

The Gift of Marriage for Christmas, A Home with the Presence of Jesus Desert Light Christian Church, December 29, 2019



This week we'll look at scriptures in the gospel of Matthew, next week at Luke's gospel. God chose two people in transition from singleness to married life as the ones who would cooperate with Him in His plan to invade this planet with His physical presence. Before Jesus, God had shown up in supernatural

"theophanies" like His walks with Adam and Eve in the Garden (Genesis 3:8), or the visitors to Abraham (Genesis 18:1), Moses and the burning bush (Exodus 3:1-6), Samson's parents (Judges 13:1-32), or the great visitation upon Solomon's temple where the priests couldn't stand up to minister (1 Chronicles 5:14).

Christmas means that instead of a mystical, mighty, obviously other worldly supernatural theophany God would enter our existence as one of us, a baby. As Galatians 4:4 stated, **"But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman..."** At the right time, God the Holy Spirit entered the womb of a young girl, and created a special, one and only, or only begotten embryo to grow in her belly. This event called by some as the "immaculate conception" resulting in the "Virgin Birth," is a necessary part of God's plan to save people from sin. Only those with real faith and a relationship with God could believe Mary's bizarre claim that, "God's Spirit made me pregnant!" rather than what would seem to be obvious, a young girl got too passionate or maybe a Roman soldier had his way with her. Madeleine L'Engle, Newberry Award winning author of *A Wrinkle in Time* and its sequels said, "The virgin birth has never been a major stumbling block in my struggle with Christianity; it's far less mind boggling than the Power of all Creation stooping so low as to become one of us." From this questionable beginning, God the Son became one of us. To accept it, one must believe in the humanly impossible but that all things are possible with our God, Merry Christmas!

Matthew gives us glimpse of the relationship between Joseph and Mary as fiances and husband and wife to prepare the home where Jesus would be the center of the family. That is what we are still wanting to do today. Every Christian marriage should provide the situation where the marriage and home is all about Jesus. That kind of activity attracts angels, Interesting that both Joseph and Mary had angels involved in setting up their home life. I don't understand it all, but referring to a husband and wife's relationship, the enigmatic verse, 1 Corinthians 11:10 says **"because of the angels."** A Christ centered home is a hub bub of angelic activity. We can safely assume there are angels at work in a godly home.



Let's look at the points to follow in preparing a home that's all about Jesus: this week from Matthew's Christmas story and next week from Luke's and as Joseph and Mary did, **Like Joseph and Mary make home a place where everyone knows the presence of Jesus is there.**

1. “And Jacob the Father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of who Jesus was born, who is called Christ” (Matthew 1:16).



Joseph was Mary’s husband, but not biological father to Jesus. Yet he was willing to fulfill his role of raising Him as his son, because God put him into the position. I don’t think he’d have chosen it otherwise. In a home where Jesus is, fatherhood isn’t biology but a God given call and responsibility. Normally a blended family has children of another human under the step father. In this only ever one of a kind situation, Joseph is filling the role of father to a boy who was conceived by the invisible, eternal, and supernatural Holy Spirit. Yet God delegated to him the full responsibility of fatherhood. When one has to raise the biological child of another, fatherhood isn’t confirmed and affirmed by DNA, rather by love, responsibility, and commitment.

2. “Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way, When His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. 19 And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. 20 But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Him in a dream, saying, “Joseph son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save His people from their sins.”

In Jewish culture in Jesus’ time, the engagement (betrothed) was a legally binding relationship as a marriage would be and could only be broken by formal divorce. Mary faced the embarrassing situation of being totally misunderstood by her man, family, city, and even today many in the world.



Can you imagine as she tried to explain to Joseph that she was a pregnant by the Holy Spirit virgin? “Joseph, I love you, please believe me, please, the Holy Spirit did it!” I’m sure he was confused, seeing in her face and hearing in her voice that she really believed what she was saying, probably the craziest excuse for an unplanned and out of wedlock pregnancy. From her sincerity he probably questioned her sanity. But Joseph showed the quality of a real man. Hurt, feeling betrayed and though “just” meaning fair and in the right, he still refused to hurt Mary in return and would handle the situation as gently as possible. If he wanted to, he could’ve had her put to death. Remember (John 8:1-11) the woman taken in adultery? Being engaged, the law applied to her as to a married woman. Then he learned the spiritual truth from the angel. Mary was pregnant by the Holy Spirit, not only had she believed that’s what happened, it did! He obeyed: his command was to live without fear of what others would say or think and he took Mary as his wife. Too often we guide our selves out of fear rather than faith. Too often we’ve let fear rule our moment by moment decision making.

But Joseph, by choosing to be discreet in divorce proved that with tenderness he'd care about her once he learned she was legitimate. He would live with being belittled and misunderstood. God spoke to him in dreams, like Joseph of old. Though not the biological Father, he was given the job to name the Lord. A home that is all about Jesus listens to God's direction. God will still give personal and loving guidance regarding raising our children. Because of this, Jesus came to Joseph and Mary's home, and people would be saved from their sins, It still applies.

