

122318 Joseph and Mary Faith from First to last

Let me share something with you...God opportunities don't come nicely packaged and presented to us as a gift we simply have to unwrap... They usually come disguised as insurmountable problems...problems we ought to be running away from...not opportunities to be seized...

Joseph is presented a dilemma... a problem that seemed insurmountable... previously Mary had agreed to be the mother of the Christ child...that is what God asked her to do...the cost her reputation...

MT 1:18 This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit.

- Joseph is pledged to be married...contract is signed...but not consumated....until after the wedding proper...but Mary is pregnant...His reputation is at stake...

¹⁹ Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

- These two verses do not begin to address the emotional devastation, relational conflict and inner conflict that Joseph and Mary would experience in the explanation Mary would give to Joseph upon her return after three months away visiting Elisabeth.
- At this time Mary who would have been pledged and considered legally married to Joseph though not officially wed ...and pregnant...and not by him
- Joseph would be highly stressed by the timing and circumstances of this event...
- We are not given a time line...his wrestling with this situation could have taken days, or weeks
- And he would have to make some choices...
- one of which would be to believe what Mary certainly would have told him happened...which was probably dismissed outright
- **It obviously appears that he did not believe her... which would make her in his mind a not only an adulterer but a liar also...**
- And being a good man his only option was to do the right thing in this circumstance...he could disgrace her...in many ways...or he could exit quietly..
- He chose quietly. To move on... to pick up the pieces of his life...
- **NowWe can only imagine the stress Mary was under....adultery was an offense which could be punishable by death...**
- **Saying yes to God is sure paying off...for Mary!**

- She dealt with the stress of being asked to be the mother of Jesus...and she said ok... she had faith...But what about when that initial faith is more strongly challenged...now she was going to lose her marriage and the man she loved...
- Will our yes still be yes when it all goes sideways? Was Mary's yes to God request as strong now as it was earlier? Now that it appears her choice to follow God is costing her greatly...

It is pretty easy to follow God when his will and our will line up...his ways and are ways are in sync...it is a whole other story when his leading takes us into the lions den... or the furnace fire...

But this is where character is displayed...We can learn some valuable lessons on dealing with stress when conflicted from Joseph...

- **Joseph was Righteous**...righteousness is often seen as not doing something wrong... like make sure you run away from sin...but in fact righteousness is doing something right...righteousness is not just running away from sin...righteousness is chasing after that which is the right thing to do in a particular challenge...

Righteousness is first of all...

- considerate ...which means he was thoughtful....he would consider what would be the right thing to do... (Matthew 1:19,20).
- So the first thing he did was to do nothing. He 'considered' the situation. For days, weeks, months... who knows?
- The moral for us: when you have to make a difficult decision, don't be in a hurry: more mistakes are made by haste than by delay.
- He would consider...that he and Mary both lived in the same town. They were brought up in the same community. They both lived in Nazareth...they had family and friends...what was the bigger picture here...
- He thought that Mary had always told the truth their relationship was honest open and truthful... Her previous character had always been blameless. But now her story seemed unreal and strange. What happened...and her story must have stuck in his soul.
- The accepted normal thing to do would have been to expose her and make her a public disgrace. And Joseph considered doing that very thing, but his love and his compassion for Mary would not permit that kind of severe treatment.
- Clearly, Joseph's faithfulness and love to Mary led him to protect her life, even if she had betrayed him. I am sure he also thought about the child she was carrying and it's future...
- He needed to think this through....**He thought before he acted...**

- That is always the right thing to do...

This is the way every husband should treat his wife. And all of us should treat each other...

Second...Being Righteous ...he would take into consideration what the righteous one...God would have him do..

- He was humble...willing to give God the final say.....
- Humility means we do not condemn...Joseph knew all are fallible...
 - He was humble...he did not condemn Mary even when he perceived he was deeply wronged...
- So Joseph decides to quietly...not gossip, not playing the victim card seeking sympathy,...he will simply release her from her vow.
- With the decision probably came a deep restful sleep...

But God intervened...

MT 1:20 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."

MT 1:22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ²³ "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" -- which means, "God with us."

- Well that was the end of that nights sleep...

Here is a very, very important choice that Joseph and we will have to make at times in our lives...

And that choice is this...

- Trading the good plan for the God plan...there is a time to be prudent but there is also a time to be valiant...
- Joseph had chosen to take the high road the prudent decision...to do the right thing... even the godly thing...
- Prudent people focus on avoiding problems...
- Though emotionally devastated ...Joseph would come out smelling like a rose...
- It was risk free and failure proof... He could move on and she could never hurt him again...it would be hard but he could start over again...it was the good and right thing to do....
- Then God comes along and offers him the challenge to experience the GREAT THING.... By doing the valiant thing...

- But valiant people focus on Opportunities

But the God's way is always the personally risky ... It is always more fearful...people will criticize him ...he will appear weak...it could fail...it is not the logical choice...certainly seems like the harder road...

- How do you explain to people ... it's all good...I am marrying her because she is carrying the Messiah...
- After a while you probably just shut up...

There is no such thing as risk free faith. And you can't experience success without risking failure.

But on the flip side...this could be the opportunity of his life...

- Step father of the Messiah...
- The ushering in of the kingdom of God...God with us and His name would be Jesus!!!

The choice play it good and safe...or experience something great...

Let's get something clear here...if God is in it...it is a win/win...since he never fails...it is like the **old aphorism:**

"No one ever bet too much on a winning horse"

When it comes to God...you will never give up more than you will receive...

The regrets we will have at the end of our lives will be that we didn't seek God more or seek God sooner or take advantage of the opportunities he sent our way....

- **So Joseph grabbed on to God's plan and let go of His...and he never regretted it!!**
- **but a dream is one thing...reality is another...**

So how do we make a dream ...Reality...one step at a time...through one opportunity at a time... Joseph took Mary Home...they continued their engagement..

MT 1:24 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 had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

So how do we become great in the Kingdom of God...

