

Series: **Christmas 2022**

Today's Title: **"Mary + 1"**

December 18, 2022 – *Selected passages*

Objective: To help people realize Joseph's key role and example.

It's been a busy – but a fun week...

Leadership TKU Party...

AWANA – Annual 'decorate the leader night' this past Wednesday night...

BBOV - Christmas Program – this past Friday night.

For this week...

Post-It Note Prayer – Action Week!! Pray this Wednesday and Thursday – 8:00 a.m. to 3 p.m. – Come 1st to the office (lower campus – west side – so we can let you into the sanctuary. Needed security due to BBOV students on campus.)

Christmas Eve Candlelight Services @ 3:00 and 5:00 p.m. – invite those you've been praying for!

Opening prayer

This past year – if we include December 2021 - has been the year for weddings in our family.

Our bank account is very thankful that we only had 2 kids – only 1 of them a girl.

Our daughter, Jessica, was married to Ben Cajero on December 18, 2021.

Our son, Brian, was married to Gianna Gagliano on March 18, 2022.

Needless to say, we were surrounded - and for many months living in the world of wedding planning, arranging, along with the wedding invitations.

I don't remember this when Kim and I were married – but that might be because I'm a guy...and I was not focused on the invitations.

I was more aware of the invitations for our daughter and son's weddings – especially how many 'yes' RSVPs came back compared to the 'Regretfully No' responses.

Brian and Jessica – they still have a number of unmarried friends.

We invited the friends – but there was a space on the invitation for them to mark if they were bringing a 'guest' to the wedding.

The guest is commonly referred to as '+1'.

No name.

Just a number – someone who will need a seat and a meal. '+1'.

They're not the intent of the invitation.

But they are welcome – but we don't need to know their name.

When I think about the birth narratives in the Gospels of **Matthew** and **Luke** – Joseph just about falls into the category of '+1'.

In the beginning of the account – when the angel Gabriel visits Mary and tells her that God has chosen her for this amazing and difficult blessing – Joseph is mentioned a handful of times.

Sometimes it seems he’s mentioned out of necessity – but it seems Joseph gets lost in our retelling of the story.

He is seldom the focus of our favorite Christmas carols – that honor is reserved for Mary – and of course the baby Jesus. Even the wise men, the sheep, and the shepherds get more screen time in our versions of the Nativity than Joseph.

It’s as if Joseph is thought of as the hired help.

Someone to help Mary – her supporting cast in this grand history-changing event.

He steps onto the stage when needed, but then goes back to the shadows – and into the shadows of our thoughts.

Russell Moore wrote an article titled, “Stop Ignoring Joseph at Christmas” – in which he wrote:

“I played a cow in my first-grade Christmas pageant, and I had more lines than the kid who played Joseph.

He was a prop, or so it seemed, for Mary, the plastic doll in the manger, and the rest of us...

There’s rarely much room in the inn of the contemporary Christian imagination for Joseph, especially among conservative Protestants like me.

His only role, it seems, is an usher—to get Mary to the stable in Bethlehem in the first place and then to get her back to the Temple in Jerusalem in order to find the wandering 12-year-old Jesus.”

(Page Source (url): <http://www.crosswalk.com/blogs/russellmoore/lets-stop-ignoring-joseph-at-christmas.html>)

I do think it’s true – more often than not – that when we think of the birth of Jesus – Joseph is often ignored.

- Not out of spite – not on purpose.
- Most of us probably think of him as a member of the supporting cast – or maybe one of the many extras needed for the production.

But Joseph has one of the leading roles in this play.

He’s one of the center-pieces – not an extra used to fill out the space.

Today...

- But I want you to see a clearer picture of Joseph.
- I want you to see how Joseph played a significant role in the birth of Jesus – not just a supporting role.
- I want you to know that serving Christ – following Christ – is not about the headlines or the spotlight. It’s not about getting credit or recognition for your efforts.
- I want you to know that Joseph was a man of strong faith – who said ‘yes’ to God’s blessing and calling - even though it would also invite trouble into his life.

- I want all of us – every one of us – to follow Joseph’s example and be ‘all-in’ for Christ – even if nobody ever knows what we’ve done – what we’ve sacrificed – what we’ve given – or the tireless nature of our work for the kingdom.

The Gospel accounts in **Matthew** and **Luke** of the events leading up to the birth of Jesus are captivating.

Without understanding the chronology of the events, we won’t appreciate them in their fullness and in the human and divine drama these events contained.

The beginning of the events leading up to Jesus’ birth begin in the 1st chapter of **Luke**.

