

Characters of Christmas

Message 3

Joseph

Matthew 1: 18-25 Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit.

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

20 But as 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.

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

22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

23 "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel"(which means, God with us).

24 When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife,

25 but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

One summer evening during a violent thunderstorm, a mother was tucking her small son into bed.

She was just about to turn off the light when he asked in a trembling voice, "Mommy, will you sleep with me tonight?"

His mother smiled and gave him a reassuring hug.

"I can't, Dear," she said, "I have to sleep with your daddy." After a long silence he said, "The big sissy."

There are certain sayings we associate with our fathers.

Here are some typical Dad quotes:

"Ask your mother."

"Don't worry; it's only blood."

"Do I look like I'm made of money?"

"I'm not sleeping; I was watching that show."

"I'm not just talking to hear my voice." "

A little dirt never hurt anyone; just wipe it off."

"We're not lost!"

"No, we're not there yet."

"Don't make me stop this car!"

I looked in my Bible for a quote from another prominent father, Joseph, and to my surprise I couldn't find one.

I never thought about this before, but Joseph doesn't say a single word in the Gospels.

He listens and obeys.

We might assume his words are recorded, because we can imagine the conversations he had with Mary, and the Angel Gabriel.

You can almost "hear" him talking to the innkeeper.

We can visualize him teaching Jesus about carpentry...but then he fades from the scene.

It is widely thought that Joseph was much older than Mary, and when Jesus began His ministry, Mary appears alone, and although the Bible doesn't say she's a widow, we can figure that Joseph has since died.

Joseph probably thought his life was pretty well planned.

His marriage and his vocation were all arranged neatly for him, but then his world came crashing down.

He discovered that his bride-to-be was pregnant.

We know that Joseph was a man of integrity—he wanted to do the right thing, in the right way.

He considered divorcing Mary when he learned of her pregnancy, but wanted to do so without calling attention to the reason, whereas he could have had her publicly disgraced or even stoned to death for adultery.

Instead, he risks being questioned about Mary's pregnancy and marries her.

In those days, a marriage contract was worked out between families, and the engaged couple continued to live with their parents till their wedding.

The townspeople could well have thought Mary and Joseph didn't wait till their wedding.

Joseph protected their reputation by moving up the wedding date, and the Roman census took them far away from the town's questioning eyes.

Although Joseph came from the royal lineage of King David (thanks to the Gospel genealogy), we can easily picture him as a humble man.

The brief portrait of him in Scripture suggests he was a quiet, unobtrusive man, available when needed, willing to endure hardship and disappointment.

Looking forward to fathering his own child, Joseph was faced with being a step-father to a child not his own.

He accepted the humbling circumstances surrounding Jesus' birth.

He trusted the providential care of God every step of the way.

He didn't have any parenting books, any training on how to be a father to the Son of God, but he possessed faith and compassion.

Bible scholars portray Joseph as an effective provider and protector of the family.

A Sunday School was putting on a Christmas pageant which included the story of Mary and Joseph coming to the inn.

One boy wanted very much to be Joseph, but when the parts were handed out, a boy he didn't like was given that part, and he was assigned to be the inn-keeper instead.

He was pretty upset about this, but he didn't say anything to the director.

During all the rehearsals he thought what he might do the night of performance to get even with this rival who got to be Joseph.

Finally, the night of the performance, Mary and Joseph came walking across the stage.

They knocked on the door of the inn, and the innkeeper opened the door and asked them gruffly what they wanted.

Joseph answered, "We'd like to have a room for the night."

Suddenly the innkeeper threw the door open wide and said, "Great, come on in and I'll give you the best room in the house!"

For a few seconds poor little Joseph didn't know what to do.

Thinking quickly on his feet, he looked inside the door past the inn-keeper then said, "No wife of mine is going to stay in dump like this.

Come on, Mary, let's go to the barn." -And once again the play was back on track!

In all the Christmas pageants performed, Joseph doesn't get a starring role, but his part is so important.

His task is to watch over Mary and the baby Jesus.

Joseph had the important role of caring for the needs of others.

When our lives take a nasty turn, we cry out, like Joseph must have cried out, "God, how can this be?"

But like Joseph, we hear a still small voice from God saying, "Trust Me."

God's ways are not always our ways.

His thoughts are higher than our thoughts, and we may never understand everything that God is doing this side of heaven, but God says, "Trust Me, and all things will work together for good."

It's been said the best thing a father can do for his kids is to love their mother.

Joseph's love for Mary reflected Paul's definition:

1 Corinthians 13: 1-13 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

2 And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

3 If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

4 Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant

5 or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful;

6 it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth.

7 Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.



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8 Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away.

9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part,

10 but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away.

11 When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways.

12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

13 So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Instead of being indignant, Joseph accepted this child as his own.

Joseph accepted the revealed will of God.

He followed the instructions—journeying from Nazareth to Bethlehem, then to Egypt, then back to Nazareth.

We can easily picture Joseph receiving his son as a gift from God.

Joseph became a father to the Messiah, Who would teach us all about the acceptance and grace of God.

Joseph is charged with naming their son and thus defining His mission.

The name Jesus means “Savior”.

Archeologists have uncovered the ruins of Sapphoris, a thriving city near Nazareth.

It is believed that Joseph spent much time there working on carpentry jobs, probably with his son and apprentice, Jesus

When Jesus returned to His hometown, the people responded, “Isn’t this the son of Joseph, the carpenter?”

Was Joseph a perfect father?

No, of course not.

We're told that after Jesus was born, Mary and Joseph had children of their own, and they did not become believers in Jesus till after His resurrection.

In spite of what their parents tried to tell them of their older brother's miraculous birth, they refused to accept it.

Parents can teach their children, but they cannot give their children faith.

They can tell their kids how to live, but they can't make them moral persons.

They can baptize their children, but they can't make them believe.

They can love their children, but they can't give them eternal life.

The influence of parents is important, but we individually choose to accept or reject faith in God.

There's a lot I'd like to know about Joseph—where and when he was born, how he spent his days, what he said, when and how he died.

The last we hear of him is when he made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem with Mary and Jesus, when Jesus was 12-years old.

He was apparently a man of few words, but he did what he was supposed to do.

We don't know much about Joseph.

We're pretty sure he wasn't afraid of thunderstorms!

Scripture has left us with the most important knowledge: who he was:

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

Joseph may have thought that being righteous involved doing the proper thing; he found out that it is also about being the right person.

Take-Aways

He was evidently mature.

He was evidently responsible

He was evidently compassionate

He was evidently disciplined enough to practice restraint

He was evidently obedient to God

All of these traits were apparently woven together to produce righteous action in his life.