1. You seize it one opportunity at a time...all Joseph had to do was marry Mary.

- following God is always one step at a time
 - he did not focus on his good and legitimate excuses
 - What challenge or opportunity are you facing right now?
2. Do not focus on the disadvantages...but doing the best with what you have...
- He did not disqualify himself if God didn't...with negative thoughts like...I can't raise the Messiah...I don't know the Bible well enough...instead I will teach him how to build things...I am a carpenter...
 - And carpentry was a skill Jesus developed and used successfully until he was thirty... actually time wise he did it much longer than his official ministry.
3. Don't let what you can't do or understand, keep you from doing what you can...
- He did not know how to raise the son of God...but he could work and be a good husband...now...
 - And he was willing to learn...and live with uncertainty...

It is not how much you know but how much you will act upon what you know...that makes the difference...

Joseph took Mary Home... that is supernatural and natural...they continued their engagement..that is in the natural...

- The couple are in place and have obeyed God...so as we all know it is all down hill from there! Well not exactly!!!!

Then The mail arrives....it had been disclosed...

LK 2:1 In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. ² (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) ³ And everyone went to his own town to register.

- Roman tax census taken every 14 years it was Quirinius first census under his administration as Governor. Caesar was ruling from Rome but God was in charge
- Each family were to register in their home town...their home town was Bethlehem
- And God used the census to get Joseph and Mary to move 60 plus miles to fulfill His prophetic plan.
- Probably early spring...no Roman administrator would require census at a time ...winter ...when much of the land was impassable.

LK 2:4 So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. ⁵ He

went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.

- **What? How messy is that...traveling while eight plus months pregnant over 60 miles of rough terrain ...probably on a donkey... Pulling or carrying their luggage**
- **No phoning ahead for a hotel...the town very crowded....Mary extremely uncomfortable and exhausted about to give birth...and carrying God...**
- **...Joseph tired and Frustrated...**
- **These are the two were highly favored!!!....and a caring God...where is the help here?**
- **and the best accommodations they can find are in a stable most likely a cave...for the animals...**

Well at least they can get some sleep!

walking with God includes the Supernatural mixed in with the normal...the up and the down, the easy and the difficult...the miracle and the mundane...joy and Sorrow but one thing is constant...Hope! founded on Faith...that God will do what God says

...

[Romans 1:17](#)

For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”

tomorrow night the Birth

end

The three stages to Marriage...of which she was in the second...

- In those times an **engagement** was often made when the couple were only children...
- It was usually made by the parents or a professional match maker...
- Marriage was considered far too important to be left to the dictates of the human heart...immaturity or lack of judgment
- **The Pledge or betrothal**...was when the ratification of the engagement became official...the girl could call it off...but at this time they were considered in a legally binding marriage...although they would not be wed for one year...the year was spent in preparing for the marriage...home etc. but no living together or marital relations were allowed
- During this time a man and woman would be considered a husband and wife
- To break the pledge would require an official divorce...
- The third stage was the **“Marriage proper”** which took place at the end of the year of betrothal or pledge

122418 Oh Crazy night...we pick up the scene...

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- **What? How messy is that...traveling while eight plus months pregnant over 60 miles of rough terrain ...probably on a donkey... Pulling or carrying their luggage**
- **No phoning ahead for a hotel...the town very crowded....Mary extremely uncomfortable and exhausted about to give birth...and carrying God...**
- **...Joseph tired and Frustrated...**
- **These are the two were highly favored!!!....and a caring God...where is the help here?**
- **and the best accommodations they can find are in a stable most likely a cave...for the animals...**
- **Picture this ...**

- They have just settle in ...Joseph spreading blankets on the straw...Mary trying to find a comfortable position to sit on something...
- And oh great her water breaks....she goes into labor...for how long God only know...
- Joseph now is the mid-husband...*in a Completely Unsterile environment...*
- The whole delivery process....no pressure delivering the son of God...
- You can pretty much throw out the whole gathered around the manger scene
Mary and Joseph kneeling and clothed in their best clothes ...
- The baby is probably lying in the manger is because Mary was cleaning up herself with Joseph after having just gone through labor and delivery...He was the mid-wife

Nothing supernatural here!!! not likely suer disappointing

- And in keeping with this ideology God of all creation would first announce his birth to a group of men, who live on the outskirts of society. They live in the margins, working stiffs doing a necessary but far less than a prestigious job,...
- The night shift people in a day shift world....Tending flocks, on the hillsides around Bethlehem.

But These are the just the ones God wants to first hear the news of his birth.

- They are the shepherds night shift people in a day shift world watching over their sheep, **While the people of Jerusalem slept.**
 - **Make no mistake the people were glad to wear clothing woven from the wool of shepherds sheep and to eat the meat of slaughtered lambs, and to offer the best for the flock for Religious purposes...**
 - **but those people who did the shearing and slaughtering lived lives invisible to most, treated most often as second class citizens, and excluded from even their religious services.**
 - **the shepherds were Low wage workers in low status jobs...some of us in here today would understand how the shepherds were treated, because really not much has changed for those kind of folk.**
 - **Yet this night would unfold into the most extraordinary evening of their lives.**
- Luke2: 8 And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night.*

- **"And" almost sounds like an after thought...but there are no after thoughts with God!**

- A little about Shepherds...Near Eastern shepherding is one of the most demanding and least appreciated and rewarded tasks in that first- century culture. They lived most of the year outside, away from the townspeople. Flocks were kept outdoors from April to November, and, sometimes during the winter in suitable locations.
- **Sheep are defenseless and not particularly bright animals.** They are easily spooked and will always impulsively react before they think. Sheep are also vulnerable to a wide variety of diseases, ticks, insects and parasitic afflictions.
- Consequently, sheep require constant attention and care. Shepherding is a “hands on” calling. **You can’t shepherd from a distance.**
- **Leading sheep to grasses that are good to eat – many are not.** Some grasses are poisonous while others will produce nausea and stomach gas in the sheep.
- and there were always bully sheep who would run rough shod over younger sheep to get to the best grass first.
- Insuring that sheep are always on high ground, not in valley floors, when spring rains come. Rains can quickly cause flash floods that drown sheep.
- Knowing how dig and store winter rains in cisterns so sheep will have water to drink during the long, dry, hot summer season.
- Nightly protected encampments were necessary so that the sheep would lie down to sleep, feeling safe and secure –
- **"Keeping watch" to do guard duty.** protecting the sheep from lions, bears, wolves, and thieves scaring off these predators with a sling or when necessary, fighting them with the rod.
- and dealing with the prone to wander difficult sheep...
- So Picture the night scene...some Shepherds gathered around the campfire trying to stay warm... another guarding the sheep pen....just another night in a ceaseless procession of nights.living in the fields...