After Luke’s greeting (**vs. 1-4**) he begins the account of Jesus’ birth by telling of the miraculous conception of John the Baptizer (**vs. 5-25**).

Even though this conception would be the result of the physical union of Zechariah and Elizabeth – husband and wife – barren and in their old age well beyond childbirth years – this is where Luke starts the historical record.

Then, beginning in **vs. 26**, the camera shot changes from Judea and the area around Jerusalem, to the northern part of the country – to Galilee, and the small town of Nazareth.

The angel, Gabriel, tells Mary about her impending pregnancy.

Luke 1:35-37

“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 called holy--the Son of God.

And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren.

For nothing will be impossible with God.”

Mary’s amazing response to this life-changing news is recorded in the next verse.

Luke 1:38

And Mary said, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.

The very next thing we read in the text says she:

Luke 1:39-40

“Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.”

According to the text, at this point Joseph knows nothing. We’re not even told that Mary tells Joseph she’s going to see her Aunt Elizabeth and will be gone for some time.

However, I think we can assume that either Mary does tell him she’s going on this trip – or Mary’s parents would have told Joseph.

- But Joseph doesn’t know anything about the impending pregnancy.
- All he probably knows is Mary is going to visit her Uncle Zech and Aunt Elizabeth in Judah (southern Israel).

Timeline:

This occurred, we're told in **vs. 26**, in the 6th month of Elizabeth's pregnancy.

She goes to her aunt Elizabeth and Uncle Zech to think things through.

Who better than the older and wiser priest and his faithful wife to share what the angel told her God was planning to do!!

Mary is a smart girl – and right before Elizabeth gives birth (to John the Baptizer), Mary heads back home – before all the work and sleepless nights begin.

Mary arrives back home – in Nazareth – and she's about 3 months pregnant.

Showing? Baby bump? Morning sickness?

It was at this time – when Mary arrives back in Nazareth – or shortly after this time when she starts to show - when Mary said those words that we've said or heard from the person we love: *'We need to talk.'*

Joseph and Mary likely had a conversation – and she tells Joseph about her pregnancy – and she tells him she has not been unfaithful – but it was God who performed a miracle in her womb.

What would you have done if you were Joseph?

Would you have believed Mary?

Probably not.

We would have gone the same direction Joseph was moving. Let's look and see what makes Joseph a key player - an important example for us to follow.

Joseph's grace in crisis. *Matthew 1:18-19*

Mary gets back from her 3 month stay with her aunt and uncle – and now she returns to her home in Nazareth.

At some point she sits Joseph down and tells him what is going on.

And he is not buying her story.

Matthew 1:18-19

“Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way.

When His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.”

Joseph is hurt – no doubt.

It's obvious Mary has been unfaithful.

Betrothal – closest thing we have to Betrothal is an engagement – with a ring – and with a deposit on the wedding venue and reception.

But even with that – a betrothal was more than our engagement.

A betrothal was a legally binding – unconsummated marriage.

The couple was legally bound.

They could only separate by means of divorce.

The betrothal period lasted about 1 year.

The woman would live at home – under the care and protection of her father.

During the year a person's character would be revealed – which was one of the main reasons for the betrothal period.

We don't know how long Mary and Joseph had been betrothed – but they were not living together – and it's highly doubtful (because of the strictness of the culture they lived in) that they were ever alone together.

Their marriage would have been arranged by their parents – possibly with Joseph and Mary's consent.

The bride price would have been paid to Mary's parents – in part or in whole.

Now Mary shows up – pregnant.

This was not part of the plan.

It was God's plan...but not Joseph's.

So, Joseph does what we would expect him to do.

He's set on this – but he's also not vengeful.

He's going to divorce Mary – but he loved her – and he didn't want to bring her public shame more than she would already receive when her pregnancy becomes public knowledge.

So, he's determined – "resolved" – to divorce her quietly.
Why?

Why not make a public spectacle of her?

She has made a fool out of him.

She didn't care about his feelings when she slept with
whoever she slept with!

This is – in part – what it means to be a:

"...Joseph, being a just man..."

A "just man" means he cares about others – even if they
hurt him.

It means he is seeking God – He's striving to obey
God's commands.

A "just man" is driven by inner resolve – inner strength of
character and he cares deeply for others – and to do
what is right – what is good.

Joseph's spiritual resume.

In Scripture, we see three primary things which point to
Joseph's spiritual life.

Three realities of his life which reflect aspects of his
spiritual life.

1. He was a descendant of David.

This is more of a spiritual blessing in Joseph's life –
than something of an accomplishment – but it was a
spiritual blessing that not everyone could claim.

