

JESUS" EARTHLY FATHER

June 19, 2016

By Pastor Stan
Matthew 1:18-25

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SERMON SERIES: MATTHEW: JESUS, THE SOVEREIGN KING

SERMON TITLE: "JESUS' EARTHLY FATHER"

SCRIPTURE TEXT: MATTHEW 1:18-25 / (P. 807)

TOPIC: MATTHEW

DATE: JUNE 19, 2016

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INTRO.

-- We're just starting our series going through the Gospel of Matthew. Last week we looked at the opening verses in which Matthew presents the genealogy that serves as the backdrop to the account of Jesus' birth in today's verses.

Matthew 1:18-25

I. What We Learn about Jesus

A. Jesus' Identity

1. Jesus Is God.

a. The primary thing Matthew wants to do in this account is to give us insight into who Jesus is. Look again at verse 18.

v. 18, "The birth of Jesus Christ..."

-- The word translated "birth" is literally the word "genesis" (the verse literally says "The genesis of Jesus Christ"). In using the term "genesis" Matthew connects Jesus' birth with the very beginning of the Bible.

Genesis 1:1, 31 In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth....
³¹And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.

b. Now, look at what John tells us about the God who did all of this creating.

John 1:1-3 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

-- The Jesus who is the subject of both John's and Matthew's Gospels, this Jesus is none other the God of creation in Genesis 1.

c. The writer of Hebrews declares the same truth about Jesus.

Hebrews 1:1-3a Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ²but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. ³He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.

-- What the NT teaches us is that God exists eternally as a tri-unity, one God who exists eternally in three persons - the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three share fully and equally in the divine essence. As the second person of the Trinity, God the Son possesses fully and equally all the attributes of God.

-- Jesus is God.

d. The angel who appears to Joseph in a dream declares that the birth of Jesus fulfills the prophecy made in Isaiah 7:14.

vv. 22-23

2. Jesus Is God Who Became Man.

-- The angel's announcement declares that Jesus is "God with us"; in other words, He is God who is about to become a man.

a. Let's go back again to Genesis, this time to chapter 3, after the disobedience and fall of Adam and Eve. As God pronounces judgment on the Serpent, who, of course, is Satan, God says this:

Genesis 3:15 I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your

offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

-- This is the first prophecy of the Messiah in the Bible. Notice how God describes this promised Savior - as the woman's "offspring." The Messiah like all humans would be born of a woman.

Cf., **Matthew 1:21a**, "She will bear a son"

v. 25b, "until she had given birth to a son"

b. What this means is that the One who was fully God also became fully man.

Hebrews 2:14a, 17a Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things ... ¹⁷Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect

-- Jesus was made to be like us physically - He had a body that got hungry and needed food, a body that got tired and needed rest and sleep; He had a body that felt the sting of pain the same way ours does.

Jesus was made to be like us emotionally - He felt joy and sorrow; He could be moved to compassion and also moved to anger.

Jesus was made to be like us socially - He enjoyed being with people; He wanted Peter, James and John to be with Him in the Garden of Gethsemane - He wanted them to help to bear the crushing burdens He felt that night.

B. Jesus' Birth

1. The Fact of the Virgin Birth

-- While Matthew tells us that Jesus was a real baby born of a real woman, Matthew also wants us to know that there was something unique about that birth - Mary was a virgin. Matthew emphasizes repeatedly that Mary was the biological mother of Jesus, but Joseph was not the biological father.

v. 18a, Matthew tells us that Mary was pregnant before she and Joseph "came together" as husband and wife.

v. 18b, Matthew declares that Mary was "with child from the Holy Spirit."

v. 20b, The angel tells Joseph "that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit."

vv. 22-23, The angel also declares that Mary's pregnancy was the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy that a virgin would conceive and give birth to a son.

v. 25, Finally, just in case we hadn't got the idea yet, Matthew concludes this account by saying that Joseph and Mary did not have sexual relations until after Jesus was born.

-- To be clear, Mary's egg was fertilized not in the natural way by a human father but in a supernatural way by an act of the Holy Spirit.

