



"The Feeling to Be Part of the Change"
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Isaiah 7: 10-16; Matthew 1: 18-25
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9:15 AM Service

Today we just read a couple of bible passages; one from the Old testament in Isaiah and the other from the New Testament in the Gospel of Matthew. In the book from the OT, the prophet Isaiah was commanded to take his son and meet Ahaz, the king of the nation of Judah. Let me give a summary of what was happening in the context. The nation of Assyria was growing stronger and the nation was intimidating those smallest nations at the northern kingdom as Syria and Ephraim, because they were depending on a very delicate political system. Therefore, these smallest nations were making pressure to the nation of Judah under the direction of the King Ahaz into an alliance against Assyria, but Ahaz refused because he had secretly made a treaty with Assyria. So, God asked Isaiah to go and speak with King Ahaz and he rejected him, so Isaiah came with a message of assurance not just to the king; to the entire nation, to the entire "House of David". The problem here was that King Ahaz had not enough confidence to trust in God; that God would provide to them what they needed and solve the conflicts among them with Assyria. King Ahaz had lost hope that God was faithful to His people, and God would continue to be faithful to them. Then Isaiah gave the prophecy concerning "Emmanuel", of course a prophecy that would fulfill in our Lord Jesus Christ, who is "God with us".

The second scripture is the fulfillment of this prophecy and was given in the Gospel of Matthew that we just read. Most of us already heard this story hundreds of times; or, this could be your first time. Either way, whether your first or a hundred times, the message this morning is for you. Before reviewing the setting of this story in the book of Matthew, let's check the setting in our homes when a baby comes or has come before...

The Setting:

When a baby is on its way, preparations are made. Parents know that life is about to be very different. I am not sure about your story when your babies came, but let me share one small story about me. I do remember the day; it was a Sunday, and as usual we were ready to go church. But my wife woke up with some strange symptoms, she was not feeling well that day. So, we went church and before the

message ended, (in our culture, Hispanic pastors call the people to the altar and we pray for them; it is part of our tradition), people came around my wife asking God for healing to get rid of the pain. But guess what, the results after I took her to the doctor were: "Congratulations you are going to be a father". I said what!!! My second baby...yeeha. Anyway, I did re-paint the baby's room. We bought extra newborn diapers. We got the car-seat to make sure we were ready to go. We watched some videos about what we should do when the time of the contractions came. We googled some videos on "How to speed up labor?" Try to find a magic bullet to get the baby out. Finishing touches here and there.

Because I know as you know that when the baby comes, your life is about to be different. In our case we would be a family of four, not three as we were. Getting places would take longer again and all of that.

People with multiple children are often asked, "What is a bigger change going from one to two, or two to three?" People with more than four kids usually just say "After four it doesn't really matter anymore. It's just a blur."

Everyone knows that when a baby comes, your life will be different in some way; your life is changed in some ways.

Well the story in the Gospel of Matthew is quite different. Only it's a bit different, because of the nature of the baby that is about to come. But we will see that this baby, who is on His way, will dramatically change some lives.

And that's the point...this baby was different. The nature and essence of this baby was different. And He would change the lives of some people.

The story was told from Joseph's perspective, not Mary's, like in the gospel of Luke. Luke's gospel focuses on the incredible faith and character of Mary; Matthew's gospel focuses on the incredible faith and character of Joseph. And is very interesting because Mary rightfully gets a lot of press, but Joseph doesn't really get that much press. He seems to me to be kind of in the background.

But Matthew places him front and center of the story.

The BIG IDEA or main point of this story is this...**The fulfillment of the prophecy is the faithfulness of God.**

And I found this story to be in three parts: An Awkward Situation, an Angelic Visitation, and a Christmas Incarnation.

1. **An Awkward Situation (1:18-19).** *¹⁸ This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.*

"Mary had been engaged to Joseph" for some time, they were engaged to be married.

Now let me give an historical context; the bride would be engaged to a groom and basically it would be a firm commitment that would usually be about a year or two before the actual marriage.

Engagements frequently occurred when girls were as young as 12 years of age, but the bride would stay with her parents for a year or two before she came under her husband's authority and moved in with him.

