

Christmas Through the Eyes of Joseph Matthew 1:18-24

Today as we start our Christmas Series –

A)We are going to look at one of the most Overlooked Characters in the whole Christmas Story - Joseph

B)I feel we have done a little bit of disservice to the person of Joseph in the story.

C)I say that because we know he's there. Joseph is always there.

D)But we have sort of regarded Joseph as almost a bystander.

1)One pastor called him the face in the background. -

Think about this - when it comes to our Christmas Carols, they usually center on Jesus, as they should.

A)But also if not Jesus, then who else? Mary.

It's always Mary and Jesus

B)Example: Silent night is one of the most famous Christmas Carols "Silent Night, holy night, all is calm. All is bright. Round yon' virgin, mother and child. Holy infant so tender and mild."

C)There's not a word in that entire song about Joseph. I checked.

Another Christmas song, "what child is this, who's laid to rest on Mary's lap, is sleeping?" Great song. – Right ?

A)But have you ever thought -Joseph also had a lap.

B)And I'm guessing that from time to time, Jesus made his way to that lap as well.

C)There's no song about it. - Joe H is going to write that song so we can sing it next Christmas

Then there is that famous song by Mark Lowry – Mary did you Know – Right

A)Mary, did you know that your baby boy would one day walk on water? Mary, did you know?

B)Well, I don't know what Mary knew. But Mary had a revelation from God.

C)But I would also say Joseph, what did you know? Because Joseph also had a revelation from God.

1)We will see that in our text today –

There are other songs in the Christmas season. Amy Grant sings a song, "Breath of Heaven" also known as "Mary's Song."

A)The words are, "I have traveled many moonless nights, cold and weary with a babe inside. And I wonder what I've done. Holy Father, you have come and chosen me now to carry your son."

B)It's a beautiful song. But Joseph was also chosen by God not to carry the son,

1)but to train and provide for Jesus in his early childhood.

C)Ever thought about that Joseph was in charge of training Jesus with a trade and occupation,

1)many, many hours and years of investment.

D)Remember Jesus didn't start his public ministry until he was 30yrs old

From 12-30 he probably worked in Joseph's carpentry shop

A)When Joseph died – he probably took over the family business for a while

B)Baptism – Beloved son in whom I am well pleased – no ministry yet – no miracles – Well -pleased

1)Part of that was Joseph's influence and training

So today we're going to sort of put ourselves in Joseph's sandals, so to speak,

A)And look at the Christmas story from the perspective of Joseph,

B)The adoptive father of the Lord Jesus Christ. Matthew, chapter 1, Verse 18

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. 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. - Pray

Imagine, Joseph at our Christmas party!

A)How would he act?

B)I think he'd mingle among us for a while - he'd see the smiles, hear the laughter, - fun

C)Then Joseph would start to wonder, "How did Christmas become so merry?"

D)Christmas for Joseph was full of trepidation, consternation, deliberation, and lots of dedication.

We usually think of Christmas as a *treat*, but for Joseph, Christmas was a *test*...

A)It was a test of family. It was a test of faith. And it was a test of fortitude.

B)A Test of Family: V.18 Tells us that Joseph and Mary were in the Betrothal state of their relationship

C)Today, the formation of a marriage occurs in two stages: *engagement* followed by a *marriage ceremony*.

But in Hebrew culture it was a three-stage process.

A)The First stage was Engagement stage: - Arrangement

B)The parents saw to the engagement. Marriages for children were sometimes arranged as early as infancy.....

C)Then when the couple came of age they entered into what the Hebrews called the "kiddushin" or "betrothal."

The *kiddushin* usually lasted a year.

A)It was a legally binding relationship. It took a bill of divorcement to end this arrangement.

B)Legally the couple was considered married, but during this time they lived under separate roofs, 1)and they were forbidden to engage in sexual intimacy.

C)At the conclusion of the year a "nissuin," or Hebrew wedding, took place.

1)And it was quite an event...

Jewish weddings sometimes last a whole week.

A)At the conclusion of the ceremony the couple entered the bridal chamber and consummated their marriage.

B)So Mary and Joseph were in the *kiddushin*, or betrothal period.

C)Imagine Joseph's emotions during this time – He like most men was excited

He is Excited to be marrying a great godly young lady in Mary.

A)Excited at the potential of starting a Family and having some little Kids running around –

B)Perhaps and Joe Jr. to carry on the family name and legacy. Business Carpenter by trade.

C)No doubt like most guys he was excited about the Honeymoon.

I remember when Denise and I were engaged to be married –Btw I married up – great godly gal –

A)Way more spiritual than me.