2. The Reason for the Virgin Birth

-- The reason why the Virgin Birth was essential is in verse 21.

v. 21

-- The reason for the Incarnation and for the Virgin Birth is found in the name to be given to the baby, the name "Jesus," which in Hebrew is the "Joshua" (Yeshua), which means "Yahweh saves." The angel explains that the baby is to be given this name because He is the One who will "save his people from their sins."

If Jesus would have been a natural descendant of Adam and Eve - if both Mary and Joseph had been Jesus' biological parents, then Jesus would have been born like all of us with a fallen, sinful nature and needing salvation Himself. But the Virgin Birth was the means by which Jesus could be born fully human but without a sin nature.

Hebrews 4:15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet without sin.

II. What We Learn about Joseph

-- While Matthew's primary purpose is to give us insight about Jesus, Matthew also wants to let us know about Joseph. It's important for us on this Father's Day to see kind of a man that God chose to become Jesus' earthly father.

A. His Righteousness (v. 19)

-- The first thing we see about Joseph is his righteousness.

v. 19, And her husband Joseph, being a just man..."

-- Matthew tells us that Joseph was "a just man," or as many other translations put it, "a righteous man." The Hebrews called a man like Joseph a "tsaddiyq"; he was someone who held God's Word in highest regard and was dedicated to living in obedience to the Torah, the Law of Moses. That meant that in addition to the 10 Commandments Joseph also sought to obey hundreds of other moral, social, dietary, and religious rules and regulations. Few things could have been worse for a man like Joseph than discovering

that the one to whom he was betrothed was pregnant. For Joseph, marriage was a holy commitment, and Mary's pregnancy was not only a betrayal against him personally but also a serious sin and offense against God. Joseph could not take it lightly.

B. His Kindness

-- But there's a second aspect to Joseph's character that Matthew points to and that was equally important.

v. 19, "unwilling to put her to shame"

-- Joseph was a righteous man, but unlike many righteous men Joseph was also a kind man. It's likely that most "tsaddiqs" would have reacted to Mary's pregnancy with wounded pride and would have brought her before the village to accuse her publicly of being an adulteress and to make it clear that he hadn't sinned by having sex with Mary before they were fully married. Joseph knew that such an accusation would bring upon Mary a lifetime of shame and rejection. Joseph's kindness wouldn't let him do that to her.

Joseph resolved the tension between his righteousness and his kindness by deciding to divorce Mary quietly, accusing her not before the entire village but before just a couple of witnesses.

-- When God chose an earthly guardian for His Son, God chose a man who was both righteous and kind, a man who valued God's Law and who also cared about people. To be righteous but not kind is to be a self-righteous legalist like the Pharisees. To be kind but not righteous is to be destructively indulgent. Righteousness and kindness are character companions that keep a person spiritually balanced.

C. His Obedience

-- Joseph's righteous and kindness also formed the foundation for what may have been Joseph's most important feature - his obedience.

vv. 20-25

-- It's interesting that God let Joseph struggle with the decision about how to respond to Mary's pregnancy and that it was only after Joseph made a decision that God sent an angel to speak to Joseph in a dream. Notice again the instruction that the angel gave to Joseph.

v. 20, "do not fear to take Mary as your wife"

Now, why would Joseph "fear" taking Mary as his wife? The angel tells Joseph that the baby inside Mary wasn't conceived through her unfaithfulness but through the Holy Spirit. Here's what Joseph would have still feared - the loss of his reputation as a righteous man. The shame and disgrace that Mary would have to endure would now be expanded to include Joseph as well. Instead of being admired and respected in their small village, where everyone knew everyone, Joseph and Mary would both be looked upon as sinners. But risking the loss of what he valued most, his reputation as a righteous man, Joseph did what we will see him do again and again in the early chapters of this Gospel - Joseph obeyed God without argument or excuse-making or hesitation.

CONCLUSION

In choosing Joseph to be Jesus' earthly father, God chose a man who is a model for all fathers.