

Matthew 1:18-25

The Unsung Hero of the Christmas Story

Last week saw why Genealogies Matter?

A) Saw Genealogy of Jesus - 3 groups of 14 - He has recorded 42 generations of natural birth -

Aa) So and so Begot - V.16 **And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ.**

B) Notice how the language changes - He doesn't say that Joseph begot Jesus because it didn't happen that way.

1) 42 descriptions of natural birth - lead to this one description of SUPER-NATURAL BIRTH!

C) Matthew precedes to give us the back story on how that happened!

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. 19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. 20 But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. 21 And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."

22 So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: 23 "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us."

24 Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, 25 and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus.

LET'S PRETEND for a moment that this was happening today.

A) If God decided to send His Son to earth again to be born as a baby, and if He was looking for a suitable home where the child would be properly raised,

B) Would your house be in the running?

C) If we were to consider only the spiritual, moral, and relational qualities God would look for from the human side,

1) Would your home qualify?

D) Why do you suppose that of all the people He could have chosen, God picked Joseph and Mary?

I would have guessed that God would have picked somebody of prominence,

A) perhaps a priest, a rabbi, a prophet, or a ruler.

B) He would want His Son to be well-cared for,

1) so I would have expected a family that was comfortable financially.

C) Since His Son would need a first-rate education, God would probably pick a well-educated couple.

D) Since the best schools, the best opportunities for meeting the "right" people,

1) and for having the proper social upbringing would occur in a city,

E) I would have expected the "right" couple to hail from Jerusalem.

But God didn't do it that way.

A) He picked an obscure couple, unknown in the religious and social circles of Jerusalem.

B) The man was not a ruler or even a rabbi, but a carpenter of no notoriety.

C) We know that they were poor, because they offered the poor-man's sacrifice at Jesus' dedication,

1) a pair of turtledoves or pigeons (Luke 2:24).

D) As far as we know, they were not well-educated.

1) They were common, working people, living in the small, out-of-the-way village of Nazareth in the northern part of Israel known as Galilee.

2) UPSIDE DOWN KINGDOM - WEEKENDS

Now Luke's gospel really focuses in on Mary - The Angel Gabriel appears to her and declares that she was highly favored AMONG women.

A) Not ABOVE - women - but AMONG women

B) Matthew focuses in on Joseph - He has been called the **unsung HERO of the Christmas story.**

C) Interesting that there is not any recorded words in scripture that Joseph spoke but his ACTIONS speak volumes

1) Actions speak louder than words is definitely true when talking about Joseph

D) Three things I want us to see about him as we consider these verses tonight

1) **Man of Conviction -**
Man of Compassion -
Man of Courage

V.18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit.

A) Three stages in Jewish relationships in that day

Engagement: This could happen when the bride and groom to be were quite young, and was often arranged by the parents.

B) So, engagement started early.

C) Then About a year before the marriage ceremony was the second phase, the betrothal.

1) **It was a legal contract.**

D) You were legally married during the betrothal

1) That's where you get to know each other. You talk and you share background.

2) **But There are no sexual relations whatsoever.**

The only way to unbind the betrothal is with a legal divorce.

A) It was so binding that if the betrothed man died before the wedding day - she was called a virgin who is a widow.

B) Betrothal typically lasted a year.

C) Finally **Marriage:** This took place after the wedding, after the year of betrothal.

So It was during the betrothal period that Joseph finds out that Mary is pregnant

A) He knows - He is not the father - He has not been with her.

B) Here is where we see that Joseph is a man of Conviction: (Matt. 1:19). **Joseph was "a righteous man"**

C) **He followed God's moral law.**

1) He didn't believe in situation ethics, in bending God's law to fit his situation.

Even though it was sometimes very painful to obey, he obeyed God's Word.

A) And in this situation, it was painful. Joseph loved Mary.

B) Many of us can recall those wonderful feelings that engulfed us when we met that someone special and she consented to be our wife.

