

Matthew 1:18-25

Joseph's Christmas

Image Church // Christmas wk. 3

Introduction

Good morning Image family... Glad you're here...

*We're in week three of our series called **Christmas** where we're looking at the realities surrounding the coming of Christ...*

*There's a lot that we can learn from the realities surrounding the coming of Christ... Specifically, as it relates to the Christmas characters that played a role in the **inauguration of the very first Christmas**...*

- *So often these people are referenced but rarely examined...*

And so what we're doing is diving into the unique stories of these people and seeing what God is doing to them and through them that we can learn from...

So, if you have your Bible go ahead and turn to Matthew 1, this morning we're going to look at ***Joseph's Christmas***...

I feel like Joseph always gets the short end of the stick... Mary has prayers named after her, and she has figurines, and portraits that have been made of her...

- *But when was the last time you've seen a statue, painting, or figurine of Joseph?!? You ever hear of a Hail Joseph prayer- No.*

*I feel like Joseph's always getting overlooked... And yet **through Joseph, we get an incredible example of what the Christian life should look like**... And to be honest it's a difficult model...*

I think for many people, they view Christianity as something that exists to accommodate their lives, helping them to accomplish everything they want to accomplish... I think all of us can be guilty of this at times...

- God here's my plan now can you help me accomplish it...

Example: I had a friend of mine that I played with in College, he went on to get drafted and had been playing in the minors... He was somewhat religious but very inconsistent.

- He gets hurt pretty bad like could be career-ending... He texts me and he's like *hey man I got hurt bad- and I am really confused because I don't know what God's doing here.*
 - Not in a spiritual way... ***For him God's purpose was to help him live out his dream...***
- And so, I said to him, *Hey bro, God is way less concerned with your next steps in your baseball career, what He's concerned about is the posture of your heart...*

Here's the reality, Christianity isn't about helping you do what you want to do, ***Christianity is about you submitting your life to the one who's done everything for you!***

IOW: The call in the Christian life is not one of leisure, pleasure, and success, it's a call to trust, surrender, and sacrifice...

And that's exactly what we're going to see modeled through Joseph... So let's dive in...

Matthew 1:18-25

18 The birth of Jesus Christ came about this way: After his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, it was discovered before they came together that she was pregnant from the Holy Spirit.

19 So her husband Joseph, being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her publicly, decided to divorce her secretly.

Alright, so *Mary and Joseph* were in something called the **Betrothal period.¹**

¹ Thoughts in this section adapted from JD Greear, *Why Following Jesus is Difficult*.

This Betrothal typically lasted a year and it was essentially a ***contractual agreement*** of marriage *minus* the consummation of the marriage...

- So, they were married on paper but they couldn't live together or sleep together until after a year... *That's brutal!*

See, the way that the marriage process worked back then was that marriages were ***arranged*** by the parents and the ***guys family*** would have to pay a ton of money ***to the girl's family***—*this is the one part of the tradition that I think is a great idea, I'm lobbying to bring back...*

But one of the reasons for this **Betrothal period** was to make sure that the girl was pure... If the guy's parents were ***investing*** all of this money into their sons' relationship, they wanted to make sure that she wasn't sleeping around...

- They didn't have pregnancy tests back then so this 1-year betrothal was to make sure the girl wasn't pregnant...

So, Mary and Joseph were in this waiting period when all of a sudden Mary shows up pregnant! ***BTW- I would love to be a fly on the wall for that conversation...***

- *Joseph, I have something to tell you...*

Joseph doesn't believe her...

And I can only imagine how he was feeling when she shared the news...

- This is his wife- everyone knew it
- But they were in the betrothal period- and everyone knew that
- Joseph was faithfully waiting...
- Meanwhile Mary shows up pregnant...
- The only explanation is that Mary's been with another guy...

Joseph doesn't want any part of this...

But because he's a good guy he decides to quietly divorce her, which is an incredible blessing for Mary considering the typical consequence was a public stoning...

