

## The Good News of Christmas

### *Matthew 1:18-25*

Good morning and Merry Christmas.

In this fallen desperate world in which we live, we could all use some **Good News!**

*Isaiah 52:7 How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, Who proclaims peace, Who brings glad tidings of good things, Who proclaims salvation, Who says to Zion, "Your God reigns!" NKJV*

When Jesus was born, the Gospel, which means **good news**, actually came to humankind, within a baby.

The best news ever given is that we can be saved from the punishment we deserve because of what Jesus did on the Cross.

Jesus came to the Earth He created so we could have forgiveness of sin, peace with God, and a new life by His sacrifice.

For the person who receives His gift of Salvation, there is no more shame or condemnation because our account has been wiped clean by the blood of Christ.

His Salvation would be good enough if the Good News stopped there, but it doesn't, those who have Christ are also given peace.

If we surrender to Jesus, He will give us peace, rest for our souls, and set us free from the chains and sins that bind us.

Please open your Bibles this morning to *Matthew 1*.

This morning, we are going to look at a very well known passage however, if we are open to the LORD, He will speak.

Bible study tools said, *“In the Old Testament, when God says, "I Am," it refers to God's name as Yahweh and signifies God's eternal nature, self-sufficiency, and dominion over all things”*

***Eternal nature:** God's name "I Am" conveys his eternal nature, that he was, is, and will be. **Self-sufficiency:** God is self-sufficient and does not need anything from outside of himself.*

***Dominion:** God's name "I Am" conveys his dominion over all things.*

*In Exodus 3:14, God says to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM". Say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you'. " I Am " is used in the New Testament, where Jesus refers to himself as the I Am ".*

*In John 8:58, Jesus said, "Before Abraham was born, I Am". In this statement, Jesus equates Himself with God."*

Jesus called Himself *“I Am”* throughout the *Book of John*.

- *I AM the Bread of Life (John 6:35, 41, 48, 51);*
- *I AM the Light of the World (John 8:12);*
- *I AM the Door of the Sheep (John 10:7, 9);*
- *I AM the Good Shepherd (John 10:11,14);*
- *I AM the Resurrection and the Life (John 11:25);*
- *I AM the Way, the Truth and the Life (John 14:6);*
- *I AM the True Vine (John 15:1, 5).*

This name, "***I AM WHO I AM***", is the name *Yahweh* which appears more than 160 times in the ***Book of Genesis*** alone.

The name Jesus means "*Yahweh is salvation*" and the word "Christ" comes from the Greek word *Christos*, meaning Anointed One, or Messiah.

Jesus Christ came to earth as our Salvation and the Anointed One. He is the Great I Am, who came to earth because we needed forgiveness of sin and a way to have Eternal Life.

***I AM*** also means that God is "*the becoming one*"; God becomes whatever is lacking in our time of need.

When we need the LORD to provide something, we can fill in the blank of our need and that is what the LORD will become for us as He supplies for our needs, as the ***Great I Am***.

***Philippians 4:19 And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. NKJV***

We can say, "*I need a Savior, I need a redeemer, I need a healer, and the LORD becomes that for His Children*".

Jesus Christ came into the world to save lost **sinners**. So, as the "***Great I am***", He became our Savior.

## **I. Immaculate Conception.**

Read ***Matthew 1:18***

C.S. Lewis said, "*The Son of God became a man to enable men to become sons of God*".

At this time, Mary was pledged, or betrothed, to Joseph.

Oftentimes, in their culture, young children were pledged to one another in an arranged marriage by their parents.

Betrothal was official and binding similar to a marriage **engagement**, but it had a much deeper importance than our modern-day practice.

During a betrothal, the couple was known as husband and wife and a betrothal could only be broken by a divorce decree.

A betrothal typically lasted a year and then the Marriage celebration would happen.

So here, we find Mary betrothed to Joseph, pregnant before the marriage, while she was a virgin.

Okay, put yourself in Joseph's shoes here for a minute... *What impact would the discovery of Mary being pregnant have on you or others around her?*

I am sure everyone would believe that she had physical relations with a man...

*How would their society expect Joseph to respond to this news?*

Everyone would expect Joseph to give Mary a letter of divorce, not for irreconcilable differences, but for supposed **adultery**.

According to the Law of Moses, Mary and Joseph could have been stoned to death for their supposed adultery and Mary would certainly lose all of the rights to a family inheritance.

Not to mention Mary's family would have to return the dowry that they received for her hand in marriage.

Notice, "***She was found with child of the Holy Spirit.***"

David Guzik said, "*The truth of the supernatural conception of Jesus was disbelieved by many in that day, and was later twisted into lies about the parentage of Jesus*".

We see references in scripture about the suspicion of fornication.

