



DECEMBER 5, 2021 | PASTOR TIMOTHY SONG

“Jesus our Promised Son” (Matthew 1:18-25)

18 This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. 19 Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

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.”

22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 23 “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”).

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 did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

Good afternoon church. Well, it’s finally that time of year again isn’t it? Less than a week left before Christmas! For some of us, you’ve been prepared for months. You’ve planned out how you’ll be spending Christmas, whether it’s with your family or friends. That’s definitely not me. I am not a planner. But Irene, my wife, is. It’s our first Christmas together. So it was important to map out when we’d be seeing each others’ family. Hopefully all of us have made plans, even though CoVid continues to impact our ability to gather in larger groups. This time last year we were in lockdown. At least we are still able to gather in smaller groups! Let’s continue to be careful and safe!

Some of us have probably done research on what the hottest gifts are this year and have already purchased them. Others will be frantically looking the day before. Regardless, Christmas is supposed to be a season of hope and anticipation. And perhaps we need to be reminded of that even more as we’re nearing the two-year mark of the pandemic. But, let me ask this question: What is it that we are hoping for? What are you hoping for this year?

There are so many noble things to hope for. You may be hoping that CoVid is eradicated, and everyone is healthy. You’re hoping to spend time with loved ones. You may be hoping that you get the gift you’ve been wanting this whole year. I love gifts just as much as the next person. Or perhaps some of us aren’t feeling hopeful. It’s been a tough year. But what I’d like to do today is for us to be reminded of the greatest gift



we've been given and the hope that comes from this gift. So please turn your Bibles to Matthew 1:18-25. Follow along as I read.

[Read the Text]

And this is the word of God. If you've grown up in the church, you've probably read this passage or heard a sermon on this text many times. This is what Christmas is about isn't it? The miraculous birth of a baby named Jesus. Whether it's the first time you're reading this or the hundredth time, I pray that we would leave this place renewed and transformed. May the Spirit work in us. What I'd like to do is break up the passage into three sections with three points:

1. Joseph is promised a son (vv.18-21)
2. The World is promised God's Son (vv.21-23)
3. Joseph accepts Jesus as His Son (vv.24-25)

So let's go through today's text together. Starting with the first point: Joseph is promised a son.

POINT #1: JOSEPH IS PROMISED A SON (VV.18-21).

We're told in the beginning of the text of how the birth of Jesus came about. In verse 18, we read that Jesus' mother, Mary, was pledged to be married to Joseph. "Pledged" is also translated as "engaged" or "betrothed". Back in the first century, an engagement was much more binding than it is now. Once you were engaged, you were legally bound. So to call off an engagement would be equivalent to a divorce. After the engagement, the only thing left to do was for the woman to move into the man's home and consummate the marriage for them to live together. Usually this would happen a year after the engagement began. So, when Matthew says that Mary was pregnant "before they came together" (v.18), he is saying that Mary was with child before she and Joseph consummated their marriage.

Another thing to note is that Mary was pregnant "by the Holy Spirit" (v.18). Matthew is clueing us into something supernatural that was going on. But we know that an angel appeared to Mary to let her know this was going to happen. But as of this point, Joseph has no clue! Let's try to put ourselves in Joseph's shoes. What would you do if the person you were married to became pregnant, but the child wasn't yours? When I thought about this this time around, I thought – and I have to stress that this is completely hypothetical – "What would I do if Irene said to me that she was pregnant, but I knew I wasn't the father?"



But not only that. Irene claims that she's a virgin! There would be some serious trust issues. Probably a lot of fighting too.

We don't read much about who Joseph is or how he felt when he heard this news. But we read in verse 19: "Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had a mind to divorce her quietly." Joseph was faithful to the law. Another translation says he was "a righteous man". The bible teaches that Joseph would have had the right to divorce her. Not just that, but publicly humiliate Mary in front of all the townspeople and even stone her to death for her "unfaithfulness". Again, we know that Mary was a virgin and she conceived through the Holy Spirit. But Joseph didn't know that. For all he knew, she cheated on him. And not only that, she got pregnant! But instead of doing what he had the right to do, he wanted to protect Mary and considered her before himself. Wow. Do you think you could've done that? I think to myself that I could. But could I really?

Joseph demonstrates grace even amidst heartbreak. Even though it seems like he was wronged, he wanted to protect Mary from ridicule and shame. I can't imagine all the emotions that would be rushing in Joseph's mind and heart: anger, sense of betrayal, shame, utter sadness, pride. He probably went through all of that. And yet, he wanted to divorce Mary in the quietest way possible. This is when an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. In verse 20 the angel says, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit." Notice how God appears just at the perfect time! Think of moments in your life when God appeared to you and comforted you with the words you needed to hear.

[ILLUSTRATION here]

Sometimes we go through difficult situations that God uses to ready our hearts to hear him speak and mold and shape us in the way He desires. God uses these situations to help us grow and become exactly what He desires us to become. James 1:2-4 tells us to "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything". This was Joseph's testing of his faith.