Verse 20:

20 But after [Joseph] had considered these things, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, don’t be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because what has been conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

21 She will give birth to a son, and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

*Then watch this, Matthew, who's the one recording all of this takes a second to give us an aside to connect the dots to a prophecy some 700 years earlier pointing to the validity of what's happening here, quoting **Isaiah 7:14...***

22 Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

23 See, the virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they will name him Immanuel,
which is translated “God is with us.”

24 When Joseph woke up, he did as the Lord’s angel had commanded him. He married her **25** but did not have sexual relations with her until she gave birth to a son. And he named him Jesus.

What I want to do is hold up **3 things** that we see from Joseph that should shape the Christian life for us...

1. Trust is the foundation of obedience

Joseph's trust in God was the foundation of his obedience...

There's something unique about Joseph's situation here... He had the chance to do something that **Mary** didn't. He literally had the **open opportunity** to walk away from Jesus *literally...* He could have said “no” to this whole thing...

But what does Joseph do? He wakes up, and he did what God told him to do... He didn't give any pushback, he didn't question it, he didn't try to rationalize any of it, he just did it...

I feel like if anybody had a right to ask a couple of questions it was Joseph! *I mean I would! I mean, I ask questions about way less...*

God just completely rerouted the rest of Joseph's life and what we see in Joseph is ***un-waivered trust***.

- ***BTW side note: how you respond when life takes a turn, is indicative of how much you really trust God...***
 - Do you continue to trust and obey or do your own thing?!?

Joseph's trust in God is evident in his obedience... he stayed with Mary, but not only did he *just stay* with Mary, but he also adopted Jesus as his son...

See, ***physically***, Jesus was the son of the ***virgin Mary, brought about by God***... Part of the purpose of that is showing us beyond a *shadow of a doubt* that salvation does not come from man but from God.

But Joseph would adopt Jesus into his family where Jesus would ***legally*** become his son. And here's what's awesome, it's this adoption that ties Jesus to the line of Joseph, who's in the line of David, which is exactly how God said it would be hundreds of years earlier!²

- God used Joseph's faithful obedience to ***validate*** His promise and His plan for the world!

Adoption plays such a key role in Jesus' story- and it's ultimately a foreshadowing of what God would do for us through Jesus!

BTY: 3 more times God would tell Joseph through a dream and instruct him to move...

Matt. 2:13: Joseph is told in a dream to go to Egypt- Herod is looking for Jesus to kill Him...

- This move fulfills what the Lord had spoken through the prophet Hosea where God says: *out of Egypt I called my Son.*

Matt. 2:19-20: Joseph is told in a dream to go to Israel Herod is dead...

And then in **Matt. 2:22:** Joseph is told not to go to Judea Herod's son is there

- Ends them up in Nazareth- this fulfills what was spoken through the prophets that Jesus would be called a Nazarene...

Joseph's trust in God was at the foundation of his obedience...

- Even when things seemed shaky, things seemed less than ideal and really uncertain and very inconvenient...Trusted/Obedied.

And what I don't want you to miss is how **God used Joseph's faithful obedience!**

- Some of yall need to hear this, ***God works through faithful obedience...***
- God uses faithful obedience...
- You want to see God work in your life practice obedience...

***Could it be that the absence of the presence of God in your life is indicative of your apathy in the Christian life??**

*I think for many of us the level of our ***obedience*** is contingent on it's impact on our lives, we obey God when it works for us... But the minute obedience to God infringes on our comfort or our desires we pull back...

Here's what I want you to see, at the core of our lack of obedience is ultimately a lack of ***trust***...

² David Platt, sermon. *Our Mysterious and Majestic King.*

Let me read you this quote from a small book called A Gospel Primer and show you how this is all tied together...