C) We thought - I Can't wait for the wedding day - ok the honeymoon -

D) Denise - I can't wait for Jesus to come back -

1) I hope he comes today - I don't - at least wait until after the honeymoon

But it is more than that - Thought of sharing your life with this person

A) It's a unique time in life, as you look forward to life together with the woman you love.

B) Even though the Jewish customs were different than ours,

1) we would be mistaken if we thought that Joseph was not caught up with the same feelings that we have when we fall in love.

C) In fact when v.20 says that Joseph thought about these things -

1) the Greek word for thought or considered has the nuance of emotional reasoning.

D) In some places it is used to describe **angry, passionate reasoning.**

1) In other words - Joseph didn't sit down and calmly weigh his options. **AGONIZING**

E) He was in turmoil as he tried to figure out what to do, because he loved Mary deeply, but he wanted to follow God fully.

His heart was in turmoil because although he loved Mary - he loved God more.

A) He couldn't just ignore this - condone wrong behavior -

B) Joseph decided to break the engagement. Joseph held God's moral law in highest regard, even above his own feelings.

C) It's easy to have **moral convictions** until a situation comes up that causes you a lot of pain or grief.

1) Then it's easy to bend those convictions to fit what you want rather than what God wants.

D) What we call Situation ethics – bending God's word to fit our situation.

In our day of relative morality, it's easy to grow accustomed to the loose standards of our culture and bend God's Word to fit our life-style,

A) Rather than holding firmly to God's standards when everyone else, even fellow Christians, are compromising.

B) Joseph didn't believe in situation ethics – He was a man of strong conviction even though it was painful.

C) But beside being a man of Conviction – he is also a man of compassion

V.19 says Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly.

Their culture was not tolerant of having a baby out of wedlock

A) He could have made this a big deal – the letter of the law PERMITTED stoning for an adulteress,

B) IF he didn't want to go that far he could have publically embarrassed Mary –

1) had her labeled a harlot and ran out of town

C) Or, he could hand her a bill of divorcement (**necessary to dissolve the engagement**), dismissing her privately without public fanfare.

Joseph chose the latter because he did not want to disgrace Mary (1:19).

A) Even though he was in pain and he thought at this point that Mary was responsible for his pain,

B) he didn't want to get even or make her pay.

1) He was considerate of her feelings.

C) Biblical love, which we are to have even toward those who have hurt us deeply,

1) seeks to protect and shield others rather than to make them pay.

Joseph is a man of Conviction but also compassion

A) Often a rare – combo – some people are so compassionate –

B) you often wonder if they have any convictions – come across – soft

C) Others such strong convictions – often accused of being stubborn and heartless

1) If you can have both that is a great combo – Jesus was that kind of man – CONVICTION – also COMPASSION

D) Able to pick his battles wisely.

E) So Joseph decides to put her away privately quietly -

I love the way Aaron described this Sunday –

that is when the Kingdom of Jesus came crashing into his world

20 But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. 21 And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”

Joseph has the ministry that I want – Dream ministry:

A) We see in this chapter as well as in Chapter 2 any time God needs to talk to him – Dream. 3 times

B) Wouldn't that be awesome – Honey – I need to seek the Lord – going to take a nap

1) I rarely dream – Saturday night UCLA B-Ball – I dreamt – game – I was going off –

C) I couldn't miss from the 3 point land – High school all over again **9 threes in one quarter** – So in my dream the game is coming down to the end/great dream smiling – **alarm went off**

C) Well Joseph has this dream: Don't be afraid to take Mary

Joseph is a man of Courage:

A) Their culture was not tolerant of having a baby out of wedlock.

B) Mary's pregnancy before marriage would have triggered a lot of condemning stares and vicious gossip.

C) "Psst! Did you hear that she got pregnant before they got married? And I hear that it wasn't even his baby!"