this particular night these men simply were doing their job like they did every day. completely unaware was up to on the other side of the hills. **They were about to get front row seats to the Hallelujah chorus along with backstage passes to seek the King.**

- **One minute the shepherds are talking quietly in the blackness of the Spring sky. The next moment the hillside is ablaze in light with an angel standing in front of them...**

*Luke 2:9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord **shone** around them, and they were terrified.*

- **Appeared actually has the idea of standing before them...**

- The Glory of the Lord shone around them...refers to two things
- **One "Glory"** refers to "the condition of radiating brightness, overwhelmingly bright, burning as fire **two...of the Lord...** The presence of the Lord was physical as in burning bright and emotional the overwhelming feeling of the presence of God...
- **When the shepherds saw this intense bright light and felt the presence of the divine... and someone standing there who was not there a second ago... they were terrified...**

¹⁰ But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people."

- the unbearable presence of God... that is humbly compassionate and approachable... Finally, the angel utters the words that Jews had longed for centuries to hear -- " Christ the Lord is born...and for all people///plural!!."
- **So Jesus Making known to those on the night shift of life.. servants and not the Served...because he is the good news for all people! and them personally:**

¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.

- He was for them! for the angel said you! and he is close only six miles away!
- Messiah the Lord the word "Messiah" (anointed).. Lord." "Lord" master...

and we can locate him...

¹² This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

- **we can identify him...**he will look like any new Born...but he will be in a barn like setting... A manger would indicate the location in some kind of stable -- a Second Century legend indicates that this was in a cave. Makes Sense!
- **A King being born would naturally be expected to be wrapped in the finest purple garments in the finest nursery money could provide for a beautiful crib, many attendants and servants...**

But wait there's more... Then we go from one angel ...to a great company...thousands...

Luke 2:13 Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, ¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

- His favor good news was for all people...not sure how long the angels sang and praised...but when they were done...lets go...the light was lit in them...

LK 2:15 *When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."*

- **Whenever God speaks to us there is a what now to do with it... they had a choice..Go back to warming themselves by the fire...or look for the King**
- There is a spiritual truth here...the angels could have given them the address...but there is a role for anyone to play in God's drama...
- *the light of knowledge God had given them they moved on it.. there is always enough light to take the next step... ..*

LK 2:16 *So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. ¹⁷ When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, ¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰ The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.*

- The shepherds running through the town looking in every back yard looking for the right stable .
- *..after they found it.. they told Mary and Joseph what happened....Mary stored this info in her heart...because she could not verify it in her circumstances...she is in a stable..and the first guests are lowly shepherds..but boy are they geeked up!!*
- The word "treasured" has the idea of counting things up, almost like making a list so that you will not forget anything. It's what you do at the end of a very busy day and you want to make sure you don't forget anything that has happened.
- The word "pondered" goes deeper than "wondering." It means to take the events as you have laid them out in your memory and then to go beneath the surface to try to understand what it all means and why it happened the way it did.
- No doubt she thought about what Gabriel said to and Elizabeth... the Baby John the Baptist leaping in his mother's womb.... and how Joseph responded when she told him she was pregnant, and then the amazing dream Joseph had. She recalled the long, arduous journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, and all the events of the birth itself, and now the surprise visit of the shepherds.
- She certainly had plenty to think about. No doubt she continued to wonder why God had chosen her, and I'm sure she pondered what was ahead for her newborn son.
- Pondering is hard work, which is why many of us never get around to it. And yet this is the perfect time of the year to do it. What better time than the end of December to ponder what God has

allowed and what he has been teaching you? To look back over the last 12 months and consider the ways and works of God in your life and in the world around you?

- **Meanwhile** while she is worn out from child birth...looks like a hot mess and her babe in a manger!
- **When the shepherds leave ...they tell everyone they see what they saw...they cant help themselves! they had Glory of the Lord and received the light of the knowledge of God became one of us! Immanuel is with us!**
- **They did not possess great theological knowledge, nor had position in society...and lived to a great extent unfulfilling lives...but a light was lit in them tonight!**

later she would ponder what Jesus said he himself would possess...

JN 8:12 When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world(plural). Whoever (singular) follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

- **Jesus claimed himself to be light... and his followers will carry the light of life in them**

MT 5:14 "You (singular) are the light of the world. A city us (plural) on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

Jesus goes on to explain some things about this lamp that is lit ...**1) ...the lamp is lit by someone else...** for the shepherds the angels lit the lamp...**2) the light in the lamp is Jesus...** **3) ...we are the lamp...** **4) the lamp is not lit to be hid... but to be visible to others**

The shepherds went back to shepherding...just like Mary nothing changed circumstantially...but her heart received treasure! ...the shepherds returned to shepherding nothing changed circumstantially...yet everything inside them changed... they have a new light! ...

Christmas is the dawning of the light of men! Immanuel ..God with us

Jesus...is the light...then he let it shine... we are all lights...Mary, Joseph the shepherds...all different people...but carried the same light...

I am not you and you are not me...but we have the same light in us...which will shine through my life as well as yours...

This is the great joy to the world the light has come...

- His grace extends to all...his truth his glory shines through us...
- everyone take out their lights...don't light them...for the light is lit by another...

we will sing silent night...just as the shepherds ...were that silent night...then when we sing the people at the out most edges...the margins of the church turn and touch the light

of the person next to you...then when they do turn on your light ...then turn to the person next to you and do the same...until all our lights are lit!

end with.....

These little lights will be turned off...but the light on you need to go on shining

Phil 2:15.....Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky ¹⁶ as you hold firmly to the word of life.

end

122417 Jesus the Light of the world.... **How often we like to make Jesus simple How complex is the person of our Lord Jesus Christ! ... he is far more than we can imagine or comprehend...**

Isaiah9: 6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

In one breath the prophet calls him a “child,” and a “counselor,” a “son,” Mighty God and “the everlasting Father and Prince of Peace! .” it is an amazing marvel that

he who was an infant should at the same time be infinite and a wonderful counselor, he who was the Man of Sorrows and familiar with grief should also be God over all, and that he who is in the Divine Trinity always called the Son, yet he is the everlasting Father or creator of all there is ... He who came to conquer supernatural forces is the prince of peace to his rebellious humanity... He is the one who fashioned us out nothing...

