

Rev. George Arceneaux

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Advent 4

Happy Advent 4 everybody!.... and Christmas Eve! You know, I didn't think it was possible to have Christmas Eve on the fourth Sunday of Advent, but hey learn something new everyday, right? Speaking of what's possible or not, how 'bout that line from Gabriel this morning, "nothing will be impossible with God."

How's that for a segway to today's sermon topic?

But truly, I'm rather put at ease this morning by Gabriel's words to Mary; I'm encouraged by that idea that God makes all things possible. Even though it's a reality that I really, often, struggle to believe. Sometimes things are so hard, so immediate, and even at times so bleak that the notion of the impossible being possible... well it can be hard to trust that, to quote Julian of Norwich, "all things will be well."

For so many, to hear that God can make all things possible is almost insulting. How can we say that to the people of Russia and Ukraine or Israel or Palestine? How do we say such a thing to those who can't find a job or who struggle to eat or who feel hopeless?

How can we say that all things are possible in God, and trust Gabriel's words? Well, we try to do as the Gospel teaches us. We don't just say all things are possible with God. We show that all things are possible with God.

Now, this is hardly the most noble of stories I'm gonna tell to hopefully make a point up here, but we'll now turn to a true tale from the ex-girlfriend chronicles of George to illustrate how even in the

bleak midwinter of heartbreak, there is hope. I moved to Chicago back in 2013 and at the time, I was still in a long-distance relationship with my girlfriend. We had been “together” since two years prior in college and we stuck together until 2014. It was one of those relationships that, by the end of it, I don’t think was helping anybody. But the drug of security was, at least for me, incredibly strong. And over the years, my best friends were there beside me, curious and present. Well around 2014, we finally broke up. And right after it, I looked up to the cruel, clouded sky and in my languishing soul cried “my God my God why have you forsaken me?” as the darkness of my broken relationship consumed me.

I took the el back to my apartment and to my roommate Andrew. And I told him, with a cracked voice, “We broke up.” And Andrew, he looked at me with kind eyes and said, “I’m so sorry George.... THANK GOD.”

Turns out he and the majority of my pals had been waiting for this moment for years. They had seen me miserable and unhappy in this relationship yet had stood beside me to support me no matter what. And now Andrew and my other friends were there not only to be with me in my angsty high-school style heartbreak, but to know that what I thought was impossible, was absolutely possible. That I could move on from this broken romance to something healthier and happier.

They were my archangel Gabriel. They came to me with hope that I couldn’t understand, yet they were beside me until I did. Gabriel doesn’t merely tell Mary that she will have a son by virgin birth. He does everything he can to show Mary that this will happen. Like Gabriel, my friends showed up, a present sign in impossibility. Gabriel showed Mary that’s God’s power was manifest already in Elizabeth, aged and yet 6 months pregnant with John who would grow up to baptize Jesus. My pals similarly showed me that they were with me and would fight my own despair of the impossible. We had parties where they wrote my online dating profiles and they coached me through dates, and hey, worked out

because that's where I met my wife Fiona. As much as I have fun with this dating analogy, I only get to because they really did help me out of a sense of self-hatred and despair.

What Gabriel did for Mary; what my friends did for me... to help those who can only see the impossible find that in God anything is possible, we can be just like them. We can listen to those who are dealing with a terminal illness and not shy away from that reality while at the same time be with them not as their disease but with THEM. The same can be said of any trauma in another, we can show that we love others. Peter Thompson, God bless him, prayers for the people of nations in conflict be they Ukrainian, or Russian, or Israeli, or Palestinian, or whoever they may be and he shows me that the desire for a less violent, more loving world IS desired.

You may come here this morning, in this strange space that is both the fourth Sunday of advent and the night where we await Christ's birth, believing something is impossible. And every sign on the planet, every immediate hurt and boundary may make that thing feel impossible. But God, manifest in ways we may not see but certainly in the people we can, will break that impossibility. And through that brokenness, we'll be shown all sorts of things that are possible. Amen.