But let's go back to what the angel said, "...what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit". God the Spirit made it happen. It's mysterious. That's something when we go to heaven we have to ask God about. But it's the Holy Spirit that causes God the Son to be conceived in the womb of an engaged virgin. What's the significance of Jesus being born of Mary and conceived by the Spirit?



Well, first, it shows that Jesus is fully man (human). He was born of a human woman, just like any other child. Jesus was born like us. He came as a crying baby boy, just like any other baby who enters the world. He had a body like us. Needed to sleep and eat to grow like us. He even learned and grew in wisdom like any human being does. He had emotions like we all do.

So why is this important? Why emphasize Jesus' humanity? We must affirm Jesus' full humanity because it means that Jesus is fully able to identify with us. Brothers and sisters, Jesus knows and understands our struggles. He's gone through what we all go through physically, mentally, and emotionally. He knows our pains, our sorrows. He is familiar with our sufferings. Do you find comfort in knowing that the Messiah was born of a woman and have lived through everything and anything we have? We have a Messiah who is relatable.

However, by being conceived by the Spirit, we must also acknowledge that Jesus is fully divine (God). He is God who came down from heaven to dwell among us. If you pause for a moment and think about that, isn't that crazy? God became human, to be with us. Therefore, this birth is something extraordinary. God is doing something amazing here.

Think about this: If Jesus was conceived by two humans, He'd be just fully human. But if He came in the world without any human being, He wouldn't be human, and therefore, not relatable. Jesus is fully man and fully God. And this was God's sovereign, creative way of bringing Jesus in the world. And this was why it was the Holy Spirit, God Himself, who caused Mary to conceive this child.

Ok, very quickly one last thing I want to point out is that by the angel appearing to Joseph and telling him not to be afraid to take Mary home as his wife, God is also telling Joseph to adopt the son Mary will give birth to. Beginning of verse 21 says, "She will give birth to a son, and YOU are to give him the name Jesus..." This passage mentions that Mary is the mother of Jesus. But it never says that Joseph is the father. And that's very intentional. Because he is not the father. However, after being told to name the child, Jesus is taken into the family of Joseph, and therefore, becomes Joseph's adoptive son.

This is how Joseph is promised a son. And that's the first point. The second point is this: The world is promised God's Son.

POINT #2: THE WORLD IS PROMISED GOD'S SON (VV.21-23).

Not only was God promising Joseph a son, but through this baby, God was fulfilling a promise He made a long time ago. This son was not just for the couple; it was bringing God into this world for all of us. Let's look together at verse 21, which is the thesis or



climax of today's text, and it reads this: "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".

Have you thought of the importance of your name? I guess we didn't have a choice. But, our parents did. Parents, when you were expecting your child, one of the things you probably discussed was what to name your child. I mean, I just got married in September and we talk about this. And no, we are not expecting so don't go asking Irene. I remember growing up and my dad telling me at a young age what my name meant. And in many ways, it's an integral part of your identity. At least back in the days of the Bible (and I believe still today), your name in many ways set course your life and had significant meaning.

There are two names given to this Son in verses 21-23. The first name is Jesus, which means The Lord, or God saves. That's what the name Jesus means. Jesus is the God who saves His people. And what does He save His people from? Their sins.

Here's a quote by Rico Tice (about sin):

The word "sins" sums up what's gone wrong. Sins are not just doing things that a bit wrong, or even very wrong. Sins are the actions and attitudes that spring from a decision to reject the loving authority of the God who made all things. That's the sin that lies beneath all sins. It's the choice to live without a relationship with our Maker – to say to Him, "This is my life, and I will live by my rules". Sin is taking all that God gives – life, breath, friendship, love, fun – and ignore, or abuse, the Giver (Rico Tice, 6).

All the way back in Genesis in the garden of Eden, God promises a seed from a woman, an offspring, who will crush the head of Satan, the serpent (Genesis 3:15). Well, in today's text, God fulfills that promise and provides that seed through Mary. The first man, Adam, rebelled against God and fell into sin. Apostle Paul says that from Adam's sin, condemnation came to all men. We have inherited a sinful nature from Adam. But Jesus is the new Adam, the Second Adam, and He has come to save us from our sins. God is bringing redemption for us through Christ. We are rescued from sin and reconciled to God. This is what Jesus does for us:

- He takes the hurts in our lives, and He turns them into joy.
- He takes the suffering in our lives, and He turns them into satisfaction.
- He takes the rebellion in our lives, and He clothes us in His righteousness.
- He takes the sin in our lives, and He brings salvation.



What God does is He remains faithful to His promise; to His Word. Follow with me in verse 22: “All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet”. And what did the Lord say? Verse 23 is a reference to the prophecy found in Isaiah 7:14 which says, “Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call Him Immanuel”. This prophecy was given about 700 years before Jesus’ birth. It was a time when Israel had a wicked king, Ahaz. Instead of seeking the Lord, King Ahaz refused to listen to the God and rebelled against Him. Even though this was the state of God’s people, He

gives them this promise; that a virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and will call Him Immanuel. This is the second name given to Jesus.