***John 8:18 I am One who bears witness of Myself, and the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me."***

***John 8:19 Then they said to Him, "Where is Your Father?"  
NKJV***

Later in that same chapter

***John 8:39 Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham.***

***John 8:40 But now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this.***

***John 8:41 You do the deeds of your father." Then they said to Him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father, God." NKJV***

Extra-Biblical writings tell us, that lies began to be spread that Mary had become pregnant from a Roman soldier.

But here, *Matthew* set the story straight, both then and now.

Spurgeon said, "*There was no other way of his being born; for had he been of a sinful father, how should he have possessed a sinless nature?*

*He is born of a woman, that he might be human; but not by man, that he might not be sinful.*" (Spurgeon)

## II. Joseph was a “just” man.

Read *Matthew 1:19*

As we read this verse, we start to see the sincere **kindness** and faith of Joseph by his immediate response.

Joseph was in a terrible situation. *What would happen if he married Mary after she was already pregnant?*

If he married her, he would be publicly admitting that he was the father of this child and that he had physical relations with Mary before marriage, exposing Joseph to be a sinner as well.

Matthew describes Joseph as just, but even Joseph should have remembered the prophecy given within *Isaiah*.

***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. NKJV***

Even though this prophecy of *Isaiah* describes this conception as immaculate, there would be no reason for Joseph to believe it was referring to Mary’s child.

Joseph's righteousness was attained by his trust in the LORD.

“*Just*” in Greek refers to sincere righteousness in the sight of God, a righteousness that comes only from faith in God.

People, who have placed their faith in Christ's work, rather than their own works, are the ones who are truly righteous.

Joseph desired in his heart to be right with the LORD and his faith was what caused the LORD to view him as righteous.

We are faithful when we take the LORD at His Word and that shaped who Joseph was, and would later motivate Joseph's righteous response to this situation.

Joseph cared for Mary very much and rather than exposing her to the consequences of the public knowledge of her adultery,

He was thinking about how to give her the certificate of divorce without public disclosure.

It seems that even Joseph believed that Mary had committed adultery and had become pregnant as a result of that sin.

But it was evident Joseph cared for Mary, so he must have been tragically hurt, by finding out the news of her pregnancy.

Joseph probably had his whole future planned out, but then God intervened and messed everything up with his plans.

Joseph's entire future was radically changed by this discovery.

Joseph was most likely thinking, the woman he loved appeared to have been playing him for a fool and messing around with another guy!

Yet still, he cares enough for her to try to find a way to divorce her without hurting her in any way.

The peace and joy of his engagement was immediately shattered.

Faith is placing your trust in God which then causes **peace**!

***Isaiah 26:3 You (God) will keep him in perfect peace; whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You. NKJV***

*What does this say about this Joseph?*

Surely, as a righteous man, he was **praying to God** for an answer...and God was going to provide an answer, and it was something he did not expect.

### **III. A change of plans.**

Read ***Matthew 1:20-21***

Some guess this angel was Gabriel, but we really don't know.

The Lord chose to use this angel to assure Joseph that Mary was being truthful in her testimony about the pregnancy, in a dream.

As Joseph was dwelling on his situation, the angel came and told him how to handle it.



The angel said, “***Joseph, son of David***”, which was a clue to Joseph something significant was being communicated in this message, a reference to Joseph's lineage to the throne of David.

We do not know whether Mary tried to **explain** to Joseph that she was pregnant by the Holy Spirit, but if she had, Joseph did not immediately believe her but the angel’s visit convinced him.

Notice, “***You shall call his name JESUS***”

The name Jesus means "Yahweh is salvation" and “Christ” comes from *Christos*, meaning Anointed One, the Messiah.

The Jewish people were expecting a Messiah to give them a physical victory over all of their captors, but the LORD told them of a different plan for the Messiah.

You see, the main reason for Jesus coming to earth was to die. He was born to DIE, as the propitiation of our sin.

The baby’s mission statement and life purpose were clear; “***For He will save His people from their sins***”.

Jesus saves us first from the penalty of sin, from the power of sin, and from the presence of sin.

France has said, "*Salvation from sins is an element in the Old Testament hope, found in **Isaiah, Ezekiel., and Jeremiah.***

*Its isolation here warns the reader not to expect this Messiah to conform to the more popular hope of a national liberator."*

Put yourself in Joseph's position. *What would you think when you woke up from this dream?*

*Would you believe the angel, or attribute the dream to a wildly vivid dream?*

Most of us would probably have awoken with plenty of doubts to disregard the message from God through the angel, but Joseph displayed faith in God's Word.

#### **IV. Fulfillment of prophecy.**

Read *Matthew 1:22-25*

Again, we see the faith of Joseph, by his response.