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning.

*******There is no greater blessing than God taking his Humanity from our DNA...coming to us as one of us...a child born to us who will be a brother to us and yet like a Father for he created us...**

John 1:14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us....

It is an amazing and wonderful thing to realize that God devised His plan, created us, and is perfectly executing the plan, so that we could be with him forever...

- **That God would want his messed up creatures to live for eternity in a relationship with Him as family is beyond comprehension.**

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No doubt Mary went back to what happened to Zacharias and Elizabeth and the birth of John the Baptist. I’m sure she thought about what Gabriel said, and how Joseph responded when she told him she was pregnant, and then the amazing dream Joseph had. She must have recalled the long, arduous journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, and all the events of the birth itself, including the surprise visit of the shepherds. She certainly had plenty to think about. No doubt she continued to wonder why God had chosen her, and I’m sure she pondered what was ahead for her newborn son.

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Romans 1:17

For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”

end

MT 1:18 This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit.

- Mary had agreed to be the mother of the Christ child...that is what God asked her to do...the cost her reputation...
- Joseph had agreed to be the Husband and step father of Mary...the cost his reputation... **this was the opportunity of their lives ... The ushering in of the kingdom of God...God with us and His name would be Jesus!!!**
- Along with Zechariah and Elizabeth ..the parents of John the Baptist
- The players are in place...
- Two things left ...the location of his birth and the announcement to the world that the Messiah has arrived...Immanuel God with man!!

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- **The couple are in place and have obeyed God...so as we all know it is all down hill from there! Well not exactly!!!!**

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 - No phoning ahead for a hotel...the town very crowded....Mary extremely uncomfortable and exhausted about to give birth...and carrying God...
 - ...Joseph tired and Frustrated...
 - These are the two were highly favored!!!....and a caring God...where is the help here?
 - and the best accommodations they can find are in a stable most likely a cave...for the animals...
 - **Picture this ...**
 - They have just settle in ...Joseph spreading blankets on the straw...Mary trying to find a comfortable position to sit on something...
 - And oh great her water breaks....she goes into labor...for how long God only know...
 - Joseph now is the mid-husband...in a Completely Unsterile environment...
 - The whole delivery process....no pressure delivering the son of God...
 - You can pretty much throw out the whole gathered around the manger scene Mary and Joseph kneeling and clothed in their best clothes ...
 - The baby is probably lying in the manger is because Mary was cleaning up herself with Joseph after having just gone through labor and delivery...He was the mid-wife
- Nothing supernatural here!!!
-

LK 1:26 In the sixth month, (**perfect time**) God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, ²⁷ to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary.

The three stages to Marriage

- In those times an **engagement** was often made when the couple were only children...
- It was usually made by the parents or a professional match maker...
- Marriage was considered far to important to be left to the dictates of the human heart...immaturity or lack of judgment

- **The Pledge or betrothal**...was when the ratification of the engagement became official...the girl could call it off...but at this time they were considered in a legally binding marriage...although they would not be wed for one year...the year was spent in preparing for the marriage...home etc. but no living together or marital relations were allowed
- During this time a man and woman would be considered a husband and wife
- To break the pledge would be require an official divorce...
- The third stage was the **“Marriage proper”** which took place at the end of the year of betrothal or pledge

@ @ @ @

Mary’s pregnancy would be a miracle...from the Holy Spirit of God..His God DNA would be combined with His Human DNA...thus fully God and Fully man

- **Joseph would not be the father nor would any man...why???**
 - 1. fulfill prophecy... he would be God with us**

ISA 7:14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. (God with us)

- 2. Jesus would be the only person ever born who lived prior to his conception And therefore would not need a human father...just a mother to carry him...**

LK 1:38 "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her.

- what I like about Mary and Joseph....they were not educated beyond their obedience
- **God has always been comfortable with making people uncomfortable they were just one risk away from breaking through a barrier that seemed impossible.**

**The Lord has set the plan in motion...
the enemy is none the wiser...**

Now to Joseph... God didn't just choose a WOMAN, He chose a COUPLE, both godly and willing to make a great sacrifice.

MT 1:18 This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was **pledged** to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man (**loved god from his heart**) and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

- Found his wife to be morally suspect....to say the least
- Divorce rather than take her to Jewish court convict her of adultery...and life long social and religious disgrace

A. It put their marriage on the line (imagine Joseph's to Mary's claim!)

B. It sacrificed BOTH of their reputations (imagine the "market gossip"!)

C. It put their future at risk (Their plans together were sacrificed on the altar of GOD'S WILL!)

D. It endangered their fellowship with others

1. The apparent infidelity
2. The absurd (even INSANE) explanation
3. The move away from home

E. It put a severe emotional strain on them

When Christ enters a life, His presence does NOT make all your hardship go away. In fact, the change Christ brings often presents its own set of challenges!

MT 1:20 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. (supernatural... outside of time)**" ²¹ She will give birth to a son, and **you are to give him the name Jesus**, because he **will save (in future time)** his people from their sins."

MT 1:22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ²³ "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" -- which means, "God with us."

MT 1:24 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 had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

- **So God chooses a righteous man...one who loves him, not just keep rules. and would obey immediately ...the instruction God gives...even when t makes no sense in the natural ...**
- And a righteous woman...puts them in the position of suspect morality...throws off Satan...
- **A common skilled laborer. Not a religious rabbi or standout. Humble and ordinary**

Bottom Line... THEY WENT FOR IT! And because they were willing to step out in obedience ...we are here today!

*******This obedience will cost them....but some things are worth losing your reputation over!! let's jump ahead 32 years...Jesus at the Temple in one of the most heated dialogues recorded in the Gospels..**

- **We know this situation becomes well known ...for when Jesus has an argument with the Religious leaders years later they bring up this fact of his questionable birth...**

JN 8:12 When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

JN 8:13 The Pharisees challenged him, "Here you are, appearing as your own witness; your testimony is not valid."

- Jewish belief that light was from God...Jesus claiming equality with God..
- Who backs your play? Who sent you to teach us?...Hebrew law states that every testimony must have at least one witness.. who testifies that you are this?