B)One of the things that attracted me to Denise is she was so excited about Jesus –so in love with Jesus

C)In the 80's there was a lot of talk about the rapture and Jesus coming

One day during our engagement – She says to me – I can't wait to see Jesus –

A)Aren't you excited to be with the Lord – see the Lord

B)Yea of course – but inside I was thinking – I hope he waits until after our honeymoon –

No doubt if Joseph is a normal guy that is what he is thinking too. He is excited about the Honeymoon.

A) Well it was during this betrothal time that the Angel Gabriel – according to Luke’s gospel appears to Mary says:

Greetings, highly favored woman! The Lord is with you!”

B) Mary was taken back by this greeting -who me.

“Don’t be afraid, Mary,” the angel told her, “for you have found favor with God! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!” Luke 1:30-33 NLT

C) Mary asked the angel, “But how can this happen? I am a virgin.”

The angel replied, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God. Luke 1:35

D) Gabriel basically says – God is going to do this –

1) Pregnant by the Holy Spirit – it is going to be a Miracle conception

38 Mary responded, “I am the Lord’s servant. May everything you have said about me come true

Then The Angel tells Mary that her cousin Elizabeth is also pregnant -in her old age –

A) Another but different kind of miracle- Go visit her

B) Mary goes down to visit Elizabeth and is gone 3 months

C) When she comes back – no doubt Joseph is excited to see her

1) but this is when he is going to discover she is pregnant

Imagine that conversation:

A) she comes back and can tell she has put on a little weight

B) He says hey your cousin Elizabeth must be a good cook putting on a few pounds there

C) Mary gets this sort of distressed look on her face

D) Joseph is like babe I’m sorry I shouldn’t have said that -

1) you know I love you every pound of you

And she says no Joseph that’s not it - I’ve got something I have to tell you

A) What do you mean everything okay?

Mary - well Joseph um - all right I’m pregnant

B) Right there his emotion changes from Excitement to Shock – Anger – Bewilderment – What?

1) how could you do this to me Mary – I trusted you

C) Mary says – Wait - Joseph it is going to be ok ! –

Joseph is like, Mary what do you mean it’s going to be okay?

A) do you realize what you’ve done you’ve ruined our lives you’ve wrecked everything

B) Again Mary says no Joseph listen to me it’s okay it’s God-

1) what do you mean it’s God – Are you’re telling me that God led you to have sex with somebody

C) no no no no Joseph listen to me - it’s God’s baby! --
---- Mary stop it – I was born at night but not last night come on

No Joseph listen to me – an Angel appeared to me –

A) telling me I have been Chosen by God to carry the Messiah-

B) the Holy Spirit would come and overshadow me – and impregnate me with God’s son!

Put yourself in Joseph’s shoes: Next you are going to tell me that Moses and Elijah were there to clapping.

A) At first Joseph is not buying this story at all –

B) He is thinking Mary has just ruined their lives, their hopes and their dreams by committing adultery.

C) They’re going to become the laughingstock of Nazareth all of his plans

1) All of his dreams have become unraveled

D) All because The woman he loves is pregnant with someone else’s baby.

Put yourself in his shoes.

A) Now In that day and age in that culture, there were three options Joseph had.

B) Option number one:

1) He could expose her publicly as being an unfaithful wife, an unfaithful woman.

C) The period of betrothal, the 12 months, as I mentioned, was a formal contract.

D) No physical relations allowed whatsoever

E) If that contract was broken by a pregnancy, the man could have, according to Old Testament law,

1) Deuteronomy, chapter 22,

2) brought her out publicly and exposed her.

And what would they do to a woman like that?

A) Stone her.

B) They'd stone her to death. That was an option.

1) Joseph could have opted for that.

C) Even though in Under Roman occupation the Jews didn't have the right to exercise capital punishment

1) At the very Least he could have exposed her – SHAMED HER that was OPTION 1

Option number two:

A) He could privately divorce her.

B) All he had to do is give her a handwritten notice of divorce.

1) The certificate would be witnessed by two witnesses, and it would be done.

C) Marriage would be legally over – Option 2

Option number three:

A) He could marry her.

B) According to Exodus 22, God gave this provision

1) that if a young woman became pregnant During the betrothal stage –

C) and the text sort of presumes – by her fiancé

1) They could get married. That was permissible under the law.

Problem though in this case is Joseph had nothing to do with it.

A) So Joseph opts for option number two - Our text tells us in V.19 Joseph was a just man –

B) Meaning Good and upright – caring -

C) Because he is a Just man he is going to privately divorce her.

1) Just quietly end things as to not embarrass her

D) Now eventually, everybody will know because she's pregnant.

1) She's going to be really showing.

E) But that's going to be her problem, not his problem.

1) So to show her a little compassion, he decides he is not going to expose her publicly.

But even after making that decision he seems to be struggling in his heart because we are told in the text in V.20

A) When the Angel Gabriel appears to him – the first thing the Angel says is , “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife,

B) Why would the Angel tell him not to be afraid?