So, Joseph and Mary were engaged, publicly and legally committed to each other, and virtually married.

For instance, I read this: *"an engaged woman could be punished as an adulteress, whereas, the punishment of a virgin who wasn't engaged, was a different kind of punishment."*

So, the nature of this relationship was completely different; this was a very serious situation.

Not like today, where guys will say, "No ring, no thing". Meaning, if she's not actually married, then there is still hope.

"Before they came together, she was found to be pregnant from the Holy Spirit." And Matthew doesn't really give any details, He just says that Mary was pregnant, and it's due to the Holy Spirit. This is the "Virgin birth" but neither Matthew nor Luke talk about a virgin birth, but technically it's a virgin conception.

Joseph is put into a really awkward situation or scenario.

It's hard to overestimate how awkward and how difficult and life-changing this situation was for Joseph. This is an unprecedented situation. As a man, imagine finding this out...imagine the conversations...

He knows the public will be less apt to believe him. He will face accusations that he "jumped the gun."

Or, "Sure Joseph, your fiancé is pregnant by God...couldn't you come up with a better story than that, seriously?"

Or think about it from Mary's perspective "Mary always seemed like such a good girl...I never would have suspected Mary or have guessed Mary..." It would literally take an act of God to convince someone of what Mary had claimed.

Thankfully Joseph was of good character, "*Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly*".

This is a window into the character of Joseph, because Joseph was really an incredible guy in many ways.

Not many songs are sung about Joseph. If you read through the hymns, you don't read a lot about Joseph.

But again, Matthew puts him front and center and highlights his character; he was mentioned twice as much as Mary is in this story.

Now the Bible says that he was a "*faithful man*", and this means that he was a devout man who obeyed the Law of Moses. But even though he obeyed the Law of Moses, he was not willing to use the law in all its strength to shame Mary. In other words, he was a merciful man; he planned a quiet divorce, he could have given her a bill of divorce and it would be over.

All he knows at this point of the story is that his fiancé was pregnant, and he is not the father.

Mary at least, had a growing fetus to confirm with the angel told her. But Joseph didn't have the same kind of confirmation. In a sense, he displays greater faith. There are men who are righteous, but not kind, and there are men who are kind, but not righteous. But Joseph was a righteous and kind man, a person that God chose to be the legal father of Jesus.

2. An Angelic Visitation (1:20-21). *"²⁰ But after he had considered 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 home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ 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."*

The angel gives Joseph five important details:

1. It is God's will that you marry Mary. I am assuming that Joseph was wondering what to do...Do I marry her or not? But he had a confirmation directly from the angel...go ahead Joseph marry her.

I remember when I was dating Denise, my wife; I quickly knew that she was the type of woman I wanted to marry. She was a beautiful young girl and after 24 years together, (4 years dating and 20 married) she is still as beautiful as the first day I met her.

2. Mary's pregnancy was supernatural, it was miraculous, and it was the work of the Holy Spirit.

And actually, it makes a lot of sense that an angel of God was the only way Joseph would be assuaged. I mean now he sees the whole picture of the angel visitation, or at least a bigger part of the picture; a bigger slice of the pie...

Like any conversion, the bandage fell from his eyes, and he was able by God's grace to see more clearly what was going on, his eyes were opened to the reality. Mary was exactly who he thought she was... and now so much more!

3. Your baby will be a boy.
4. The name of your baby boy will be 'Jesus.'
5. In connection with his name, your baby boy will be a Savior, and he will save his people from their sins. Now this is astonishing. This is such narrative to put in the middle of this; you know this is a great history... Hey Joseph, your boy will be your Savior! Please think for a moment on this...This is a life-changer for Joseph.

Now you are taking in the woman who is publicly seen for most people as unfaithful.

For the rest of your life you will have to live with the accusations of this people. But Joseph, as a faithful man, chose to build his marriage on some hard-to-believe circumstances to the outsiders.

And let me tell you that certainly Joseph and Mary were convinced to do that, but how convinced were their parents, or their uncles, or their neighbors, or their co-workers.

"So, yea, Mary is pregnant because of the Holy Spirit, huh?" Are you serious!!! Are you kidding me!!