1) For Joseph to stand with Mary, he had to fear God more than he feared the opinions of others.

D) **Fear God OR Fear man** – Men pleaser – it will be really hard to be a God pleaser – to please men – you will be asked to compromise

D) God pleaser – You can also live a life that is pleasing to men too.

Luke 2:52 **Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.**

Proverbs 16:7 **When a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.**

To raise His Son, God picked a dad who feared God enough to stand with God against public opinion.

A) Your kids need that kind of Mom and dad, too!

B) Even if they complain, "But, dad, everyone else does it!"

1) Why can't we?" they still need parents who fear God and obey His Word.

Parents who are willing to explain – We don't do that – and here is why.

A) Kids need to catch the heart of God - Not just well because we are Christians

B) Christianity is all Do's and Don'ts

C) Catch the heartbeat who explains

22 So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying:

23 "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us."

24 Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his

wife, 25 and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus.

Now in V. 22-23 it says that this was done so that it might fulfill what was spoken by the Prophet

A) This is the first of many times in this gospel that Matthew uses the phrase - **it might fulfill what was spoken by the Prophet**

B) He is the gospel writer who quotes the OT more than the other **3 gospel writers combined.**

C) Remember many scholars believed that he was a renegade priest – turned tax collector –

1) so his knowledge of the OT is imperative.

Here he quotes from Isaiah 7:14 "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel."

A) Immanuel = God with us or as Aaron put it on Sunday – The with us God.

B) Now, the term Immanuel is a title or a description.

1) It's not a formal name. It is not a personal name.

C) V.25 says – they will call his **name Jesus** – Hebrew is Joshua – Jehovah or Yahweh is our Salvation

1) Jesus was His name – Immanuel is a title: Describing what He will do and what He will be

John 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ **All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.**

v.14 **And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."**

That is what He is coming for: To be the with us God – Immanuel – Dwelt among us – revealed to us His glory

A) Perfect blending of Grace and truth!

B) That is what Jesus puts before us. – Constantly – perfect blending of grace and truth.

C) Conviction and compassion – In order to do that

you have to have courage.

Courage to stand by your convictions and turn from the world to follow Christ.

A) Also takes courage to stand as a Christian and show compassion to people who some Christians might deem not deserving of it

B) Jesus shows compassion in going to the house of Matthew and hanging out with his friends and the religious leaders didn't like it.

C) So too today – People see you being friendly with a homosexual for example – why are you doing that?

1) Jesus would

D) Pastor – Hawaii – Dinner – Birthday party for Prostitutes

E) Are we going to be like Jesus or not?

So Matthew is quoting here from Isaiah 7 -

A) This prophecy was given by Isaiah 600 years before the birth of Jesus.

B) Let me explain the setting of this prophecy – if you were to read it in Isaiah 7 it could be confusing – give you the back story.

C) Here's how it came out. The king at that time was named King Ahaz, a real scoundrel, wicked guy.

1) His dad was Josiah, very righteous king – reigned for 52 years in Judah but his son Ahaz takes over.

D) Ahaz was wicked, brought idolatry back into Judah – even sacrificed one of his sons – burning his son to death at the Altar of Molech, wicked.

Now during the time that Ahaz was ruling in Judah -

A) The king in Syria was named Rezin.

B) The king in Israel was called Pekah and Pekah and Rezin didn't like Ahaz!

C) They conspired against him – **“Let's depose him, kick him off the throne and we'll put a king in his place that will do what we want him to do.”**

So what Ahaz does when he finds out their plan is he makes an alliance with another nation, the

nation of Assyria.

A) The king's name was Tiglath-Pileser. AHAZ asked Tiglath-Pileser, "Hey, let's be buddies

B) let's make an alliance because these guys are trying to kick me off the throne but you're a big gun, you're Assyria. You can help me.

C) We can form an alliance and you can take care and protect me." So he makes an alliance.