JN 8:14 Jesus answered, "Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid, for I know where I came from and where I am going. But you have no idea where I come from or where I am going. ¹⁵ You judge by human standards; I pass judgment on no one. ¹⁶ But if I do judge, my decisions are right, because I am not alone. I stand with the Father, who sent me. ¹⁷ In your own Law it is written that the testimony of two men is valid. ¹⁸ I am one who testifies for myself; my other witness is the Father, who sent me."

JN 8:19 Then they asked him, "Where is your father?"

- *Speaking of your Father exactly who is he? They did their homework on Jesus..*
- *They knew the controversy surrounding his mother's pregnancy?*

"You do not know me or my Father," Jesus replied. "If you knew me, you would know my Father also." ²⁰ He spoke these words while teaching in the temple area near the place where the offerings were put. Yet no one seized him, because his time had not yet come.

JN 8:21 Once more Jesus said to them, "I am going away, and you will look for me, and you will die in your sin. Where I go, you cannot come."

JN 8:22 This made the Jews ask, "Will he kill himself? Is that why he says, 'Where I go, you cannot come'?"

JN 8:23 But he continued, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. ²⁴ I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins."

JN 8:25 "Who are you?" they asked.

"Just what I have been claiming all along," Jesus replied. ²⁶ "I have much to say in judgment of you. But he who sent me is reliable, and what I have heard from him I tell the world."

*****And jumping ahead in the same debate...they play their birth card...Who's your daddy...**

JN 8: 38 I am telling you what I have seen in the Father's presence, and you do what you have heard from your father. "

JN 8:39 "Abraham is our father," they answered.

"If you were Abraham's children," said Jesus, "then you would do the things Abraham did. ⁴⁰ As it is, you are determined to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things. ⁴¹ You are doing the things your own father does. "We are not illegitimate children," they protested. "The only Father we have is God himself."

- **There they said it...Jesus is illegitimate...they believe his daddy is not Joseph..**

JN 8:42 Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me. ⁴³ Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. ⁴⁴ You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. ⁴⁵ Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me! ⁴⁶ Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don't you believe me? ⁴⁷ He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God."

JN 8:48 The Jews answered him, "Aren't we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?"

- they say to him, you are not only illegitimate...we believe your daddy is a gentile... you are a half breed
- and you are demon possessed

Jesus said they don't believe in Him because their father the devil doesn't Satan in his pride and lack of spiritual understanding ...would not believe that the messiah would come by this sort of morally suspect beginning.

- **The truth....Hidden in Plain Sight....always baffles pride..**
- **Foiled again...the best strategy is sometimes the truth...Satan would not believe it**

Back to the beginning...Mary and Joseph get to parent the son of God!!!!

LK 2:1 In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. ² (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) ³ And everyone went to his own town to register.

LK 2:4 So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. ⁵ He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, ⁷ and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

- **THEY WENT FOR IT! And because they were willing to step out in obedience ...we are here today celebrating the birth of God with us...!!**

HIS plans will take place in HIS ways in HIS time...and that I am not the one who gets to direct His will...but rather participate in it!

Without this testimony in your heart Christmas truly believing in the one sent from Heaven to earth.... Christmas means nothing...

The God of Creation entered into Creation and Creation was forever changed...

Now for us in 2009...will this Christmas and what it means should make all the difference in our lives?

How will you proclaim it this year!!!

He came to us in the silence of the night... just another night....but a night that changed History...the God hidden in plain sight...when God sanctified Humanity by becoming one of us...Emmanuel God with man...we became different at His Birth...OH HOLY NIGHT...the night that changed humanity....

Emanuel God with us...what could be better...

end

- When things seem most out of control...He is most in control! We cannot proclaim to be believers in the Sovereignty of God and then freak out at the first sign of the wheels coming off!
- Understand this...no matter what happens...no matter WHAT happens...God is still God...He still reigns...He is not worried...we shouldn't be either!

We've GOT to be about hearing from Jesus as to why He put us on this earth "for such a time as this!"

Our goal, should be to make the name of Jesus famous—period.

Here are a few questions for you?

- What risks am I wrestling with wanting to take...but have been too afraid to vocalize?
- What am I REALLY afraid of—failing OR people viewing me as a failure?
- Am I saying I am praying about something when, in actuality, I am delaying & hoping that God will just somehow "work things out?"

We are not to be obsessed with those who oppose us...we are to be obsessed with Jesus. If we are following Him then He will handle those who oppose us. We are not to be obsessed with those who oppose us...we are to be obsessed with Jesus. If we are following Him then He will handle those who oppose us.

And...

1JN 5: 11 And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹² He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

Without this testimony in your heart Christmas truly believing in the one sent from Heaven to earth..... Christmas means nothing...

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end

Jesus is for all People!!

Picture this: You're in Santa Ana. It's 4:30 a.m., In a small building connected to a giant garage is a group of disposal truck drivers. Regular guys with Leather gloves and green uniforms. They are standing around in a circle near the coffeepot, sipping coffee from Styrofoam cups. They each refill and then as one group walk out the door toward the garage where a few dozen disposal trucks are warming up.

These men are on the outskirts. They are in the margins. We don't really even acknowledge they exist until we can't get out of the driveway or they're holding up traffic as we try to get to the office. But These are the ones God wants to know first. Suddenly there is a bright light. . . .and an angel appears what began in the dark as an ordinary work shift doing a necessary but less than prestigious job...suddenly would change their lives forever...

- **This is quite similar to what the shepherds would have experienced, in the hills of Bethlehem as they worked the late shift, watching their sheep, The people of Jerusalem were glad to wear clothing woven from the wool of their sheep and to eat the meat of slaughtered lambs, and raise the animals who would serve as the substitute sacrifice for the peoples sins...but those who did the shearing and slaughtering were invisible to them, the same people who treated them as second class citizens expected them to raise unblemished first quality animals for their religious services**

- **Low wage workers in low status jobs today would understand how the shepherds were treated, because really not much has changed for those kind of folk.**
- yet this night would unfold into the most extraordinary evening of their lives.
- Only Luke shares the story of the shepherds among the four Gospels. Luke in chapter 2, beginning in verse 8, he sets the stage of the shepherds:

Luke 2: 8 And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, **keeping watch** over their *flocks* at night.

