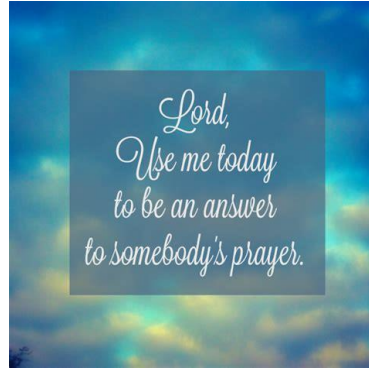


Do we have any Joseph's here this morning? People whom God is calling to renewed service and usefulness before Him? Are there those whom the Lord is calling to come to Him today for salvation? For service? For surrender in some area of life? If there is a call being placed on your heart today, I invite you to use the life of Joseph as a picture of how one needs to react to the call of God. Simply put, when God calls, get up and go! Right now, will you get up and come to Him as He calls you?



## LET US PRAY

## The Unsung Hero of Christmas

Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC  
Dr. H. Powell Dew, Jr.  
December 6, 2020

Second Sunday of Advent – Preparation and Peace

Text: Matthew 1:18-25

Purpose: God called Joseph to a place of service. His character, calling, and conduct uniquely prepared Him to be the earthly father of Jesus. If we surrender our lives unto God and are obedient to the call He has on our life, then we can accomplish the will of God for our life – whether great or small.

This year, like almost every year, has had its share of scandals. There have been reports of Congressional insider trading prior to the stock market drop in February. Celebrities have been under the spotlight this year for various things they have said and done – Ellen DeGeneres, Shane Dawson, Jeffree Star, Megan Fox, and even JK Rowling. Wells Fargo was caught creating fake accounts and had to pay \$3 billion dollars in fines and fees as a result. The Houston Astros was fined \$5 million in their sign stealing activity. It seems that no one is immune from failure, sin, and public humiliation. The scripture does tell us that we are “all sinners” in need of a Savior. Yet some sins seem so public, so wrong, and so egregious.



We come today, lighting two candles for this Advent Sunday. Every year during this season of the year, we begin to hear about the various people and characters involved in the Christmas story. People like Mary, the shepherds, the wise men, sheep, donkeys, and turtle doves are portrayed and the event is reenacted year after year in many churches. In most of those Christmas plays, one fellow, namely Joseph, is treated merely as an extra. He shows up in the Christmas program, but he brings no gifts, he sings no songs and he makes no speeches. He just stands there in his sandals and his robe, watching the scene unfold around him.



Well, I want to set the record straight! As I read the Christmas story, I am convinced that Joseph possessed certain elements in his life that make him stand out as “The Unsung Hero of Christmas.” The characteristics we see evidenced in this man’s life teach us how we should go about the business of serving God, even if it is as an unsung hero of the faith.

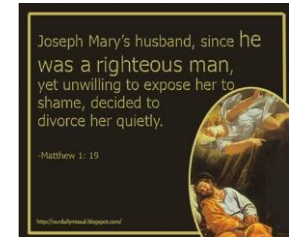
For a few moments this morning, I want us to take a look at Joseph’s life and see what it is that makes this man stand out as a hero in this story. By the way, those elements that were active in the life of Joseph can make us useful to the Lord too, if they are found in our lives!

## I. Joseph’s Character (v. 18, 19)<sup>1</sup>

The first thing I notice in Joseph’s life is that he is a man of character. Verses 18 and 19 say this about him, “*Now the*

<sup>1</sup> Outline from Sermon Notebook – Matthew 1:18-25

*birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly.”*



We see that Joseph was a Consecrated man. The Bible tells us that Joseph was a “just” man. This means he was a man who lived for God. As far as the Law was concerned, Joseph was blameless. As far as his heart was concerned, he walked by faith in the Lord. He was considered to be a righteous man.

Joseph was also a Compassionate man. For just a moment, try to put yourself in Joseph’s place. You are betrothed to Mary, which in this culture was the same as a legal marriage, except there is to be no physical intimacy. All of a sudden, you discover that this woman is pregnant. Of course, you would think the worse. Yet, when Joseph hears all these things, instead of reacting in anger, he responds in love and compassion toward Mary. He seeks a way to sever their relationship without publicly humiliating Mary.

According to Deuteronomy 22:13-21, Joseph could have had Mary put to death because to be found pregnant prior to the marriage, would have been disgraceful. But because Joseph loved Mary and didn’t want to bring harm to her, a secret divorce may have left her destitute financially but it was better than stoning her to death. Because he was compassionate, Joseph displayed the



love of God in his actions toward Mary. I Corinthians 13 reminds us that *“love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth.”*



The true character of Joseph was revealed in this crisis. Each of us are tested and tried. Our genuine character is demonstrated in times of crisis. How we respond in a crisis reveals a lot about our character. When things are going smoothly, we are able to hide a lot of things that become evident in a time of crisis.