When he does, Isaiah the Prophet comes to Ahaz and basically says, "Shame on you Ahaz!"

A) Why would you trust a king rather than the Lord your king?

B) Why wouldn't you trust God for protection?"

C) And he rebukes him for not trusting the Lord – for making a human alliance.

Later on, Isaiah the Prophet comes to him a second time

A) GOD wants to assure the king that God will make sure that those two kings in the North that want to depose him

B) They won't have their way, that God will protect Judah and the royal seat.

1) Ahaz doesn't want to have anything to do with Isaiah the Prophet and Isaiah said, "Ahaz, listen to me. Ask God for a sign. He goes,

C) **"I'm not going to ask God for a sign."** So Isaiah said, "Well, God is going to give you one anyway."

D) Isaiah 7:14 This is the sign **"Behold, the virgin will conceive, and bear a Son, and they will call His name Immanuel, God with us."**

E) Sign is a Virgin will conceive – but obvious it has far away implications

So what kind of a sign was that to a king in Israel especially about a boy who wouldn't be born for 600 years?

A) Well first of all, when Isaiah said, "God will give you a sign," the "you" in Hebrew was plural use.

B) It's not just you, the king, but you, the entire nation will have a sign.

1) It's a sign for the nation not just one man.

C) The idea was is that God is going to protect His

interest in the lineage of King David.

D) He's going to make sure that He fulfills His promise and the promise will be fulfilled in the virgin born Immanuel.

Around the same time, another sign was given to and through Isaiah the Prophet.

A) The Lord said, "Isaiah," this is in the very next chapter in Isaiah Chapter 8, "you're going to have a son and you should name him this," here's the name God told him to call him, "Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz".
Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz

B) Now your parents that are looking for Biblical names, thank God you're not Isaiah the Prophet.

1) Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz = **Swift or speedy – TRACK STAR**

C) Here's what God said, ABOUT this little guy - "Before your son is even weaned, those two nations up North are going to be forsaken,"

D) and true enough, before that little boy, Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz was three years old,

1) those two kings that were threatening the kingdom of Judah died.

D) It is there in Chapter 8 that the prophet tells Ahaz – this land belongs to Immanuel –

1) Never worry about Israel – Belongs to Jesus – just waiting for him to possess it

So that is the connection to the Prophecy in Isaiah 7 in case you read that later on and are trying to figure it out.

A) **The Far sign – A virgin will conceive** and give birth to a son – called Immanuel – the with us God

B) We will behold his glory the glory of the only begotten full of Grace and truth

C) The near sign – You Isaiah will have a son – named Swift – speedy –

1) before he is weaned the two kings that are against you will be gone

D) 3 years later that was true

One last thing we want to see tonight about Joseph

24 Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his

wife, 25 and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus.

B) Note: He didn't know her until she gave birth to Jesus

1) Did know her afterwards

C) Jesus had brothers/ sisters – Matthew 13:54-56

When He had come to His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished and said, "Where did this *Man* get this wisdom and *these* mighty works? ⁵⁵ Is this not the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? ⁵⁶ And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this *Man* get all these things?"

Brothers didn't believe – James and Jude – sought to have Him institutionalized

A) Half-brother James became a leader in the early church – Acts 15

B) Half-brother Jude wrote the book of Jude

C) But here is the thing that I want us to see about Joseph – **Man of Conviction – Compassion – Courage**

1) He is also a man who is swift to obey the Lord

He has the dream and wakes up and responds. – Took Mary as his wife.

A) **Chapter 2:14 another dream** – wakes up and responds

B) **Ch. 2:21 – Another dream** – wakes up and responds

C) Well if I had dreams – I would respond? Would you?

Are you responding now to the voice of God's word – voice of God's Spirit

A) Flee sexual immorality – Flee lust – Forgive –

B) Joseph had a dream – he responded – but he didn't have the Holy Spirit in his heart – He didn't have the New Testament

C) We do – ARE WE RESPONDING?