Every time I deliberately disobey a command of God, it is because I am in that moment doubtful as to God's true intentions in giving me that command. Does He really have my best interests at heart? Or is He withholding something from me that I would be better off having? Such questions, whether consciously asked or not, lie underneath every act of disobedience.

However, the gospel changes my view of God's commandments, in that it helps me to see the heart of the Person from whom those commandments come. When I begin my train of thought with the gospel, I realize that if God loved me enough to sacrifice His Son's life for me, then He must be guided by that same love when He speaks His commandments to me. Viewing God's commands and prohibitions in this light, I can see them for what they really are: friendly signposts from a heavenly Father who is seeking to love me through each directive, so that I might experience His very fullness forever.³

Trust is at the root of obedience...

- And its often connected to the lack of activity that we see from God in our life, because we're not leaning into Him in faithful trust and obedience...

Where is it that you're saying no to God right now?? Where are you not trusting Him in your life and being obedient?

- Sharing the gospel?
- Dependence on God and not your ability or your money?
- Commitment to the local church? (Priorities)
- Commitment to your family (not over working)?
- Discipleship of your kids?
- Your generosity?
- Leveraging your job?
- Dating God's way? Marriage God's way?

³ A Gospel Primer, page 17.

Listen, God was active in Joseph's life through His obedience, he didn't let the projected impact dictate his obedience, he allowed his trust in the faithfulness of God to dictate his obedience...

Last thing here... *Maybe you are being obedient and it's hard... keep trusting and keep walking in obedience and watch what God does through it...* I know that God is going to use it in you and through you...

Let's look at the second thing we need to see...

2. Sacrifice is the outcome of true surrender

Joseph is willing to sacrifice because of who he's surrendered to...

One of the things that the angel says to Joseph is: **Don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife (v. 20) ...**

Now **why does the angel say this?** What does Joseph have to be afraid of?? ... Well for starters, *the rest of the town didn't get a push notification or a Facebook Live update from God...* The angel didn't reveal all of this to the rest of the people, **only** to Mary and Joseph...

- The angel of the Lord didn't go around to the rest of the town and let them know the situation with what's going on here...

What everyone else would see is that **Mary** showed up pregnant at the end of the betrothal waiting period...

So, from the outside looking in, for Joseph to take Mary as his wife would be to acknowledge to the city that he had gotten Mary pregnant, this would have been disgraceful- it would have ruined his reputation...

- Joseph's obedience to God was really **indicting** himself as a man who had sinned sexually.⁴

You think Harry and Megan got the drama... They aint got nothing on this...

⁴ Joshua Harris, sermon. *With us to save us.*

And here's the thing that we have to understand, like any other person, Joseph had his own plans and dreams that he wanted to see happen in his life...

- *I think it's easy for us to look at people in the Bible and assume they're completely different than us- but they were human with aspirations too...*

But Joseph was willing to sacrifice his plans for God's plan, he was willing to **sacrifice** his *earthly* reputation for a *new identity in Christ*, he was willing to *endure* inconveniences and hardships because life was not about him...

- ***His life was surrendered to someone greater...***

What we need to see here is that **sacrifice follows surrender...**

Example: Baseball for me growing up and in college...

- You sacrifice for the things that you love...

How much more than... Should you sacrifice when it comes to your faith?!?

When you're surrendered to God, it means that:

- you're willing to **share the gospel** with a boldness not worrying about what people might think about you or how you will be labeled...
- It means that following Jesus is greater than self-fulfillment
 - o Life's no longer about your comfort and convince
- It means that you're willing to **give of your time** to serve the church and to meet the needs of others...
- It means that you prioritize the **church and Gospel community**
- It means that you're **leveraging your career** for God's Kingdom and not yours... Asking how you can be strategic with what you do to help advance the gospel!
- It means that you give sacrificially...
- It means that you invite people to be part of the church...

What is it that you find yourself giving up the most for?

- Sometimes it's a good thing that you turn into a God thing?!?

For some of you, it's things counter to God...