Because he was battling fear – He is confused

C) What is he afraid of? Well, he could be afraid of a lot of things.

He's afraid of the future. He's afraid of the gossip, the talk, the slander.

A) The people are going to be blaming him.

B) Maybe he's afraid for Mary's future. What's going to become of her?

C) I'm going to divorce her privately. But then what? What is her life going to be like? I love her, but I'm afraid for her.

There were a number of things he could be afraid of.

A) But while he was thinking about all of these things, he got really tired.

B) And he fell asleep. And when he slept, he entered into a dream state, we are told here.

1) An Angel came and spoke to him

Now, everybody dreams every night.

A) I rarely remember my dreams – but my wife Denise – She dreams in color

B) Often times in her dreams – I am the bad guy – makes no sense to me – love her so much

C) She says You want to know what you said to me in my dream last night? – No not real – dream –

People have stress dreams, dreams falling, dreams being chased – all these weird dreams

A) Joseph has an Angel dream

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.”

B) Imagine waking up from that one: Angel Dream – a surprising message

C) This would lead to Joseph’s next test - not only *a test of family*,

It was also a Test of Faith.

A) *Would Joseph believe this? Could he believe?*

B) All he had to go on was *the Word* and *A word...*

C) *The Word* – Gab – in v.23 quotes from Isaiah 7:14. “Behold, a virgin shall be with Child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel.”

D) Joseph knew this name “*Immanuel*” - it meant, “God with us!”

E) *And A word...* An angel appeared and told him, “For that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit...”

How crazy does this sound – God becomes a baby?

A) Mary is carrying the Son of God inside of her? Hard to fathom –

B) Max Lucado, "The omnipotent made Himself breakable. He who had been spirit became pierce-able. He who was larger than the universe became an embryo. He who sustains the world with a word chose to be dependent upon the nourishment of a young girl. God became a fetus.”

C) Do I understand it? No way. But do I believe it? Absolutely

The real question Joseph had to answer was not, "do you believe a virgin can conceive?"

A) Or "can the divine become human?" –

B) The real question was, "are you going to limit the power and potential of an Almighty God?"

Christmas through Joseph's eyes was a test of faith.

A) Christmas challenges us - do we know where our logic ends, and God's omniscience begins?

B) Do we recognize our limits, and God's limitlessness?

1) Do we see our resources as finite, and God's as infinite?

C) For Joseph, Christmas was a time to stop figuring how, and formulating why –

1) and settle his heart and soul to trust.

So Joseph took Mary to be his wife because *he loved her* but more importantly because He trusted God

A) Joseph was faithful. – With his obedience He passed the test of faith

B) The memorial to Joseph's life are seen in the words in verse V.24 Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife.

C) Simply put He followed orders.

Christmas is about believing in God's promises – being astonished at His power - trusting in His grace

A) From Joseph's perspective Christmas was a test.

B) A test of family, a test of faith, and finally, a Test of Fortitude.

C) How strong was Joseph's commitment?

I read a story this week about a 13 year old boy named Josh Martinez who lived in Little Rock, Arkansas

Now Josh's mom had cancer. She was undergoing Chemotherapy. As a result she lost her hair.

Josh loved his mom, and wanted her to know it, so he shaved off his blond locks as a symbol of solidarity.

Josh's haircut was a wonderful gesture of love and support, but some of the kids at his school didn't see it that way.

Some of the kids accused Josh of being a skinhead.

One day a group of thugs jumped him and beat him up.

His mother, wearing her blond wig, told a reporter, "It was out of love for me that he shaved his head. It's tragic that someone would have to take a beating for a haircut."

Well I am sure -Joseph knew exactly how Josh Martinez felt.

A)For Joseph took *a beating* for showing his love and loyalty to his betrothed Mary. .

B)Joseph's marriage to Mary, carried social consequences far worse than a shaved head
1)Especially when that baby was born

You see, in those days, sexual purity was regarded very highly.

A)By the way, it still is with God. He puts it on a high plain.

B)But In ancient Israel few sins brought greater shame than infidelity and illegitimacy.

C)For the rest of his life- Joseph would father a boy *everyone else knew* was not really his son –
1)and he'd remain faithful to a woman everyone else thought had been unfaithful to him.

Joseph no doubt faced questioning and ridicule his family and friends

A)Joseph was a carpenter – and People in the building business can be direct, shall we say.

B)And I'm sure that Joseph heard things like, oh, come on, Joseph. We know you did it.

1)Or really, you're going to marry this girl? Are you kidding?

C)If she did it to you before marriage, she's going to be unfaithful to you after you get married too

1)You need to dump that girl.