Matthew 1:16

“...and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.”

Luke 1:27

“...a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David.”

Luke 2:1-5

“In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered.

2 This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria.

3 And all went to be registered, each to his own town.

4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, 5 to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.”

We don't know how much this factored into how Joseph lived each day before Mary was pregnant by the Holy Spirit – but I think it factored in how they lived after this news.

The lineage of Joseph and Mary was an important part of why God chose them.

Whoever God chose had to be a descendant of King David – which they were.

2. He was a *just* man – a good man.

Matthew 1:19

“And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.”

There is something to being a good person – a kind person.

There is a spiritual quality – a spiritual dimension of kindness and helping others.

Joseph had this quality.

3. They were faithful in worship.

In the next chapter, Luke tells us:

Luke 2:41

“Now His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover.”

This shows us their spiritual practice – their spiritual commitment.

To travel to Jerusalem – from Nazareth – was not a simple journey.

You couldn't just hop into the mini-van with the kids and drive a few hours – go to church – then drive home.

This was an extended trip – a costly trip – especially when you consider the expenses along with the lost wages.

No paid time off for a carpenter – a craftsman when they're not working!

But every year – they made the approximately 70-mile trip to Jerusalem for the Passover celebration.

I would submit to you these 3 things give us some insight into Joseph's spiritual resume.

Joseph's obedience. *Matthew 1:20-25*

Let's read what happens when Joseph goes to sleep that night – after they had 'the talk'.

Matthew 1:20-23

But as he (Joseph) considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

She will bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us)."

First, we see Joseph was thoughtful.

"But as he (Joseph) considered these things..."

He wasn't rash – he wasn't in an out-of-control rage.

He was mulling this over – thinking through the situation in his mind.

It doesn't tell us this – but maybe he had prayed about this.

Second, we see he was afraid.

Afraid of what?

Of taking Mary as his wife!!!

- If she was unfaithful during our betrothal, then how could I ever trust her?

- Was she still seeing this man?

All the normal – and rational things to consider led to him being fearful about marrying Mary.

But the angel tells him, “...do not fear to take Mary as your wife...”

The angel tells Joseph a very specific thing about this child – that Mary was not told.

They were both told that the child’s name should be “Jesus” – but the angel tells Joseph the reason:

“...for He will save His people from their sins.”

“Jesus” is the Greek form of His name.

Yeshua / Joshua is the Hebrew form – which means ‘Yahweh (God) saves’.

This name normally pointed to the salvation that God provides.

But this child – He will do the saving!

It’s not that His name declares that God saves.

The angel says to name the baby boy “Jesus” because He will be the one who saves!!

What a huge statement.

What a huge responsibility or Joseph!!

Now he might be afraid for a totally different reason!!!

Third – Joseph denied himself for God’s plan.

Then we see his response.

vs. 24-25 - “When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called His name Jesus.”

Was he still afraid to take Mary as his wife?

We’re not sure.

Fear has a way of lingering.

But he obeys what the angel commanded.

Joseph realizes the angel is serving as a mouthpiece for God.

So, Joseph obeys.

He takes Mary as his wife – but there is more.

He protects Mary’s virginity.

Why?

Because Joseph is a “just man” – he knows the Scriptures – and he knows the Messianic prophecy of **Isaiah 7:14** which Matthew included in **vs. 23**.

“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us).”

However, this required a great deal of sacrifice on his part.

He was Mary’s husband – consummation of the marriage is an important part of the marriage!!!

But his needs and desires were not the priority – and he understood this.

Obedience is often an issue of self-denial – or delayed gratification.

It's about putting God first, and he does that.

Apply it...

There is more we can say about Joseph – but let's stop for now.

We've seen that Joseph was not a minor player in the great birth narrative of Jesus.

He was vitally important – he had a leading role along with Mary.

We've seen 3 things about Joseph that are important to note.

1. Joseph had grace in crisis.

He was a "just man" who followed God – and treated others with grace and kindness.

2. Joseph's spiritual resume...

was extensive – blessed by God to be in the line of David – he was a "just man" - and committed to worshiping God even when it was costly.

3. Joseph's obedience...

He obeyed at his own expense.

Even when he might have been afraid – he still obeyed, trusting God for the results.

Obedied when you don't get the credit.

He obeyed when it required sacrifice.

He protected Mary's virginity – even though they were now legally married, and he had his full 'rights' as Mary's husband.

There was something greater – more important than his own desires.

God's plan – the birth of the Savior of the world.

Close in prayer