- Sex, approval of others, the exaltation of yourself, greed...
 - o Keeping up with the Jones... Running after the dollar... A need for identity...

See, when that's true in your life then you are willing to do things like

- Follow Jesus even if it means that people don't agree with you, even if they look down on you...

We say this all the time ***Christianity isn't lip service, it's life surrender...*** Joseph gives us a living example of this, the question is, is the same true for you?

- **Do your sacrifices show that you are surrendered to God or to something else?**

At the end of the day, Christianity is a call to surrender and sacrifice...

- *If there's no sacrifice, chances are you're not truly surrendered...*

What does that look like?!?

- *In some ways it's going to look different for everyone, but here's what will be the consistent theme of the life of a Christian...*

Saying "no" to things, in order to say "yes" to the things of God...

- *And doing this in a way that cost you something...*
- 2 Sam. 24:24- David says: *I will not give to the Lord that which costs me nothing!*

What are you saying "no" to in order to say yes to sacrifice??

Here's the thing to understand: Sacrifice keeps you grounded in your **surrender...** It's a good thing, it's a blessing!

You say this is hard... It's hard to trust and obey, it's hard to sacrifice and surrender...

Well, here's the last thing that we need to see through Joseph...

3. Our motivation comes from the significance of Christ

Joseph understood the significance of the Savior and it changed everything for Him...

Verse 21 She will give birth to a son, and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

This is huge because Joseph knows that **only God can forgive sins**... What's unfolding before his eyes is something that will change the world forever... It's what would become the most foundational doctrine of Christianity...

He bears witness to the fact that Jesus was **100% man and 100% God**... Jesus would be born from a human, Mary, making Him fully man. But he would be born of a virgin who was impregnated by the Holy Spirit, so He is fully God.⁵

- **BTW, this doesn't mean God came down and had sex with her** there are other religions that believe that... **The conception didn't happen sexually it happened divinely**...

Joseph would have begun to understand that this was the long-awaited deliverer that they'd been waiting for!

Remember Joseph was from the line of David, so he would have known about what David's son Solomon built, which was this huge temple that was symbolic of the place where God would come and temporarily dwell.

But only the High Priest once a year could go in after he had completely cleaned himself through various rituals...

And the only reason he would go in was to offer the blood of a sacrifice for the people...

And now all of the sudden, Joseph is confronted with the fact that God was about to walk among them!!

- *He was about to see the reality of Immanuel, God with us!*

*And here's what I want you to see, everything that God is asking Joseph to do, God will do in a much greater sense...*⁶

- Like Joseph, Jesus would be misunderstood.
- Joseph would have been falsely accused for something he didn't do, in the same way Jesus would be falsely accused for something he didn't do...
- Joseph and Mary would have been despised and rejected, Jesus too would be despised and rejected...
- Mary's only hope of life came through Joseph receiving her back...
 - Jesus would give His life so that God could receive us back!
- He would take upon his back a bloody cross and open up his hands to have nails driven into them so that we could be saved.

Listen, trusting God, walking in obedience, and living a life of sacrifice, all start with and is rooted in what Jesus has done for us...

Jesus' call would be a call to come and die in light of His death that He would die for us... This is our response...

- *He is our motivation*

Following Jesus comes as an overflow of recognizing who He is and what He has done...

Your faithfulness in the Christian life will be indicative of how you view the Savior of the Christian life...

⁵ Thoughts adapted from JD Greear, *Why Following Jesus is difficult*.

⁶ Content adapted from Ibid.

What we see from Joseph is that Jesus is worth it!

- Jesus is worth the inconveniences of obedience...
- He's worth sacrificing for...

Conclusion [VAMP]

What we see can learn from Joseph's Christmas is that

1. Trust is the foundation of obedience
2. Sacrifice is the outcome of true surrender
3. Our motivation comes from the significance of Christ

Some of you are at the crossroads of Joseph this morning in some place in your life... The question is how will you respond?