Imagine how differently the Christmas story would have been if Joseph had reacted differently. But God knew the character of the person that he chose to be the earthly father of Jesus. God is willing to use those that have a clean heart and tender heart. If you wish to be used by God, you need to model these characteristics of Joseph.

After our salvation, the first step in being usable by God is the practice of personal holiness before God. Isaiah 52:11 says, *“Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord almighty.”* We are to live our lives as holy as possible. We will never be perfect, but we need to flee from those things that take us away from God.

A second aspect of being useable by God is the condition of our heart. Not only should it be clean, it should be tender to

hear the voice of God when He calls. God does not usually shout loudly for us to hear. He usually speaks in a quiet, heart penetrating manner. Over and over in the scripture you see men and women called by God for a task. If we are to be useful then we need to be tenderhearted.

These are the same characteristics we find in the life of Jesus Christ. Jesus was God, but as a boy, I am sure those godly traits were modeled by His earthly father. I am sure the character of Joseph was a factor in his God’s choice of him!

## II. Joseph’s Call (v. 20-23)

As Joseph deliberated the entire situation he found himself in, the Lord spoke to him and placed a call on his life, like he had with Mary. This call to service was, spiritually speaking, a great call and one that would have honored any man. However, from a purely human standpoint, it was a call that placed a great weight on this man’s shoulders and it was a call to bear a great weight of shame. His was a call that involved three tremendous revelations.

Before I get into these verses, I want to point out that Joseph’s call came from the Lord with a message of peace attached. Notice that as the angel begins to speak in verse 20, among the first words out of his mouth are the words *“Fear not”*. These two words were included in every message to every person who was privileged to hear an announcement concerning the great events that God was about to bring to pass.



Notice:

1. Zacharias - Luke 1:13
2. Mary - Luke 1:30
3. Joseph - Matt. 1:20
4. Shepherds - Luke 2:10

As God sent his angels to make their announcements, He sent them with a divine “**fear not**”. So it is with every person whom God calls to follow Him! You see, when you are living for the Lord and serving Him in righteousness, there is no need to fear anything! God is our Maker. He is our Lord. He is our Provider. He is the One Who is in control of the calls of life and when He places one on your life, Fear not! He knows what He is doing and God will take care of you. His call is also His promise of His Help, His Presence, His Provision, His Power, His Enablement and His Blessing. Therefore, we can face the call of God in our lives without fear! Maybe someone here this morning feels a tremendous burden. Just know this, God is still with us today and He will guide us if we seek His voice.

IN  
THE  
BEGINNING  
WAS  
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WORD

The first revelation that Joseph had was a person. God sent an angel to address his hurts and his fears. The angel told him plainly that this child growing in Mary’s womb was the Son of God. John 1:1, 14

says, “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*” The Lord was calling Joseph to be the earthly father to the Messiah! Since Joseph was a man of faith, this revelation surely set his mind at ease as to Mary’s pregnancy!

Second it revealed a purpose to Joseph. Verse 21 tells us the child’s gender, the child’s name and the child’s purpose in life. Joseph is told that this child will be THE One who will provide salvation from sin.

The entire purpose of the life of the Lord Jesus Christ is contained in this one verse of Scripture.

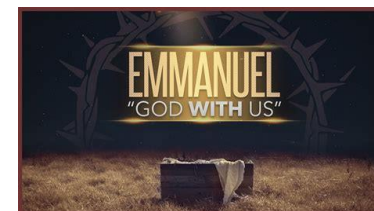
Jesus came to this world for the sole purpose of going to the cross and shedding His precious blood so that men might have life eternal through Him. Jesus came into this world to lay down His life so that men might be saved. This little, helpless baby that Mary wrapped in swaddling clothes on that night so long ago, came to this world for the singular purpose of dying on a Roman cross so that you and I might experience life eternal through His death and resurrection.



When Jesus was standing before Pilate he said, “*You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.*” The truth is Jesus came to redeem sinners.

A third revelation of Joseph is found in verses 22 and 23.