- **Near Eastern shepherding is one of the most demanding and least appreciated and rewarded tasks in that first- century culture.**
- Sheep are defenseless and not particularly bright animals. They are easily spooked and will always impulsively react before they think. Sheep are also vulnerable to a wide variety of diseases, ticks, insects and parasitic afflictions.
- Consequently, sheep require constant attention and care. Shepherding is a “hands on” calling. You can’t shepherd from a distance. You have to be with the sheep and they have to know it and feel your presence. In a much too abbreviated way, what follows is just part of a shepherd’s daily life that requires:
- Leading sheep to grasses that are good to eat – many are not. Some grasses are poisonous while others will produce nausea and stomach gas in the sheep. Other grasses look good, but provide no nourishment.
- Making sure that bully sheep will not run rough shod over younger sheep to get to the best grass first.
- Insuring that sheep are always on high ground, not in valley floors, when winter rains come. Sudden winter rains can quickly cause flash floods that drown sheep.
- Knowing how to store winter rains in cisterns so sheep will have water to drink during the long, dry, hot summer season.
- Making sure that all conditions are met so that sheep will lie down at night and sleep, feeling safe and secure – full stomachs, adequate water, not bothered by flies, ticks, leeches or parasites.
- Protecting the sheep from lions, bears, wolves, hyenas and foxes, and scaring off these predators with a sling or when necessary, fighting them with the rod.
- Lifting up those sheep that are suddenly “cast down” – fall upside down into a ditch/ depression and can’t back get up on their own.
- Never giving up on a sheep no matter how difficult and disobedient it may be.

- **These are the night shift people in a day shift world....Tending the flocks, on the hillsides around Bethlehem many were destined for temple sacrifices in Jerusalem, only six miles to the north**
- **So Picture the scene...some Shepherds gathered around the campfire trying to stay warm... another guarding the sheep pen....just another night in a ceaseless procession of nights.living in the fields...**
- **They lived most of the year outside, away from the townspeople. Flocks were kept outside in this way from April to November, and, sometimes during the winter in suitable locations.**
- **"Keeping watch" to do guard duty." ensuring the sheep were safe from wandering off and injuring themselves, and safe from thieves and wolves.**
- **"The dryness of the ground" made it necessary for the flocks of sheep and cattle to move about during the rainless summer and to stay for months at a time in isolated areas, far from the owner's home.**
- **Sometimes the owner himself or his sons did the job. But usually it was done by hired shepherds, called, hireling shepherds -- they had an poor reputation. Even Jesus used these unscrupulous hirelings as an example..**

John 10:12 The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. ¹³ The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

- **Rabbinic sources state to the effect that "most of the time they were dishonest and thieving; they led their herds onto other people's land and pilfered the produce of the land."**
- **Because they were often months at a time without supervision, they were often accused of stealing some of the increase of the flock. Consequently, the pious were warned not to buy wool, milk, or kids from shepherds on the assumption that it was stolen property. Shepherds were not allowed to fulfill a judicial office or be admitted in court as witnesses.**
- **"" Philo, a Hellenistic Jewish philosopher of Alexandria (25 BC - 45 AD), wrote about looking after sheep and goats, "Such pursuits are held low and inglorious."**
- **Yet Some of Israel's great heroes were shepherds -- Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David.**

Now at night In those days, a shepherd would make or use an enclosure of thorny branches or rocks, sheep folds, little corrals we would say with walls about this high,

waist high, usually made out of rocks from the hillside and inside of those sheepfolds the shepherd will leave the sheep.

- They would have a single doorway by which the flock could enter.
- The gate was just a space The door or gate would be narrow letting in one sheep at a time...each sheep was personally know by the shepherd ..and each sheep knew the shepherd and his voice..
- When evening came and the sheep had entered, the shepherd himself would sleep in the doorway of the sheep pen to guard his sheep.
- Thus, before any wild animal could enter the pen and kill a sheep, it would have to come through the doorway where the shepherd lay. The shepherd would then chase the wild animal away before it could harm the sheep.
- In this way the shepherd himself was "*the gate for the sheep.*" The Lord Jesus called Himself "*the Gate for the sheep.*" This means that Jesus cares for all those who belong to Him. This also means that before you can become a part of God's "flock," you must come through Jesus.

*JN 10:7 Therefore Jesus said again, "I tell you the truth, I am the **gate** for the sheep. ⁸ All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹ I am the **gate**; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture.*

*JN 10:1 "I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the **gate**, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber.*

- Any person or animal that would enter the pen by any other way...had an intent to hurt the sheep and avoid detection by the shepherd
- **Jesus is the gate and the Good Shepherd.**

*John 10:11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for *the* sheep.*

John 10:14 "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—

It was as if God was showing us what kind of oversight He wants for His flock. Caring shepherds with humble hearts who will provide His sheep with good grass and clean water while protecting, leading and guiding them.

Back to the shepherds... These men simply were doing their job like they did every day. It was neither a glamorous job nor a job that was viewed in high regard by the more sophisticated in first century Jewish society. But God does not care what people think...of a job.. these social outcasts quickly would become the insiders on what God

was up to on the other side of the hills where their sheep were grazing and bedding down for the night.

- They were about to get front row seats to the Hallelujah chorus along with backstage passes to seek the King.

Luke 2:9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

- **The Lord has set the precedent from the beginning...He came to serve and service starts with the least, last and lost...**
- **So it would fit that the angel would make Jesus known to those on the night shift of life..the servants...not the Served...**
- **The angel stopped by first to tell a bunch of folks at work on the night shift. The angels came first to the low wage, low status shepherds of the little town of Bethlehem.**
- **They didn't seek those shepherds out while they were praying or reading scripture or having a Bible study or revival. The angels came to the shepherds in the midst of their work.**
- **They interrupted that work with good news of great joy for all people. That is, all people, starting with the "least of these people," – the working stiffs whose jobs don't leave a lot of room for religious activity.**
- **One minute the shepherds are talking quietly in the blackness of the Spring sky. The next moment the hillside is ablaze with light and booming with the sound of an angel's voice.**
- **Appeared actually has the idea of standing before them...**
- **The Glory of the Lord shone around them...refers to two things**
 - **One "Glory" refers to "the condition of being bright or shining, brightness, splendor, radiance. Throughout the Old Testament the presence of God is referred to as overwhelmingly bright, burning as fire,**
 - **two...of the Lord... denotes the visible and feeling the presence of God ...Throughout the Old Testament the presence of God is referred to as overwhelmingly bright, burning as fire, This presence was real, and the physical manifestation was real.**

- **When the shepherds saw this intense bright light and felt the presence of the divine... and someone standing there who was not there a second ago... they were terrified...**

¹⁰ But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.