Joseph believed the angel and immediately went to Mary, told her of the visitation from the angel. Joseph told her he believed what she told him. He probably apologized for his distrust.

Again, this tells us why Joseph was considered "***Righteous***".

***Galatians 3:6 just as Abraham "believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." NKJV***

When we take God at His Word, that is called faith and that alone is how we become righteous before a Holy God!

Joseph also showed his respect for Mary and his reverence for God, by abstaining from physical relations with her while she was pregnant with the Christ child.

The consequences of Joseph taking Mary as his wife were great.

From the world's standpoint, Mary was an adulterous woman worthy of stoning.

Throughout scripture, a man is referred to as the son of his father: David, the son of Jesse; Joseph, the son of Jacob; etc.

However, when Jesus is described by people, He is called, not the Son of Joseph, but the "*Son of Mary.*"

This fulfilled the prophecy 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. NKJV*

In the Jewish society of that day, this was despised, and it must have required a great amount of courage for Joseph to take Mary as his wife.

Joseph had to know that he would be subject to the whispers of the hypocritical and self-righteous, and a future with little opportunity for attaining any position of respect.

Even as a carpenter, Joseph would be the last one to be considered for a job by most of the potential customers.

Joseph would also be despised by the world because he would be responsible for being the father of the Messiah.

One of the greatest sources of true **courage** is a determination to defend what is right and what is true.

This kind of courage comes from the Holy Spirit. Christians have the capacity for courage because we have the Holy Spirit.

Joseph's obedience and faithfulness to the LORD resulted in a miraculous fulfillment of the Messiah's birth.

## **V. Practical Application.**

Through his courageous obedience and faith in God, a supernatural **peace** surrounded Joseph's life even during turmoil.

The next time we see Joseph, he was being warned by God about Herod wanting to kill off male children to stop Messiah.

Joseph moved his family to Egypt and returned after Herod's death. But during all these events, he had peace, faith, and assurance in God.

Joseph demonstrated courage when he faced the consequences of the decision to be faithful to the call of God.

*How can we develop such faithfulness, righteousness, courage, and discernment?*

***Peter wrote in 2 Peter 1:3 His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,***

The LORD will produce those traits in us when trust is in Him.

Through our yielding to the Holy Spirit in the circumstances we experience, the LORD can shape in us a character that can be used by Him in His Kingdom on Earth.

So, with this very familiar story about the birth of Jesus, let's try and glean some practical application for peace in our lives.

1. We see Joseph answering **God's call** for his life.

The LORD had a specific call for Joseph's life, and once Joseph answered the call by faith, he received the peace of God.

The LORD has a general purpose for all of our lives, but He also has a specific call upon every individual Christian's life.

And once we answer The LORD's call for our lives, we will have peace about the path we take.

*Ephesians 4:11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,*

*Ephesians 4:12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,*

*Ephesians 4:13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; NKJV*

*So, what's Jesus' goal for His body, the Church?*

We are to use our gifts and callings to promote the kingdom, and we all grow in unity as we serve one another with our gifts.

True fulfillment comes when we follow God's will for our lives.

Life's greatest adventure begins when we are **following** Christ!

## **2. We need to hear from the LORD.**

Like Joseph, he was ready to dismiss Mary, but he was open and ready to hear from the LORD and obey the calling.

When the angel came to Joseph in the dream, Joseph instantly did a U-turn and obeyed the LORD.

Notice Joseph didn't say, give me some time to think about it.

If Jesus is Lord of your life, He is the boss, and when He says to do something, our only response should be instantaneous.

*How do we recognize His voice?*

We should test all things by the Word of God, pray and seek His will, and then do what He tells us to do.

***1 Thessalonians 5:21 Test all things by the Word***

***Hebrews 1:1 God speaks through the Living Word Jesus, and the written Word,***

***John 10:27 A true follower will learn to recognize the voice of Christ.***

If we want the LORD's peace in our lives, it comes through Prayer, Bible Study, and quiet one-on-one time with Him. That is when we will hear from the LORD.

## **3. Stay away from worldly influences.**

Joseph's decision contradicted the wisdom of the world, not only in his day but in our day and age as well.

***2 Timothy 2:3 You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.***

***2 Timothy 2:4 No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. NKJV***

#### **4. Learn to trust the Lord.**

***Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding;***

***Proverbs 3:6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. NKJV***

As He directs your paths, you will always go in the right direction. The LORD will not steer you wrong. So, this all starts with knowing Him.

Once we trust the Lord for eternal life and surrender to His plans

***Isaiah 26:3 You (God) will keep him in perfect peace; whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You. NKJV***

And as our minds are on Him...He gives us peace in all situations that passes all human understanding. During this Holiday season, don't let the world steal your peace.

If you are not experiencing perfect peace...it is time to get your mind **focused** back on Jesus!