Joseph discovered that this child growing inside of Mary was a part of God’s eternal salvation plan of God for mankind. God was bringing to pass all of the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah and Joseph was going to be a part of it. The verse that is quoted in this passage comes from Isaiah 7:14. “*Behold a virgin shall be with child, and bear a*





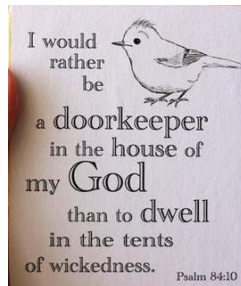
*Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which is translated, "God with us."*

Joseph can be an example for us today. When a crisis arose in his life, he sought the Lord's face. Instead of reacting harshly and abruptly, Joseph reacted in faith waiting on the Lord for guidance and direction, and he was helped by God! I am here to tell you, there are times when the Lord will step right into the middle of your plans and mess everything up! What you do in that moment reveals everything about your character and your commitment to the Lord!

Joseph's call is an encouragement to people like you and me. When we consider that Joseph was a humble character and that he was basically a nobody, it gives hope to you and me! In my opinion, to be called to be part of God's plan is an honor beyond compare, and it is an honor shared by every child of God! To be a nobody from nowhere doing nothing and for God to look at that life and say, "***I can use this man to carry out My eternal purposes***" is a blessing beyond words or comprehension!

When the great proclaimer of the Gospel, Paul, reviewed his life, he said, "*I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man, but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.*"

(1 Tim. 1:12-13) The call of God on a person's life will radically change your life. David said in Psalm 84:10, "*For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than*

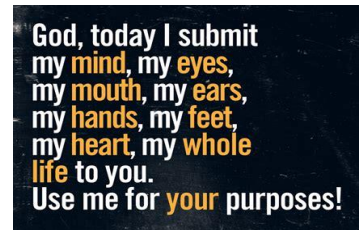


*dwell in the tents of wickedness.*" (Psalm 84:10) Sadly to say, many today would rather dwell in the tents of the wicked than to turn to the One True living God.

### III. Joseph's Conduct (v. 24-25)

When Joseph received a call from the Lord, he completely altered his plans and simply went and did what the Lord said do. Verse 24 and 25 says, "*Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her first born Son. And he called His name Jesus.*"

One of the first things I notice about Joseph was that he was submissive. He simply did what God asked him to do. His response to the news was to humbly accept it. Logically, the child could have been Joseph's – but Joseph knew that wasn't true. It could have been another man's baby, but Mary knew that wasn't true. The only thing it could have been was exactly what the angel told him – the child conceived in her was of the Holy Spirit. The world does not want to accept Mary as a virgin – but it is as God says it is.



I am sure the rest of the community thought the worst of Mary and Joseph. Yet Joseph went forward and took Mary to be his wife. Joseph took the shame upon himself to spare Mary.

Later in life, Jesus would take upon himself the shame of the cross in order to accomplish the will of God. He endured the cross in order for us to be reconciled back to God. (Heb 12:1-3)

Joseph is a lesson for every person gathered here today who wants to serve the Lord. Our duty before the God is to humble ourselves under God's mighty hand. (1 Peter 5:6) Regardless of the call God places on our lives, there will be times when the world, the flesh and the devil will try to make us ashamed of who we are and what we stand for. Yet, we should submit ourselves to the will of God and bear the shame regardless of what it may involve!

Joseph was not only submissive; he was also obedient. He didn't bargain or fuss like you and I do; Joseph did what he had been commanded to do. What a lesson for the children of God! Often the voice of God will come to us and we will debate with God and with ourselves and hesitate instead of responding in swift obedience. Let us learn the truth that obedience to the Lord is far more blessed than anything else we can do for Him. *"And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king."* (1 Samuel 15:22-23) Obedience is what God desires and is one thing we can always deliver!



Joseph surrendered his rights and put them under the Lordship of God. He respected Mary's virginity until after Jesus had been born! Even when it was inconvenient, Joseph willingly laid aside his own rights down so that he could honor the Lord! What an example for you and me!

There are times when doing God's will is not the easiest thing to do. There are times when doing His will is not the most convenient thing to do. However, doing His will is always the RIGHT thing to do! We must come to the place where we lose our will to the will of God! Let it be said that we are surrendered to the plan of God without reservation and without compromise! Have you reached the place in your walk with the Lord that doing His will eclipses all other considerations? Is God really first in your life?

Eventually, Mary delivered her baby. On that great night, Joseph did as he had been commanded when he took his Creator into his arms and called his name **JESUS**. Now, this year in Christmas plays and programs all around the world Joseph will take a backseat to shepherds, wise men, animals and other characters. However, to me, this man stands out as the real hero of Christmas, because of the lessons he teaches us about obedience to God and surrender to God. Let's take these lessons from the life of Joseph and make sure the same characteristics are found in us, not just at Christmas, but every day of the year!