First, His direction is clear from His word to raise children in the Lord (Ephesians 6:4), to train them in the path they should take (Proverbs 22:6), provide discipline (Proverbs 19:18), and the whole book of Proverbs is a life smart training manual from a father to a son. But in specific situations, God will provide the wisdom (James 1:5) to raise a child in a home where Jesus dwells.

3. 22 "All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: 23 "Behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call His name Immanuel" (which means, God with us), 24 When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, 25 but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called His name Jesus."

Jesus' coming to earth fulfilled many prophecies. And Joseph put off his own right to a man's desire in the first months of his marriage to fulfill what God's word said, though he was seen as a fool who was cheated on or a man who got his bride to be pregnant before the time. In a home where Jesus is the center of it all, the words of scripture, fulfilling prophecy, and self control are important rather than being acceptable to the world around us. He had the privilege to name the Lord, but no recognition from people, yet the amazing satisfaction of knowing he was a personal partner of God. He transferred his sense of meaning in life to a heavenly and eternal purpose, and he didn't even live long enough to see it on earth, but He had God's satisfaction and surely a celebrated entry into the afterlife. Every marriage and home should be so with Jesus the center of it all.

God wasn't shy in leading them to have a home where Christ is the center and that home wasn't a building. The place where God led Joseph and Mary to live for Jesus' birth caused them to be homeless! Jesus, born in a homeless family laid in an animal's feeding trough brought God's glory to the humblest side of human existence. God will still guide and show His people how to have a Christ centered home regardless of how extravagant, humble, or even lacking the building .

4. 2:13 "Now when they had departed, behold an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise take the child and His mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." 14 And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt 15 and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt I called my son."



Joseph and Mary were willing to move away when the Lord led them to, even disappearing in the middle of the night in order that their home be a safe place. It is so

important that we make home safe that the presence of Jesus rule. Another prophecy came true from Hosea 12:1.

5. 2:19 But when Herod died, behold an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, “Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child’s life are dead.” 21 And he rose and took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. 22 But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee. 23 And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, that He would be called a Nazarene.

On Christmas eve, 1989, Romanians removed their horrible communist dictator, Nicolai Ceausescu. When he was dead, their first act was to grant religious freedom. They were forbidden to celebrate Christmas for 40 years, so Christmas in Romania became a happy time, with all night caroling, non stop visiting, and everyone wishing everyone a *Craciun fericit!* (Romanian for “Merry Christmas). I preached my first Christmas message in Cluj, Romania, not long after the revolution.

My message was, “The dictator is dead, you have freedom, take Jesus to the land!” That applies to all of us. Since Jesus rose from the dead, He fulfilled the prophecy of Genesis 3:15, that He’d crush the serpent’s head. The Christ centered home will want to take Jesus to the land, to the world!

Matthew 2:19 finishes with a unique prophecy, quoted that Jesus would be a resident of Nazareth. There could be a slight problem in that no Old Testament scripture says that. One verse hints at it. The Hebrew word for branch is *netser* from Isaiah 11:1, “**a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch (*netser*) from his roots**” may be the connection. Isaiah definitely wrote of the Messiah, but about Nazareth? Another more likely solution could take the words “**spoken by the prophets**” about prophecies that were spoken and not written.

Though prophecy was silent for more than three centuries after Malachi, the Spirit began to speak prophetic words again. One example is the prophetess Anna (Luke 2:36-37) and the old man Simeon (Luke 2:25-35) and John the Baptist’s father (Luke 1:67). If these three are only a microcosm of what was happening all over the land, could it be the prophets were buzzing away with all kinds of information regarding the about to be born Messiah? It’s reasonable to think so, and the facts are, 3 of their prophecies made it into the scriptures.

God in His sovereign direction determined where the family would have their Christ centered home. We can believe that the location of our homes is something we can seek God about and expect that He will guide each of us to the place to live.

May this Christmas remind us from the marriage of Joseph and Mary of their incredible challenges, their call to raise the boy, the gentleness of their home where no one will be shamed, willingness to live as misunderstood people because they obeyed, willingness to practice some self control, a safe place where God guides, and from a Christ centered home, take Jesus to the world. Merry Christmas!

A Christmas Poem (Eric Villanueva 2016)

Joseph wanted Mary for his wife,
To build a home and start a life.
And then to receive such a surprise
She seemed so pure and honest in his eyes
Telling him she loves him but yet with child
This sweet girl has somehow gone wild
Saying it's a supernatural conception
Coming from a divine connection
Angry, confused, and troubled of soul,
Time to break it off, yet maintain control,
Protect that poor lost girl from shame,
You treat her gentle, for her mental state, surely insane,
Try not to defame, stain her name!
And to make it crazier comes God's angel, by the name of Gabriel
It's prophetic, don't get pathetic,
"Joseph this is God's will, to fulfill, and the king will try to kill
The boy that's not from your biology, but you'll see as you raise
The ancient of days, you will Father the son of another,
But as you escape to Egypt in the Dark,
Your life will always have that question mark."
The skeptics will ask, did she cheat?
Or from the forbidden fruit did you eat?
But you'll keep Him safe, this Son of God I gave
For you to raise, Joseph
Are you still, ready to do my will,
to raise the one who will save?
You'll go to your grave, and many will say,
Joseph did His job, gave Jesus a home,
His place to grow
and now we must do the same, you know.