Please do not underestimate how difficult this must have been. Only an angelic visitation could influence someone. And this is what happens when people come in contact with Jesus. Their lives are challenged, changed. Joseph and Mary were afraid; they were terrified; they realized that this situation they were in would be life-changing. Honestly, their lives would never be the same again.

Because the baby who would be born, Christ, would change everything! And that's the point and they couldn't be more right!

"Until this point, Christ had changed nothing in Joseph's life. But from now on, that baby, Jesus Christ would change everything. And this is my question for you this morning at this point of the sermon, *I wonder if everything has been changed by Christ, for you?*" When you open the door of your heart in simple faith and trust in Jesus, he comes and starts to make some changes in your life...the question is the following...Are you the person who constantly opens the door of your heart to Jesus?? Especially in this season...

But the message from the angel is to Receive Him! Open your lives and your closets, and your family to him!

I was thinking about how this relates to the Christmas story for today. Joseph and Mary both illustrate for us what a simple trust in God's Word is all about.

They didn't rely on their instincts; they relied on God's Word. "Faith comes by hearing the Word of God."

Joseph is portrayed as a man who knew the Law, but practiced grace. Joseph is also obedient in the same way that Mary was. They believed the Lord in spite of harrowing circumstances.

3. A Christmas Incarnation (1:22-25) ²² *All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet:* ²³ *"The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"^[d] (which means "God with us").* ²⁴ *When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. ²⁵ But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.*

Notice Matthew's comment, "This Jesus is the fulfillment of the promises of the Old Testament" In other words, this isn't the beginning of the new kind of cult or religion or sect.

This is the fulfillment of God's promises to the Jews. Salvation was from the Jews.

2 Cor. 1:20, *"For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. (In Jesus) That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory."*

Mat. 1:1, *"son of David, son of Abraham"*

In the beginning, Adam and Eve dwelt in the presence with God, it was a wonderful thing; but they sinned and God's presence departed from them. God's presence left them.

Years later, God presence was not at the earth but in His mercy. God graciously gave plans for the Tabernacle. Now His presence has returned in a modified sense and location "The Temple".

After that we find the Temple as a permanent location for God's presence. But again, people sinned and the presence of the Lord left the temple and after hundreds of years, it was a long pause of silence between the Old Testament and the New Testament; people were wondering what's going to happen and then Jesus came to earth. And He dwelt among the people, among us. He literally "tabernacles" among His people, among us.

So, the Christmas incarnation is an indication of heaven; a progressive stage of development in the plan or history of redemption. This was the fulfillment of the prophecy that we read from the book of

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."*

When Joseph woke up, he obediently fulfilled his obligation to his fiancée.

Joseph took Mary in, but did not "know her" until after Jesus was born.

Conclusion (What can we learn from this story?) **The faithfulness of God in this Christmas season.**

Try to step back from this story for a minute... The Coming of baby Jesus was disruptive for Joseph, right...an awkward situation; the angel visitation; and all that provided for a change in Joseph's life.

How about for us today in this Christmas season? When baby Jesus comes showing us His faithfulness, will you welcome him, or will you reject Him? Because this baby coming into our lives will change the way we live and the way our family and friends think about you.

Let me read the last part of a Poem by Glen Scrivener, an evangelist in England.

"Incarnation"

"This God in the Manger uproots all our notions: A heavenly stooping, divine demotion.

Born in a stable, wriggling on straw, fully committed to life in the raw.

Santa gives things and then goes away. Jesus shows up, to befriend and to stay.

Santa rewards those with good behavior. Jesus comes near to the broken as Savior.

If you don't like God, I think I know why...You probably think He's Saint Nick in the Sky.

You're right to reject that far-away stranger! This Christmas look down to the God in the manger."

Try to imagine this...God in the flesh, IMMANUEL, God with us. God came down to live with us, to dwell among us. Jesus came down to our level of humanity to interact with us as I played with my girls with Barbie's when they were little...or as you played or play with you grandsons/granddaughters today. We move to their level...it's how we connect with them, it's interactional playing. This was what God did; he came down to our level, and identified with us. Would you think that this story of faithfulness from God to us is amazing? And How do you feel today about being part of the change of the world...?