



ELIZABETHTOWN
CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

PRACTICING PEACE, SERVICE AND OPENNESS TO ALL

*Moonshot,
Doing the Impossible*

Genesis 18.14; Mark 14.36; Luke 1.35–38

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Wow. What was once thought of as ridiculous, laughable, impossible was suddenly made real. The Impossible was suddenly possible. And that's what we're talking about over these coming weeks when we talk about moonshot. Let's take a look at a definition of Moonshot.

Moonshot

noun

1. an act or instance of launching a spacecraft to the moon.
 "the Apollo 11 moonshot"
 - an extremely ambitious and innovative project.
 "the tech giant's latest moonshot" is how we might hear it today.
2. Baseball; a home run characterized by its great height.
 "Ramirez hit an absolute moonshot into the left-field stands in the third inning"
3. From Urban dictionary: awesome, fantastic, almost impossible to achieve, the best, the reason for success, reaching the highest point, right on target.

As a people of God, we too, have had our moonshot moments: a mass escape from slavery that most would've thought laughable, an impossible birth, a message even more powerful than death itself; and the spread of that message all across the globe over thousands of years to follow, and countless God moments throughout. *Still listening to God, still working with God, what "impossible" moonshot dreams call us forward today with focus, innovation, and hard work?*

Over the next four weeks we will relive the Apollo 11 moon landing, and Biblical moonshots. We'll launch into the successes, but also discuss what happens when the mission does not go according to plan. Next week, Pastor Jason will review the near disaster of Apollo 13, a launch that did not accomplish its mission, yet is still regarded as a pivotal moment in

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NASA's history. It's the event that popularized the line where the line "Failure is not an option."

Week 3, the conspiracies will run amuck. There are still those who believe the whole moon landing was a government hoax. And we've had the same kind of conspiracies in our very own Christian history. We've seen what happens when we allow suspicion and conspiracy to run wild, even in the church. Then, the final week, Pastor Pam will land our collective craft with "Houston, we have a problem". How can we continue as a resilient community that stares challenges straight in the eye, solves problems, and still completes the mission even in the midst of troubles? So let's get on to today's mission...

SCRIPTURE

Most moonshots are initially pilloried as ridiculous, laughable, impossible! Which of course got me thinking about the Bible. Our common text is full of the ridiculous, the laughable and the impossible. Things that never could have happened, but have somehow changed the course of human history. God and God's people are no strangers to the impossible. Looking back to the Bible, there were also some impossible moonshot moments. We are in the business of doing the impossible.

- We're slaves now, but Moses is saying we ought to head to the desert?! (for 40 years!)
- There's a big storm coming. Build that ark.
- That' impossible! She couldn't be pregnant!
- A message stronger than death itself. "Jesus is dead. This movement is over." Not so fast.

And a reminder, whether we read these stories as literal or metaphorical, the Truth within them remains the same: with God, we as God's people are part of making the impossible, possible.

Thinking of impossible things in the Bible, I then thought of the story of the rich young ruler who could not give up his possessions in order to enter the Kingdom. You know, when

Jesus says *it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God.* To which the disciples, aghast exclaimed *Then who can be saved?!* To which Jesus replies one of the most quoted verses of the Bible: *for God all things are possible.* I love that.

Sadly, this scripture has been overused and misused. Bumper-sticker Christianity ready to be slapped onto whatever personal goals we want to go after, losing weight, running a marathon, and even, irony of all ironies, making money. If it's not about these things what is it really about? So I looked this scripture up, then I looked down at the little notes section in my study Bible and it led me to a few other scriptures that stressed God's ability to do the impossible.

GENESIS 18.14

'Is anything too wonderful for the Lord? At the set time I will return to you, in due season, and Sarah shall have a son.'

In other words, is anything beyond the power of God? *Is anything too wonderful for the Lord?*

MARK 14.16

Jesus praying in Gethsemane, knowing execution was near. *He said, 'Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want.'*

LUKE 1.37

The angel said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.' Then Mary said, *'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.'*

In these scriptures we see that much is possible with God, but sorry, no marathon training plans, weight loss tips, or money making schemes. But we do see some important similarities in these scriptures that talk about the possibilities with God: In each of these instances there is a recognition that God is

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God and we are not. That what is *not* possible for us, may be possible *with* God. That humility, gratitude and obedience are the rocks on which these Biblical figures are part of the impossible, even when that obedience means we have to throw off our cynicism as in Sarah's case, bear what will be seen as an illegitimate child in Mary, or go all the way to the cross as Jesus did.

But there is also something else going on here of note. In each instance, we see that the impossible is made possible as God works with and through us. John the Baptist and Jesus do not materialize out of thin air, Elizabeth and Mary give them life. Same with Sarah. And God does not swoop in and whisk Jesus of the cross. Humanity plays a role.

IF GOD WORKS WITH AND THROUGH US, WHAT ARE WE DOING HERE?

Now I'm not saying that God willed the moon landing, but this is where it might be interesting to go back and look at the moon landing and the entire Apollo Program as it relates to our own moonshots as people of God.

First, it started with a dream. Someone had to be the first to propose a moon landing. And I'm guessing that person was met with the responses of *That's ridiculous, laughable, impossible!* And maybe it was, at the time. We have to be on high alert for how God is moving among us. Even when an idea seems ridiculous, laughable, impossible.

Next, they didn't have everything figured out when they started. They knew they would need to figure things out and innovate along the way. Even problems that seemed impossible to solve were walked into head on.

Then, they had courage. Imagine being those first astronauts to step into the cockpit. Or the engineers to build the thing that held these precious lives. Or the politicians who staked their careers on this dream.

Finally, they had distinct roles. The astronauts got all of the glory, but control tower folks, the engineers, the mathematicians, even the President and Congress (back when they

sometimes did things together) all played a part. It took everybody working together.

We can learn a lot from the Apollo program.

WHAT IS OUR MOONSHOT?

So what's your moonshot, personally? To turn around a life-long behavior pattern or habit that has disrupted your relationships; to have the courage to do what the rich young ruler could not and give away your wealth to follow Jesus; to really love our enemies.

What's our moonshot? I would say build a church facility that will serve our partners in Child Care and Nursery school while also growing all of our Etown CoB ministries, but I think that's selling ourselves short—the equivalent to building the launch pad for our moonshot.

Maybe our moonshot is to serve others and seek to eliminate hunger and homelessness in Etown, then Lancaster County; maybe it's to make housing and employment discrimination a thing of the past; maybe its to help found a new Anabaptist/Pietist denomination from the imploding mess that is our current denomination. How about to listen to our youth to build an economy that stops destroying the planet they will inherit.

These things are hard. They would require courage and innovation and hard work.

What do you think? I'm serious. As you think about it today and for the rest of this series, what is your moonshot, what is our moonshot? What is that thing that appears impossible, but really could be possible as we work with God?

In 1962, almost seven years before the moon landing, John F Kennedy gave his famous "We choose to go to the moon" speech. The speech was intended to persuade the American people that a moonshot was a worthwhile endeavor. Not everyone was on board, including Congress, who held the purse strings. Some thought it was ridiculous. Others laughed. And many thought it was impossible. I'll spare you my JFK impression, but these are his words...

6 *We choose to go to the Moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard; because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one we intend to win,*

What is that for you? For us? What is our moonshot? Yeah, what is that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, the challenge that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one we intend to win.

Is anything too wonderful for the Lord?

