

Christmas is Almost Over
Matthew 1:18-25

Introduction

Christmas was last week. It is over, some of the decorations at home are down. Those decorations you see here at the church will come down this week. Presents have been opened. Toys have been played with, misplaced, broken, and some have already been forgotten.

Traditions have been observed. Family has been visited. Fun has been had. For some, feelings have been hurt, and awkward times have either been tolerated or avoided. People who haven't been to church since Easter came to worship and remember, or at least they intended to before it snowed.

Christmas means so many things to so many people. There is so much that happens and is associated with this time of year. Family is emphasized. Concern and benevolence is stressed. It is harder to drive down Wanamaker for several weeks. We change the way we do things for a while. But now, Christmas is over. So what do we do next?

I know, we get ready for New Year's. Let's keep moving. The next step is to figure out what we are going to do, where we are going to be, hoping we don't make a fool of ourselves on Thursday. But before we leave Christmas, I want to consider a few things about that celebration of Jesus' birth.

Jesus came to this world to give up His life for us. He was born to die. He asks us for the same commitment. Today, I want us to consider the example given by a man who showed that kind of sacrifice from the Christmas story.

Matthew 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. ¹⁹Because 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.

²⁰But 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. ²¹She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

²²All 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."

²⁴When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. ²⁵But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

We don't know too much about Joseph. He lived in a really small, insignificant town. He was a descendant of David. He was a blue collar worker. Many Bibles say he was a carpenter. All we really know is he worked with his hands. We don't hear anything about him after Jesus is 12 years old. We don't know if he died young, or if he just

stayed in the background. It is assumed he died before Jesus' crucifixion because from the cross, Jesus asked John to take care of His mother. We don't know much about Him, but we do know that when he was called upon by God, he did what he was supposed to do. He had a good reason to do what he did.

FILM CLIP from White Christmas. "It's not good, but it's a reason."

Joseph was a righteous man. More than that, we know he was a Godly man. God was able to use him because Joseph was a righteous man. A righteous man makes God more important than anything else in his life. There is a reason to use a righteous man – a good reason to choose Joseph to raise and protect, and take care of Jesus.

1. A Righteous Man

a. He was ready to follow the Law

- i. He was going to divorce Mary
 1. The Law allowed him to do this. To divorce Mary was more than just the right thing to do. It was the proper thing to do.
 2. The Law was clear. Joseph had every right to divorce Mary. He had every right to walk away from this pregnant, teenaged girl, who refused to let him know who the father of the child was. All she would say is the child was God's. Like anyone would believe that. I assume everyone, from his friends to his parents, to the people in his synagogue were all telling him the same thing, Joseph, get away from that girl.
- ii. He was doing what he thought was right.
 1. How many times do we do what we know is right, and we can be so right we are wrong?
 2. Do we turn our backs on sinners, or do we turn our backs on sin? It is easy to look down our noses at people. We can always find someone who is less righteous than we are. We aren't as bad as – whomever.
 3. We can do all kinds of things we know are right, but we aren't helping. We aren't concerned for anyone else. But hey, we're right.
 4. Joseph was in the right, and he was trying to be righteous.

b. He was acting righteous

- i. He was not going to disgrace Mary.
 1. Joseph cared enough about Mary that he was interested in somehow taking care of her, not condemning her. He understood the Law, but he also understood righteousness.
 2. After all, there is a difference between being righteous and being religious.
- ii. Religious leaders and the woman caught in adultery
 1. **John 8:3 The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group⁴ and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. ⁵In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" ⁶They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.**
 2. The religious leaders, and Joseph were aware of the Old Testament Law.

3. **Deuteronomy 22:23 If a man happens to meet in a town a virgin pledged to be married and he sleeps with her, ²⁴you shall take both of them to the gate of that town and stone them to death...**
4. Just because we are correct, that doesn't mean we are right. Jesus didn't pat these religious leaders on the back and say, "Way to go guys. I am so glad you caught this girl. Get me a rock."
5. According to Old Testament Law, there were 2 ways of handling an unfaithful spouse.
 - a. I know Mary and Joseph weren't married, but to be pledged held the same legal authority as marriage. You had to go through a divorce proceeding to eliminate an engagement.
 - b. You could do as the religious leaders did, and publicly expose the unfaithful woman, or you could, in the presence of 2 witnesses give the woman a certificate of divorce.
6. Joseph was not just religious. Joseph was righteous. He cared. He wanted to do what was right for Mary. Joseph was a Godly man.

2. **A Godly Man**

a. **He Listened**

- i. Instead of just reacting
 1. Jonah reacted and ran away
 2. Moses responded and made up excuses
 3. King Saul answered and hid from view
 4. Gideon reacted, but needed a sign
 5. Like all of these, Joseph listened, and he reacted. But he reacted with love for others first instead of for himself.
- ii. Loved instead of being dogmatic
 1. Religious people are interested in keeping every single rule so they can get to Heaven. Godly people are interested in a relationship with God and loving others.
 2. The religious people of Jesus' day thought counting their money and everything else and giving God only what they had to give him, made them righteous.
 3. Godly people have always been interested in God, and those whom God loves before them selves. Sometimes we are so busy trying to save ourselves, we forget about everyone else. Joseph listened because he was a Godly man. Joseph did what God commanded instead of getting all religious, because he cared.

b. **He did as God commanded**

- i. Instead of what he wanted God's commands to be
 1. For the sake of God, Joseph let his reputation go. It didn't matter anymore that Mary was pregnant and the baby wasn't his. He made the decision of placing God's plan above his own.
 2. It was more important to Joseph that he make a home for Christ, instead of making a name for himself. In this little

town, from now on, he would be known as either the guy who got his girlfriend pregnant before they got married, or the guy who married his girlfriend even though she was pregnant with someone else's baby.

- ii. He did what God commanded in spite of the cost. Immediately, instead of getting to it later.
 1. He did what God commanded without considering how that would affect him, his business, his finances, or his reputation.
 2. How much are we ready to give, and when are we ready to give? Have we counted it all up?
 3. **FILM CLIP - WHITE CHRISTMAS** (How much will it cost? Wow)
 4. To accept Jesus as our Savior and our Lord costs everything. Way past, "ouch," "boing" and "wow."

Conclusion

Christmas is over according to the calendar. Is it over with you? I don't think Joseph ever got over it.

When Joseph listened to God, and took Mary as his wife, she was at least 3 months pregnant. She had just come back from visiting Elizabeth. It wasn't like they could cover this up. It wasn't like they could quickly get married, and after Jesus was born, they could let people think the baby was conceived by Joseph. He listened to God, and considered God's plan more important than anything else.

Joseph was a righteous, Godly man. Joseph was a regular guy who was called upon by God to do something very irregular. When he was called, he responded. When he realized what he needed to do, he did it.

When will we decide not to take chances? When will we decide to give our lives to Jesus.

"Millions of people have given their lives to Jesus over the centuries. Millions have taken on the responsibility of being righteous and Godly. The first man to step up to bat – to step out on faith – was Joseph. A blue-collar, construction worker in a small, do nothing town. He was the first man called upon to take this infant, this child, this Savior, and, in a stable, in the presence of shepherds, barnyard animals, and angels, followed God's commands, and held Him, loved Him, and gave Him the name 'Jesus'". --Lucado

Will you follow suit?