God's hope.

And once you start seeing the sign, you see it everywhere... It's a bit like when you when you buy a yellow car, having struggled to find one - suddenly as soon as you have one they seem to be there in multitudes! Or a dress that you've spotted and think is scarce... Once we discover the sign that is Jesus, the miracle of God's blessing and provision - the Yes! To God's promises, we see God's grace breaking in through all parts of life and into society in general.

Looking at the nativity narratives, we see that signs are familiar phrases - the shepherds receive a sign of God's answered promise - the star rising in the east is a sign to the magi. The sign of Zechariah's encounter with the holy is that he loses the power of speech until the child, John is born... Signs are important ways by which the impending power of God is demonstrated.

This Advent - we are in need of knowing the power of Almighty God to Save us. Look for signs! Check out the Scriptures... And be reminded that the impossibility of Isaiah's prophetic word that the sign of God's intervention would be in the Virgin giving birth to Immanuel. Which was the beginning of the intervention when the Old Testament Law would be fulfilled.

We need to be confident that we need God and can trust that he wants us to ask him into every aspect of our lives - not with well-meaning arrogance, or jaded unbelief to declare that 'we won't test God' in the manner of Ahaz but to look with hope like Mary for where God is moving to bless, to check, to re-route...

And to be less Alice... and more Paul!! God is the God of the impossible - able to do immeasurably more than all we can ask or imagine. The virgin will give birth to Immanuel, and God will be among us - in Jesus Christ our Saviour and to the end of the age.

So pray prayers of hope and don't despair. Let the love of God surround and envelope you.

So let your heart of inquiry go out to God and let him show you the signs of his love alive and alight in the world...

So move towards Christmas with expectation: God is still Good and his covenant promises are for you. He will always be yours, if you stay close to him and follow him closely, you won't go wrong!