

*Sermon: Lessons from Joseph*  
*Text: Matthew 1:18-25*  
*Date: December 21, 2008*  
*Place: Jesup First UMC*

*Sermon: Surprise! You're Gonna Be A Daddy*  
*Text: Matthew 1:18-25*  
*Date: December 23, 2001*  
*Place: BVUMC*

How did she tell him the good news? One morning in 1994, Lori came back to bed, put her arm around me and said: "*Tucker, we're going to have a baby*" and we both cried. Four years later, Lori walked into the room and gladly announced: "*We're pregnant.*" And we celebrated. And then, in April 2001, Lori came into the room, put the pregnancy test on my chest and said: "*You ready to start looking for minivans?*" But I wonder how Mary told Joseph.

Our text tells us the Christmas story from Joseph's point of view. Now, the birth of a baby is a very confusing time for most daddies, because nobody really needs him. Mama gets baby showers and baby gets all the presents, but daddy just gets to stand in the corner and stay out of the way. And that's exactly what happens to Joseph. You see, nobody cares too much about Joseph.

I remember as a kid at Lee Valley Baptist Church, playing a shepherd in the Christmas program. Now, some of the boys wanted to play a shepherd and some wanted to play one of the Wise Men, but nobody wanted to play Joseph. You see, Joseph had to stand beside Mary, a girl, for the whole program. And there was a time or two when Joseph even had to tough Mary and if the world got out that you actually liked girls you were done in with the rest of the guys. And after all, Joseph didn't even have any lines to say; all Joseph had to do was stand

there, beside Mary – an insignificant character in the greatest story ever told.

But in Matthew's gospel, Joseph is a hero and a man of faith. About 2000 years ago, in a small insignificant village in Galilee called Nazareth, there lived a young man named Joseph. Now, we don't know much about Joseph but we can imagine that he was a simple man. His clothes were well worn. His hands a little callused. But he had a heart for God.

Now the custom of the day was arranged marriages. Parents would arrange for their children to marry one another for political or economic reasons. And so Joseph was set to marry a girl named Mary. Maybe they had known each other for years and as the time of their engagement got closer and closer, surely they were looking forward to be the big event.

Can't you just see Mary walking by the carpenter's shop several times a day just to get a glimpse of Joseph. Or Joseph making an extra trip or two down Mary's street on his way to repair a broken roof? Yet in spite of all the flirting and the anticipation, they knew it would be another year before they were officially married.

Then, one day when Joseph was working, Mary stopped by. And when she walked into the room, he could tell something was wrong. How did she tell him? Did she say, "*Surprise, you're going to be a daddy*"? Or did she say, "*Hey Joseph, I think we're going to need a carriage built for three*"?

We don't know. We don't know what she said or how she broke the news, but by Joseph's reaction we

can imagine what happened in that room. Maybe he turned his back on her, clenched his fist and hit the wall. Maybe he screamed at her or told her to leave. And we can imagine that she ran out of the room in tears, thinking to herself, *“If Joseph doesn’t understand, nobody will.”*

And now Joseph is left alone to ponder the situation. What will he do? Well, he could move up the wedding date and hope his family and friends wouldn’t ask any questions. Or he could divorce her. Or he could have her stoned for adultery. How could Mary do such a thing? And then, how could she lie to him like that? And with these things on his mind, he went to bed and just as he was drifting off to sleep, he said: *“I know what I’ll do; I’ll divorce her quietly.”*

But when he went to sleep that night, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said: **“Don’t be afraid to take Mary to be your wife for that which is conceived within her is of the Holy Spirit. She will have a son and YOU will give Him the name Jesus.”**

This morning, as we reflect on the Christmas story, I wonder what we can learn from Joseph. What is there about this story that will help us live for Jesus every day?

### **1. THE IMPORTANCE OF SEEKING GOD!**

Now, the Bible doesn’t say Joseph prayed or that he sought the face of God. But the Bible does tell us that Joseph was a righteous man, a man of faith. And there is a sense in these verses that Joseph was

wrestling with his situation. And I believe that indicates prayerfulness.

Have you ever been there ... between a rock and a hard place? Maybe you're there this morning. It's the most wonderful time of the year; and yet, people are hurting; families are struggling; Jobs are scarce; retirements have been cut. And everybody seems to be asking: what in the world am I going to do? Well, maybe we need to redirect that question and begin to seek God: "*Oh God, what am I going to do?*" Seek God!

## **2. THE PROMISE OF GOD'S ASSURANCE!**

Matthew tells us that in the midst of Joseph's struggle, God sent an angel to him in a dream with a life-changing message, a dream with a revelation of God's will for Joseph and Mary and for the entire world. The story that Mary had told him was true. Mary's baby had been conceived by the Holy Spirit and He was going to be the Messiah, the Savior of the world.

But God's messengers aren't always heavenly beings. Sometimes, they're people just like you and me. Phil is a homeless man who hangs around First Church. He sleeps in doorways during the night and walks the streets all day, talking to himself. And when it's cold outside, he sleeps in the church. Oh he's filthy and his clothes are nothing but rags. He never takes a bath.

Well, it was Christmas Eve and the members of First Church went through their normal Christmas Eve routine. First, there was the Communion Service and

then, everybody moved to the Fellowship Hall for refreshments. And then, suddenly, out of the sanctuary rose a magnificent voice, singing, "*O Holy Night.*" The voice was so awesome and so captivating that the members made their way back to the sanctuary to see who was singing. And to their amazement, it was Phil. He just stood there under the cross, with his eyes lifted to heaven, singing one Christmas carol after another. Tears began to flow down people's faces and what had been just a routine Christmas Eve became an encounter with Christ.

Friends, God's angels come to us all the time. It's just what we sometimes don't recognize them. The Bible says we sometimes entertain angels without even knowing it. Maybe Phil was one of them. But that's what the story of Joseph teaches us ... that even in the midst of hardship and difficulty, God comes to us; sending to us a message of assurance and hope.

### **3. THE REWARD OF TRUSTING GOD.**

It's one thing to struggle, to experience life's hardships and difficulties, but it's another thing all together to be caught between what makes sense and what God says. Common sense told Joseph to divorce Mary. Common sense said she had been unfaithful. Common sense said the whole town of Nazareth would label her an adulteress and laugh at him for staying with her. But God ... but God said: "*Don't be afraid to marry her. She hasn't been unfaithful. The baby was conceived by the Holy Spirit.*" Common

sense said: *“Stay away from this girl and this baby at all costs.”* But God said: **“You will give Him the name Jesus for He will save His people from their sins.”**

You know, sometimes God just doesn't make sense. The things of God seem foolish to us at times, but **“His thoughts are not our thoughts neither are His ways our ways.”** And when we find ourselves in times of difficulty and indecision, we can have confidence in God. He is trustworthy. Trust Him and see what happens!

Look at what happened to Joseph. He trusted the messenger of God. Can't you just imagine Joseph waking up the next morning and running down the street to Mary's house? And he took her in his arms and said: *“I believe you. It's going to be okay.”*

You see, once he thought she was lying; now he believed her and was ready to take her home as his wife. Once he had been ready to send her away; now, he wouldn't leave her side. And when the decree was issued that a census should be taken, he took his little Mary with him to Bethlehem. Once he could have cared less about the baby she carried; now, he took that baby in his arms, looked into his eyes and said: *“The angel of the Lord said to name you Jesus.”*

What's happening in your life this morning? Are there heartaches or headaches? Are you struggling? Then seek God; I know He'll reveal Himself to you and I know that if you trust Him, you just might experience the miracle of Christmas.