

PP Joseph's Christmas *Adventure*

Text **Matthew 1: 18-25**

12/10-11/2016

The Christian life is an adventure, something the Christmas Advent season reminds us of
But what do I mean by adventure?

PP '*Advent*' is a word that means the arrival of a notable person, thing or event, and the
Christmas Advent is the celebration of the coming of Jesus born as a baby

PP I found it interesting to note that the word advent forms the root for our word '*adventure*',
which means something that is about to happen

This sermon series is about four adventures brought about by angelic visits, that prepared them
for the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ

And in each of the 4 we look at, we'll see in many ways, theirs is our adventure as well

But there will be a second coming of Jesus, a second Advent, and we, Christian brother and
sister, are on a mission to ready the world for His return

And there is no better time than Christmas to remember, and focus on our own *adventure*

PP 1-God's adventures look very different than what we would expect

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way." 1:18a

Last week, we looked at Mary's Christmas Adventure, and we learned that she and Joseph were
betrothed

The Jewish people had 3 steps in marriage, which was often between a teenage girl and boy

The first step was engagement, which was arranged by either the parents or a professional
matchmaker, often without the couple having ever seen each other

Once engaged, the couple entered the second step, betrothal

It lasted around one year, during which the couple was known as husband and wife, but there
was no physical contact and often no social contact as well, and each continue to live
with their parents

Joseph and Mary are in this second step of marriage, and verse **24** says, ***"he took his wife, but
knew her not until she had given birth to a son."***

Eventually the betrothal period ends, and the third step was the wedding, and weddings were
often expensive, lasting 7 days

To help with the expense, the bride's father was given a dowry, a payment by the groom's family
at the point of betrothal, a payment either in goods or services

The dowry was also a kind of life insurance for the wife in case he died, as well as divorce
insurance because the husband gave it up if he divorced his wife during the betrothal

During betrothal, Joseph wouldn't even be allowed to go into a war so that he would live to see
the day of his wedding, so beautifully did the Jewish people consider marriage

But now he finds out his betrothed wife was pregnant, a baby conceived by the Holy Spirit

Who would believe her story that she had been pure and faithful to her husband?

As a side note, the name '*Mary*' was one of the most common names for Jewish women
Perhaps surprisingly, the name had a very negative connotation and meaning

PP '*Mary*' was taken from Miriam, which in the Greek meant *rebelliousness*

Think Moses' sister Miriam, who rebelled against her brother Moses and was given leprosy

Imagine the gossip and whispers of those who learned she was pregnant but not yet wedded, that she was living up, or rather down to her namesake...rebellious?
 Can't you feel the shock, the hurt, the anger, the embarrassment that Joseph must have had?
 Had he lived in the Old Testament, the way would have been clear before him, she would be stoned to death, but Jewish capital punishment was rarely enforced by this time
 He had two options, either charge Mary a public court for adultery or the more private option of he and Mary getting together before witnesses and write out a private bill of divorce
 And even though Mary had undoubtedly told him what the angel Gabriel had told her, nothing of this sort had ever happened before or since, and Joseph couldn't fathom or believe it
 For a moment, settle in your mind this fact: we cannot plan out the *adventures* God gives us
 All of us make plans, we order our lives, and that is how it should be, but when God sets us on His adventures, there will detours and intersections that you will never see coming
 And when you get to them, they will bring about what we will see in the next point

PP 2-God's adventures create crises of faith

"And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly." Matthew 1:19

Note that the bible tells us he was a just man, a righteous, kind and godly man, and a public trial he just could not, would not do

Now just a point really quickly...if you ever have to endure a divorce for biblical reasons, make it your aim to do what Joseph did...resolve to divorce quietly, not vindictively

For Joseph, the path through this terrible circumstance seemed to be clear...divorce

"But as he considered these things..." 1:20a

Our translations tone down the word '*considered*' to seem like he calmly and rationally thought through his options

PP But '*considered*' means angry, passionate reasoning that comes from a spirit that is aroused
 In short, his life was completely in turmoil as he tried to figure out what to do, because he loved Mary deeply, but he wanted to follow God fully

He was so full of anguish, he was in emotional overload, it seems he shut down and fell asleep
 Was he not quite possibly thinking of his own reputation, for the eyes of people would surely shift from her unmarried swelling belly to his seemingly guilty face

Can't you imagine what had to be going through Joseph's mind, surely hearing Mary explain that she is still a virgin, and that God conceived a baby within her

That was simply not comprehensible to Joseph, better yet, it was simply not believable

His conclusion likely was that Mary was lying, for she had surely been with another man

And nothing has changed today, for the doctrine of the virgin birth of Christ is doubted by many
 One poll of Protestant students studying for the ministry, found that 56 % of them rejected the belief that Jesus was born of a virgin

Joseph couldn't understand how this could be, so God sends an angel to help his crisis of faith

"While he 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'" 1:20

There are perhaps some here right now that either do not believe that Christ was born of a virgin, or you have decided it is above your pay grade and you don't think about it

If you've taken religion classes at a secular university you've been confronted with a plethora of stories where gods impregnate women to have babies who grow up to do great things
 Secular and liberal professors tell you that Matthew borrowed from popular virgin-birth stories
 Yet, the miracle of the virgin birth is no more incomprehensible than the miracle of the new birth of salvation