- **The angel addressed their feelings...** The angel of the Lord wasn't mad at the shepherds but told them instead have Joy!! ...**this is a great thing!!!**
- **The word "people."** is used thirty-five times in Luke and only fourteen times in Matthew. It's not used at all in Mark's gospel.
- However, Luke also wrote the book of Acts and uses this word forty-seven more times there. The point of this word usage is that the gospel is intended to go beyond only the Jews.
- Jesus is the Savior for all people and is a major theme of Luke's writings, because it was a major theme in the angel of the Lord's original announcement to the shepherds.
- **Matthew's gospel is written for the Jewish people of his time. He was writing to say, "This is the guy we've been waiting for." Luke is writing with the full understanding that This is good news and great joy to all of us.**
- Together. This event is what brings us together as a people.
- **This is how the Lord advertises His Greatness...he has compassion on the needy...born to you!!**
- **Christ the Lord** the word "Christ" (anointed)..by itself, but in the phrase, "**Christ the Lord.**" "Lord" is the Greek noun *kurios*, "owner, lord, master, of earthly beings as a designation of any person of high position.
- **"The town of David"** is the Messiah-child's connection with his ancestor David. Prophecy indicates that the Messiah will be born in Bethlehem.
- **And His favor rests with whoever invites him in...present tense still today...**

This is the sign for you..

¹² *This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."*

- The sign consists of two elements. **The baby is: 1)Wrapped in cloths, and 2)Lying in a manger.**
- **The phrase "wrapped in "cloths"** (These were "strips of cloth like bandages, wrapped around young infants to keep their limbs straight". **A King being born**

would naturally be expected to be wrapped in the finest purple garments in the finest nursery money could provide for a beautiful crib, many attendants and servants...what a sign...

- shepherds would be familiar with swaddling cloths...as there sheep would birth lambs (using swaddling clothes /cloths to help clean up new born lambs) especially of lambs destined for Passover sacrifice.
- God was giving u foreshadow of the Passover destiny of this new born Perfect sacrificial Lamb.
- **The second sign was that the newborn would be found in a manger -- that was unique!** The Greek noun is *phatne*, "manger, crib, feeding-trough." A manger would indicate the location in some kind of stable -- a first century understanding would be that this was in a cave/barn.

LK 2:13 Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, ^{LK 2:14} "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

- Company and host are military terms... a large group of soldiers... thus the description of a great heavenly hosts suggests something else – a military purpose.
- These angels were on an assignment to watch over this new born, vulnerable baby. God has an Adversary and His Adversary would have seen God's invasion plan unfolding.
- And since the Evil One is dedicated to thwarting, disrupting and destroying every aspect of God's Plan, I get the sense that this massive turn out of angels was for protective reasons as well – Their presence was a warning sign to another legion of spirits that this place tonight was a sacred place, and therefore off limits to those with destructive plans.
- **Lastly notice it says...a host of angels appeared...and said glory to God and peace to men...**
- Notice the order... Give Glory to God then Peace comes to men!!
- Peace is not something we work for or earn on our own – it is a gift given to us after our recognition of God's greatness!!.”
- **“Peace is NOT the absence of crisis – it is the presence of Christ!”**

Moving on...

LK 2:15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "**Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.**"

- In a split second...this army of angels returned to heaven after their show of awesome force, which means they are a split- second away from returning to insure that God's Eternal Plan continued to unfold in an unimpeded manner.
- those angels had a duo purpose that invasion night – praising and protecting. the same as they do now
- Now...Whenever God speaks to us there is a “what now to do with it”...
- Go back to warming yourself by the fire...or look for the King
- Same in our case does his birth simply mean a Christmas break then back to work or does it mean...that if this is true what should I do about it?
- The shepherds heard the message and acted upon it...can you imagine them running through the town, waking everyone up while trying to search each barn and manger in the village...seeking
- **There is a spiritual truth here...the angels could have given them the address...but there is a role for anyone to play in God's drama...**

LK 2:16 So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. ¹⁷ When they had seen him, **they spread the word** concerning what had been told them about this child, ¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰ The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

- Their role in God's drama...was proclaiming what they had heard...then seen...some I'm sure thought they were nuts, drunk, fools...but some listened
- But regardless...they spread the word...
- **Found implies they found what they were looking for their whole life..... This babe would be the shepherd of their souls...all is well.... they have a new identity...his core identity is with Jesus Christ...**
- **They have a new identity...they establish a different foundation from which to interpret and live life...they belong to the flock of a new shepherd**
- They went back to shepherding but it wil never be the same..*God has a way to make the ordinary life we lead exciting!! it is no longer just the same old same old it is an adventure...for we have a new identity...and a new future*

Mary treasured these things in her heart...

- **She treasured this memory in her heart.....Historically she was the source for Luke writing the first two chapters of this Gospel... telling Him...These shepherds**
- 1. Were the first of the despised people whom Christ brings into communion with himself,**
 - 2. And they become the first of the evangelists of the good news that the great shepherd of all people has come...**
 - 3. Just like Isaiah said he would...**

Isa 40:10 Behold the Lord God shall come with strength, and his arm shall rule: Behold his reward is with him and his work is before him. ¹¹ He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather together the lambs with his arm, and shall take them up in his bosom, and he himself shall carry them that are with young.

- Tomorrow, or next week, when you go back to work, or to school, to housework or volunteering, or back to your work-a-day life that seems too much the same, that promise stretches to you, too. God did not come and go; God came and stayed and stays with us still in the Holy Spirit. Fear not God is with you ...and you have a role to play in his unfolding Drama!!

end

JN 8:12 When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

JN 8:13 The Pharisees challenged him, "Here you are, appearing as your own witness; your testimony is not valid."

