

A Righteous Man

Journey Through the Dark

Matthew 1:18-25

EXPLORING THE SERMON

- * What did you hear?
- * What did you think or feel about what you heard?
- * What is one thing you can take away from the sermon this week?

EXPLORING THE SCRIPTURE

18 Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. ²⁰But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.' ²²All this took place to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: ²³'Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel', which means, 'God is with us.' ²⁴When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, ²⁵but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

We reflect on Joseph during this second week of Advent. Though his plans immediately fall apart with the discovery of Mary's pregnancy, Joseph follows the angel Gabriel's advice without hesitation. He displays the faith to not only follow God's plan through the darkness, but he actually has the faith to listen. ***Put yourself in Joseph's place or think about a time when your world turned around just as suddenly. How did you initially react? Were you able to find faith through that time of darkness?***

Throughout 2020, we've explored the lives of those who stepped out in faith despite the cynicism that their circumstances might have dictated. Moses' call in Midian came not when all was going well for him, but rather when everything had been taken away. As Jesus hung on the cross, He continued to cry out in prayer. Paul's call to plant churches and shape lives came as he was knocked off his horse on the road to Damascus, hearing God's voice telling him all he stood for was wrong. When we as sheep are lost and vulnerable, we see what the love of God truly looks like. ***What do you think God is trying to teach us as his people through these similar stories? Through the trials of 2020, how do you see the baton being now passed to us as people of faith?***

Joseph is "righteous" because he can still hear, listen, trust, and believe even when he feels like his faith is caving in. The losses we have each experienced this year can easily incline us toward cynicism and a dulled spirit. It's more difficult to be open to what God wants to do when so much has been stripped from our lives. ***Have you found yourself dulled to the news or cynical about the future? What steps do you need to take to raise your head and seek now how God may want to re-shape you?***

*"Do not go gentle into that good night, but rage, rage, against the dying of the light."
Welsh poet Dylan Thomas*

Heavenly Father, though we continue to walk in great darkness in so many ways, we wait with great expectation that your light will shine and your call will come to each of us. Give us strength to raise our heads high during this time, believing you will do something new, beyond what we can imagine. Amen.