Just as God created life within Mary creating a baby boy, He creates life within a believing sinner, creating a new person, one who made like Him

And beautifully, the virgin birth of Jesus is critically connected to the core of the gospel

PP 3-God's Adventures will show the world the means of salvation

"She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." Matthew 1:21

It is naturally contradictory that Mary could be a pregnant virgin, as this was the days before in artificial insemination

It was a supernatural event and notice that Matthew's account here never calls Joseph His father
 Physically, Jesus would be Mary's son, legally, the baby will be Joseph's son through adoption, tying Him in to the line of David through ***'Joseph, son of David'***

Ultimately, He is God's Son, and He will bring salvation from God

The importance of the virgin birth in scripture, is to show that salvation doesn't come from man, it can only come from God, who caused Mary to conceive the Christ-child

The name of the baby is given to Joseph, and the name will be ***'Jesus'***

PP ***'Jesus'*** is the Greek form of the Old Testament name ***'Joshua'*** which means *the Lord saves*

PP ***"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him."*** John 3:16-17

What we see here in the baby's name is the core of the gospel message, the good news in the midst of the bad new

The good news from the angel is Jesus ***'will save His people'***

The bad news is that it's ***'their sins'*** that have put them in need of saving

PP The basic meaning of the word ***'save'*** is to rescue from danger, to protect and keep alive

We tend to define sin purely by morally wrong behavior, but it goes deeper than that

Sin is a heart full of desires, demands and selfishness that is at war with God

God told Adam and Eve they had everything to enjoy but one thing, yet they defied Him and took that one thing because they wanted it for themselves

The state of innocence that they were created in, was fractured, their souls now guilty

Sin is cosmic treason against the Most High God Who is the owner and ruler of His own creation

God cannot just shrug off sin, turn a blind eye to it, for He must judge it or He isn't just or holy

If Jesus did not die on the cross in our place, then we must die for our sins, we must be judged

PP (Put up **Romans 6:23** ESV) The wages for sin, the earnings, is a paycheck called death

Either your sin is on you and you bear the penalty, or it is on Christ who bore the penalty

This is what Peter helps us see: ***'He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree' 2:24***

'Himself' because only Christ has ever lived life without sin, God's own sacrifice for humanity

The moment you turn to Christ in faith, God transfers your sins, your guilt to His Son Who gave His life on that cross and you are delivered from the penalty of your sins
 You may have done some terrible things in your life, but you can have this peace that Jesus willingly bore your sins on the cross and never again will you be charged with them
 This baby, Joseph, is the means through which God will save you and Mary and everyone who will place their faith in Him
 Faith is taking your paycheck to the bank to deposit it, or having it automatically deposited, and never worrying if it will clear the bank
I need to keep checking on line with my bank to see if my company had enough funds to pay me
 Faith in Jesus is the assurance that in His death He made the payment for all your sins, and in His resurrection, it cleared the bank of God's holy requirements
 The baby born from a virgin died to take our sins, and was raised in life to prove we are saved!

PP 4-God's *Adventures* will always be accompanied by His presence

"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)." Matthew 1:22-23

His name is '*Jesus*', but one of His titles will be called '*Immanuel*'

PP '*Immanu-El*'-'*El*' is the name for *God*; '*Immanu*' means *with us*
 '*Immanuel*', *God with us*, '*Jesus*', God is here to *save us from our sins*

I want to emphasize this truth that God will never leave us or forsake us because it is all through the Scriptures

He is the most loyal friend you could possibly have

His presence was with Israel day and night as they escaped Egypt and journeyed 40 years

We see His presence clearly in the task, the adventure He has given every believer

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Matthew 28:18-20

Christian, Jesus is never going to ask you to do anything and then leave you on your own to figure it out or do it in your own power

If there is a task He needs you to do, He will be with you at every point making it clear

If there is a lifestyle choice that He wants you to stop, He will be with you at every point, to help you end it, and start a new one that please Him

When you do not know God's will and you are confused, Jesus is there as the light for your path

When you are hurting, He is there as the Balm of Gilead, bringing healing

When your faith is failing, Jesus is there as the author and perfecter of your faith

He is Immanuel, God with us!

PP 5-God's *Adventures* are to be immediately obeyed

This is a theme that surely you are noticing in these Christmas messages

The only right response to the call to God's *adventures* is one of obedience

What explanation could Joseph have concluded other than Mary was unfaithful to him?

Guess who the most likely candidate was that got her pregnant, so his reputation has been sullied

She ruined his dreams, sullied his name but now he has a command from an angel to marry her,
with an explanation that God is the one that conceived this child in Mary

One more thought: it would have been utterly humiliating for Joseph to take her as his wife, if
she had been unfaithful to him

“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.” Matthew 1:24-25

He woke up, and did what the *‘angel of the Lord commanded him’*

Two of the marks of a godly righteous man or woman are these: when God makes clear what
He wants you to do, there is no more hesitation, and there is never partial obedience

PP (All the rest of these on 1 slide) We have seen 5 great truths about living God’s adventures:

PP They will look very different than what we expect

PP And His adventures will cause in us a crisis of faith

PP But they will show the world the means of salvation

PP God’s adventures will be accompanied by His presence

PP And when He makes them clear, His people must immediately respond in obedience

Amen!

Pray