

Advent 2 December 6, 2017 “Send Peace” Matthew 1:18-24

Dear Peaceful in the Lord:

The Gospel writer Matthew devotes 17 verses to Jesus’ human genealogy from Abraham to Joseph. Now in v18 he reports Jesus’ divine genealogy in 1 verse. Mary “was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit.”

- Fact
- History
- Our salvation

When Joseph became aware of Mary’s pregnancy he could only conclude that she had been unfaithful to him. Imagine the pain and disappointment Joseph felt. Who was Joseph according to Matthew?

- He was a righteous man
- He was righteous in God’s sight through his humble faith in God
- He was concerned about living a righteous life
- He did not want to seek revenge or desire to “expose Mary to public disgrace”

But the Lord intervened.

Though we don’t know all the history of Joseph before he enters the story of Scripture as the man who was pledged to be married to a virgin named Mary, the first verses of this story tell us something of his character and spiritually.

Joseph is described as a man who was “faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace.”

- Joseph most likely had planned a peaceful life under God

- Now suddenly conflict enters his life with the news of his fiancée's pregnancy
- He knows this is NOT his child
- He is 100% sure of that fact

Joseph is also not buying her story about an angelic encounter and how this child is actually a miracle from God.

- He is faithful to the Lord, but he is no fool.
- Yet, while he is faithful to the Old Testament Law he opts for a merciful response towards Mary rather than condemnation.

Betrothal was a serious matter, a legally binding promise to marry. It was marriage without living together. The wedding ceremony marked the time when the husband took his wife home with him. A breach of vows during betrothal was considered adultery and was dissolved only by divorce.

Joseph could bring an accusation against Mary, but he extends grace to her and plans to quietly dissolve the engagement.

- So the conflict is not with Mary but within himself.
- He seems consumed with the breaking of his heart and the shattering of his plans.

When you look at the verse here in Matthew you realize there is a lot of inner turmoil in a few words for Joseph: "When he had considered this."

- And that is when God sends an angel into the fitful dreams of Joseph
- Once again God's Word has a lot of material into these next 2 verses:

“Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

What an astounding revelation the angel’s message was for Joseph!

- His doubts about Mary’s faithfulness were removed
- He received the amazing good news – that he would have the privilege of caring for God’s Son the Messiah – the Redeemer of the world.

The virgin birth of Christ is clearly taught in the Bible and it is an article of faith that is confessed by us with the Apostle’s Creed.

Joseph believed the angel and obeyed his commands. He “took Mary home as his wife” without delay.

With these words, the Lord not only restores the peace (or shalom) of Joseph’s life, but elevates it.

The Lord tells Joseph...

---Go ahead and marry Mary.

---Establish a home where God’s peace abides

---God is indeed behind this child and indeed is doing something unheard of.

---You can put your mind at ease.

---Mary has not been unfaithful but she has been chosen by God to bear this child.

---She will give birth to a Son and you are to give him the name Yeshua, or Jesus

---You will witness the birth and the coming of the long-awaited Messiah who will be the Savior of the world

Jesus

The name Jesus is the Greek for the Hebrew Joshua. It means God saves. Many men at this time were named Jesus. It was a common name. Jesus had many other names throughout the Bible: Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, Alpha and Omega, Author of Life, King of Kings.

Jesus' name is more than just a name.

- Demons were cast out by Jesus' Name
- Sick people were healed by Jesus' Name
- Sins were forgiven by Jesus' Name
- Salvation is found alone in Jesus' Name.

From this moment on, Joseph is a different man.

- God has sent him peace in this dream and the shalom he experienced from God carries on into the rest of the story.
- The peace God has sent him carries on into the rest of Joseph's life
- He takes Mary to be his wife

On Christmas Eve we will move over to Luke 2 and see what happened on that special night in Bethlehem...the night of our Savior's birth.

In Micah 5 the Old Testament prophet gives us a glimpse of the several hundred years before Joseph lived. Micah speaks of the coming Messiah “Whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.”

When Messiah comes he will shepherd his people in the strength and name of the Lord and he “will be our peace.”

God will send peace.

We have peace...

- Christ gives it II Thess 3:16
- Christ guides it Lk 1:79
- It comes with faith Ro 15:13
- Is promised to us Ps 72:3
- We are blessed with it Ps 29:11
- We are kept in it Is 26:3
- We wish peace to one another Gal 6:16
- It supports us in our trials Jn 14:27
- We die in peace Ps 37:37

God sent us Peace in the form of our Savior Jesus. The Prince of Peace.

- Joseph had this peace
- Mary had this peace
- We have this peace which is everlasting.