Joseph dug in and stood his ground

A)Now look at verse 25. It says, "and Joseph did not know her--"

B)that means have intimate physical sexual relations with her-- "until she had brought forth her firstborn son

C)Understand what this meant practically... Joseph took a cold shower on his wedding night!

1)That's a tough way to start a marriage, and that was just the beginning.

D)For the next 6 months Joseph took cold showers in obedience to the command of God!

He had all the duties and responsibilities of marriage,
A)Yet he abstained from one of its wonderful pleasures.

B)No doubt he did that out of a sense of Holiness for the situation – Purity

C)And maybe even – to make it very clear – this was a miracle Baby – we didn't even have sex
1)Until after that boy was born

So Christmas through the eyes of Mary makes us *giddy* –

A)From Joseph's perspective Christmas forces us to be *gritty*.

B)Christmas through the eyes of Joseph was a test of fortitude, courage, stick-to-it-ness, and toughness.

C)You might say, "Mary danced with God. But it was Joseph who got her to the dance on time."

D)Joseph added a practicality to Mary's spirituality.

The English word "reliable" is a compound word. "Liable" means "*responsible*."

A)The suffix "Re" means "over and over again." That is a picture of Joseph...

B)Joseph never tired of his responsibilities.

C)He honored his commitment to his family, *over and over and over again*.

We don't know much about Joseph – he seems to be a hard working blue collar kind of guy

A) Yet God found a man *who listened to heaven - then did as he was told.* –

B) And he did it over and over and over again.

C) We need more *men – BE THAT KIND OF MAN*

1) Dads – Young Men – Grandpas

D) Men who hear the heartbeat of God – men who read the word – and do what it says

E) And they do it over and over again – That was Joseph

Mary knew the *mystery and marvel of Christmas.*

A) Joseph knew the *conflict and combat of Christmas.*

B) Joseph will take Mary on a dangerous journey to Bethlehem when she is 9 months pregnant

C) After the Baby is born – Herod the King decided to Kill all the Babies in Bethlehem 2yrs old and younger – Potential next King

D) Joseph will take his wife and Jesus – to Egypt – where they will live for 3.5 yrs

E) So he's leaving the country. His culture =

1) He has to start all over in his occupation and make a living for his family.

Then after 3.5yrs, he's going to take them back up to Nazareth.

A) With all his family and all his friends and all his carpenter buddies,

B) And their tongues are going to wag, and the gossip is going to fly for years to come.

C) The gospels make it clear that even into adulthood the stigma about Jesus was that he illegitimate kid

Joseph's life reminds us that, obedience to God is rarely ever easy.

A) If you think, well, once I decide to obey God and do his will, everything's going to flow smoothly,

B) I have News for you, sometimes the right thing is the hard thing.

But here is the key lesson that we learn from Joseph today: What mattered to God is what mattered the most to Joseph

A) What mattered to God is what mattered most to Joseph

B) So in obedience to God – Joseph forfeited his reputation – he chose discomfort instead of comfort –

1) He chose ridicule instead of reputation

C) He chose rigor over relief

And God chose *this man*, Joseph, for the most important mission *any man* has ever been assigned to

A) that is to be the earthly father of God.

B) That might just be the greatest gig in the Christmas story

C) Apparently, God is pleased with a person who is endeared to family, engaged by faith, and energized with fortitude.

Application

#1 families work best when Jesus is at the center.

A) That's sort of the obvious big-picture story here. Families work best when Christ is at the center.

B) At first, Joseph did not know this.

C) He didn't know that Jesus was to be the center not only of his family, but of world history.

But he found that out in a dream.

A) And he decided I'm going to put Jesus at the center of my family, where he should be.

B) I wish that all families would put Christ at the center.

C) Their family life would be better. Families work best when Christ is at the center.

#2 Sometimes the best decisions are the hardest decisions.

A) It would have been much easier for Joseph to get that private divorce, put her away secretly.

B) Life would have been a lot easier for him for him to avoid all that heartache – hassle

C) Yrs of living out of suitcases in a foreign land

But the easy route would mean -he would have
Missed out on the biggest blessing from God
A) Sometimes the best decisions are the hardest.

#3 The world needs more Josephs.

A) Men who follow the word of God even when it is
hard

B) Men who listen to heaven - then do what they are
told.

C) In this way Joseph reminds me a lot of Jesus

Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus,
6 who, existing in the form of God, did not consider
equality with God as something to be exploited.
7 Instead he emptied himself by assuming the form of
a servant, taking on the likeness of humanity.
And when he had come as a man, 8 he humbled
himself by becoming obedient to the point of death—
even to death on a cross. Philippians 2:5-8 CSB

D) Remember – The Night before the Cross – Jesus in
the garden – soul is troubled – sweating blood – let
this cup pass from me – not my will but yours be
done.

Choose God – His way – His plan above my own

A) Example today communion