Another quote by Rico Tice (about the name Immanuel):

“God with us” – that’s the nickname. As we look in that manger in history, we can say, There was God – Immanuel – come to be with people. But it’s even better than that, because Jesus can be with us today. At the other end of His time on earth, after He’d risen and before He returned to rule in heaven, Jesus promised His friends (and us too), “Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matt. 28:20).

The God who lived on earth over 2,000 years ago now lives with His people through the Spirit. The very essence of life as a Christian is God being with us always and enjoying Him forever. Brothers and sisters, we worship a God who keeps His promises. And what He promised was His Son, Jesus, the One who saves. This is the meaning of Christmas:

At the first Christmas, God’s Son became a man. Jesus lived a perfect life. Jesus never rejected His Father, our Creator. Yet at the other end of His earthly life from lying in the manger, Jesus died hanging on a cross. And He did that in order to experience the misery of complete separation from His Father that we have chosen by rejecting relationship with Him. He died to bring us forgiveness so that we could enjoy coming into friendship with God – not just in this life, but forever. Jesus came to save people from the consequences of their sin. He came to break down the walls we build between ourselves and our God. He came to announce that, in the most cosmic, most eternal, and most significant sense: “War is Over (If you want it)” (Rico Tice, 9)

God waited 700 years to finally fulfill His promise of Immanuel. He remained silent throughout the exile years and from the birth of His Son, Jesus, God reveals His plan for salvation, redemption and restoration. If God is faithful with His promises, what other promises can we cling on to? What about these:



- God says, “I will never leave you or forsake you” (Joshua 1:5).

- Or what about when God says that He is your “refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble” (Psalm 46:1).

- Or what about this wonderful promise: “For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38-39).

These are all promises from God’s Word we can bank on. These are guarantees we can hold on to. Do we believe in these promises? Do we cling on to them?

These are all great promises to cling to. But in today’s passage, I believe we have the greatest promise and gift given to us: We are given Jesus, the One who saves and Immanuel, the One who is with us. [APPLICATION: How does this wonderful truth affect us?].

The world (which includes all of us here) is promised God’s Son. That’s the second point. Now the final point and it’s a short one: Joseph accepts Jesus as his son.

POINT #3: JOSEPH ACCEPTS JESUS AS HIS SON (VV.24-25).

So God promises Joseph a son. And He reveals that the baby that Mary will be giving birth to is the fulfillment of God’s promise; the promise of Immanuel – God coming to His people. And his name is Jesus, the One who will save His people from their sins. And all of this is revealed in a dream in which an angel of the Lord appears and speaks. So what is Joseph’s response? Let’s read together starting at verse 24: “When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus”.

Joseph obeyed God’s every word. This was a testing of his faith. And he passed. He took Mary to be his wife. He remained faithful to God and to Mary by being by her side throughout all of this. He obeyed when the baby was born and named Him Jesus. Joseph believed what God had told him in that dream and accepted Jesus as his [adopted] son. APPLICATION: We, too, are called to believe and accept Jesus as the Son of God. We, too, must respond with obedience like Joseph did. He probably didn’t understand everything fully. But he held fast to God’s word and promises. Brothers and sisters, hold fast to Christ. Hold fast to His Word. And see how this Christmas, and every day moving forward can be filled with immense hope.



CONCLUSION

I mentioned earlier that the birth of Jesus our Immanuel was what Christmas is about. But it shouldn't simply end there. It's why Jesus came, born of the virgin Mary, that really addresses the hope we have. Jesus had to do more than be born. And maybe that's why Jesus didn't tell us to remember His birth. We are commanded to proclaim the Lord's death and resurrection until He returns. Jesus came to die on the cross as a gift to us; to save us from our sins. And He rose again and conquered sin and death for us! This is why His birth is so important. And every day, we cling onto another promise that He will come again. He will return. And on that glorious day, we will be with Him for all eternity in heaven. Brothers and sisters, do you believe in the birth of Jesus Christ? But not just that, do you believe in the risen and returning Son of God?

Pause and just think for a moment who is promising you this. This is the God who spoke the world and everything in it into being. He is the Creator of the universe. He is God who rules over all creation. He rules over every star in the sky, every mountain peak, every grain of sand, the sun and the moon, all the oceans and all the deserts of the earth. This is Jesus. And this Jesus, who is God, came to a fallen world who was bound by sin and endured the penalty of sin and stood in the place of sinners like you and me. He did this so that we could be rescued from our sin and reconciled to God. This is why Jesus came. And this is who is with us.

The birth of the Messiah is a joyous occasion. But perhaps we tend to forget this wonderful truth which leads us to doubt and go astray. As we head towards Christmas, let us once again be in awe and wonder of this miracle, this promise that was fulfilled, and this gift given to us. Enjoy your time with family and friends eating great food and unwrapping the wonderful presents and gifts. I'm super excited to see my niece and nephew open their gifts this year. All of that is good. But most of all, let us celebrate and rejoice in the birth of Jesus our Promised Son. Let's pray.