THE POSSIBILITY OF THE IMPOSSIBLE

I often think about Advent as a time of pregnancy and gestation. Mary is not the only one pregnant, so are we.

You may have noticed that our biblical faith story boasts quite a few women who conceive miraculously. Sarah was over the age of ninety when she conceived. Without Sarah, there would be no Isaac. Rebekkah was unable to conceive without God's intervention. Without Rebekkah there would be no Jacob. Hannah was infertile. Without Hannah and God's answer to prayer, there would be no Samuel. Elizabeth was old when she conceived John the Baptist. Mary's pregnancy was of an unmarried young woman, a virgin birth as miraculous as her ancestors'. These women and their pregnancies were crucial to the unfolding story of the people of Israel.

Many continue to pontificate about these miraculous pregnancies, especially the virgin birth. Many wonder if such things can happen. To me, the point of the virgin birth is simple. It means "God can do the impossible."

Sometimes I think, we expect too little of God. We have become accustomed to the status quo, the ordinary and the ho-hum of every day. We expect the common and the mundane. We forget that God who makes Mary conceive without a man, who raises Jesus from the dead, is not the God of the normative or the status quo. This God is the God of the unordinary, the unexpected, the unimaginable, and the impossible. This God is the God of Christmas, Resurrection and Pentecost, the God of new beginnings and rebirth, the God of the impossible!

When we lose hope, when we despair, when we think nothing else can be done, God surprises us with the possibility of the impossible. The miracle is not in the virgin birth but in the pregnancies and possibilities within us that birth a new way of being and living, and a new world. Impossible!

During Advent we are all pregnant with possibility and promise. In fact, we in the church have been living through an unimaginable long pregnancy period as some of our churches end their ministries and others begin new ministries for a new time. The Possibility of the old dying and the new being born is a constant theme in our biblical faith story. God is always giving birth as all creation groans in labor pains. God is always doing a new thing, creating *a new heaven and a new earth. The old is gone the new has come.* God is always pregnant with possibility and promise, and so are we. Daily we experience the old familiar church dying only to be born in a new way for a new time.

Yet, for a new church to be born I believe we need to birth a new Jesus. For, we have sanitized Jesus and become accustomed to an ordinary, common Jesus who is a cordial nice man, no different from others. But Jesus the Christ, the Jesus who came to earth born in flesh, was called "to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and to set the oppressed free," turning the world upside down and downside up. While people thought the rich had God's blessings Jesus said the poor are the blessed. While people thought God punishes and rewards, Jesus said God is about Grace. While people shunned the "unclean" of the day, Jesus touched and healed them. This Jesus was born in a stable, ate with the outcast, taught truths his listeners had never heard, healed the broken, spoke truth to the powerful, died a horrifying death only to rise to defy all expectations and make the impossible possible.

I hope this Christmas we give birth to the Jesus who is far from the ordinary or common but is the revolutionary for Love, whose life and death were about Grace beyond our understanding, Love beyond our comprehension, justice and peace beyond our imagining.

Happy Advent and Pregnancy, and a Joyful Christmas!

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