JN 8:14 Jesus answered, "Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid, for I know where I came from and where I am going. But you have no idea where I come from or where I am going. ¹⁵ You judge by human standards; I pass judgment on no one. ¹⁶ But if I do judge, my decisions are right, because I am not alone. I stand with the Father, who sent me. ¹⁷ In your own Law it is written that the testimony of two men is valid. ¹⁸ I am one who testifies for myself; my other witness is the Father, who sent me."

JN 8:19 Then they asked him, "Where is your father?"

"You do not know me or my Father," Jesus replied. "If you knew me, you would know my Father also." ²⁰ He spoke these words while teaching in the temple area near the place where the offerings were put. Yet no one seized him, because his time had not yet come.

JN 8:21 Once more Jesus said to them, "I am going away, and you will look for me, and you will die in your sin. Where I go, you cannot come."

JN 8:22 This made the Jews ask, "Will he kill himself? Is that why he says, 'Where I go, you cannot come'?"

JN 8:23 But he continued, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. ²⁴ I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins."

JN 8:25 "Who are you?" they asked.

"Just what I have been claiming all along," Jesus replied. ²⁶ "I have much to say in judgment of you. But he who sent me is reliable, and what I have heard from him I tell the world."

And jumping ahead in the same debate...they play their birth card...

JN 8: 38 I am telling you what I have seen in the Father's presence, and you do what you have heard from your father. "

JN 8:39 "**Abraham is our father,**" they answered.

"If you were Abraham's children," said Jesus, "then you would do the things Abraham did. ⁴⁰ As it is, you are determined to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things. ⁴¹ You are doing the things your own father does."

"**We are not illegitimate children,**" they protested. "The only Father we have is God himself."

- **There they said it...Jesus is illegitimate...they believe his daddy is not Joseph..**

JN 8:42 Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me. ⁴³ Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. ⁴⁴ **You belong to your father, the devil, and**

you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. ⁴⁵ Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me! ⁴⁶ Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don't you believe me? ⁴⁷ He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God."

JN 8:48 The Jews answered him, "Aren't we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?"

- they say to him, you are not only illegitimate...we believe your daddy is a gentile... you are a half breed
- and you are demon possessed
- Jesus said they don't believe in Him because there father the devil doesn't
- Satan in his pride and lack of spiritual understanding ...would not believe that the messiah would come by this sort of morally suspect beginning.
- **The truth....Hidden in Plain Sight....**
- **Fooled again...the best strategy is sometimes the truth...Satan would not believe it**

Back to the beginning...Mary and Joseph get married...

God has always been comfortable with making people uncomfortable they were just one risk away from breaking through a barrier that seemed impossible. **THEY WENT FOR IT!** And because they were willing to try things no one else was trying...we are here today!

Here are a few questions for you?

- What risks am I wrestling with wanting to take...but have been too afraid to vocalize?
- What am I REALLY afraid of—failing OR people viewing me as a failure?
- Am I saying I am praying about something when, in actuality, I am delaying & hoping that God will just somehow “work things out?”

We are not to be obsessed with those who oppose us...we are to be obsessed with Jesus. If we are following Him then He will handle those who oppose us. We are not to be obsessed with those who oppose us...we are to be obsessed with Jesus. If we are following Him then He will handle those who oppose us.

HIS plans will take place in HIS ways in HIS time...and that I am not the one who gets to direct His will...but rather participate in it!

When things seem most out of control...He is most in control! We cannot proclaim to be believers in the Sovereignty of God and then freak out at the first sign of the wheels coming off!

Understand this...no matter what happens...no matter WHAT happens...God is still God...He still reigns...He is not worried...we shouldn't be either!

We've GOT to be about hearing from Jesus as to why He put us on this earth "for such a time as this!"

Our goal, should be to make the name of Jesus famous--period.

LK 1:39 At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, ⁴⁰ where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. **(family time)** ⁴¹ When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. ⁴² In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! ⁴³ But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴ As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵ Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!" **(Celebration time)**

And John grew up normally...until the time came for him to be revealed...
Satan none the wiser...

[Jump to the end of chapter one of Luke...](#)

LK 1:80 And the child grew and became strong in spirit; and he lived in the desert [until he appeared](#) publicly to Israel.

**The Lord has set the plan in motion...
the enemy is none the wiser...**

- **Now to Joseph...** Joseph also from the line of Judah...

MT 1:16 and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

MT 1:17 Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Christ.

MT 1:18 This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was **pledged** to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man **(loved god from his heart)** and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

- Found his wife to be morally suspect....to say the least
- Divorce rather than take her to Jewish court convict her of adultery...and life long social and religious disgrace

MT 1:20 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. (supernatural... outside of time)** ²¹ She will give birth to a

son, and **you are to give him the name Jesus**, because he **will save (in future time)** his people from their sins."

MT 1:22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ²³ "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" --which means, "God with us."

ISA 7:13 Then Isaiah said, "Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of men? Will you try the patience of my God also? ¹⁴ Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

- *Interestingly the Lord gives this prophesy to Isaiah...it had a double connotation...one for the time and one for the future..*

MT 1:24 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 had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

- So the God chooses a righteous man...one who loves him, not just keep rules.
- And a righteous woman...puts them in the position of suspect morality...throws off Satan...
- A common skilled laborer. Not a religious rabbi or standout. Humble and ordinary
- Completely throws off Satan.
- *We know this situation becomes well known ...for when Jesus has an argument with the Religious leaders years later they bring up this fact...*

- **. That first Christmas meant PERSONAL SACRIFICE to Mary and Joseph (Lk 1:26-38; Mt 1:18-25)**

- God didn't just choose a WOMAN, He chose a COUPLE, both godly and willing to make a great sacrifice.
- A. It put their marriage on the line (imagine Joseph's to Mary's claim!)
- B. It sacrificed BOTH of their reputations (imagine the "market gossip"!)
- C. It put their future at risk (Their plans together were sacrificed on the altar of GOD'S WILL!)
- D. It endangered their fellowship with others
 1. The apparent infidelity
 2. The absurd (even INSANE) explanation
 3. The move away from home
- E. It cost them financially (long trip to pay taxes, yet God supplied through the wise men's gifts)
- F. It put a severe emotional strain on them
- When Christ enters a life, His presence does NOT make all your hardship go away. In fact, the change Christ brings often presents its own set of challenges!
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