

## Josephs struggle with Christmas

Mathew 1:18-25

The first thing I want to draw out of this passage is God's sovereignty. Look at vs. 18 **"Before they came together she was found to be with child."** Now that's the Bible's way of saying, "she was pregnant outside of marriage." Can you imagine the real life shock of these words?

Joseph was getting the worst news of his life. In the Jewish culture, if you were pledged to be married you were in the betrothal period. There were no sexual relations during this period. The betrothal period was like our equivalent of engagement but more binding. In this period the two are considered husband and wife even though they haven't consummated their marriage yet. The only way out of this place in the relationship is by divorce. So you can see how this is devastating news for Joseph.

So how does God's sovereignty fit into this? Because through it all God has a plan.

Turn to your neighbor and say "God has a plan." God drafted Joseph into a difficult position. At this point we have to ask ourselves, would God do the same to us? Have we truly contemplated God's sovereignty? If we affirm that we are His are we willing to be drafted as Joseph was?

Sovereignty means "supreme power or authority." So the question is how did he get supreme power and authority over us? He didn't get it by demanding it of us or by hostile takeover, He got supreme power and authority because we freely gave it to Him. It's funny how we forget that when things get sideways in our lives like Joseph's did, that we truly see what really has the power and authority over us.

When we truly accept God's sovereignty over our lives then God is good no matter what happens because we know that His plan is for our good and his glory.

Let me explain:

One of God's faithful missionaries, Allen Gardiner, experienced many physical difficulties and hardships throughout his service to the Savior. Despite the troubles, he said, "While God gives me strength, failure will not daunt me." In 1851, at the age of 57, he died of disease and starvation while serving on an island in the southern tip of South America. When his body was found, his diary lay nearby. It bore the record of hunger, thirst, wounds, and loneliness. The last entry in his little book showed the struggle of his shaking hand as he tried to write legibly. It read, "I am overwhelmed with a sense of the goodness of God."

Let's pick up the story in vs 19. **"Because Joseph was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public shame, he had in mind to divorce her quietly."** This reveals the actions of a righteous man. Joseph's first concern was for Mary. How many of us given this situation would have this same priority? I'm convinced this is why scripture calls Joseph a righteous man. We can't respond like Joseph when we respond out of emotion and pain. Maybe you have been operating like this.

Can I ask you a question, how is that going so far?

Scripture describes Joseph's righteousness not in terms of his relationship to God, but in terms of his relationship with Mary. True righteousness extends two directions—toward God and man.

Church, we have to realize that even in our pain God has a plan!!! Even when the world has fallen on your head, as Joseph felt that it did, God still has a plan. Which leads me to my next point.

Joseph resisted the very strong urge to act harshly. Even in his concern for Mary and her reputation he was still going to divorce her but then vs 20 happened.

**"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."**

Here is the game changer in this story. Remember he is engaged, Mary is pregnant, and the explanation of her pregnancy is absolutely crazy. So are you ready for the game changer? Here it is **"But after he had considered this."** Joseph's response to this was to stop and consider what just took place. That flies in the face of conventional wisdom.

Joseph positioned himself to hear from the Lord when he stopped to consider rather than letting his emotions rule his life. How better would our circumstance turn out if we took time to let our emotions settle down and get God's perspective?

Let's see what happens when we take time to consider. **Vs 20 "An angel of the Lord appeared to him and said, Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home to be your wife, because (and here comes Gods plan) what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. Vs21 She will give birth to a son, and you will give him the name Jesus, because he will save His people from their sins."**

In an emotionally charged situation, just when we would be tempted to ignore our dreams as a product of our subconscious, God is present: Leading, directing and guiding us through it all. By the way, there is no other indication that Joseph heard anything else from God until after Jesus was born. He remained faithful to God's instructions for months, all based on one dream. And the result - Joseph's contemplation turned out to be the greatest story ever told.

How will your story be told this Christmas? Position yourself to be part of a supernatural story and not a predictable tragic story.