

Matthew 1:18-2:23

Introduction

- I. Christmas through the eyes of Joseph
 - A. Luke tells the Christmas story through the eyes of Mary. Matthew tells the story through the eyes of Joseph
 - B. The presence of Christ meant all sorts of surprises in Joseph's life

The Passage

- I. Scene 1 (Mt 1:18-25)
 - A. The names of Christ
 1. v. 21: Jesus (Hebrew: Joshua) = Yahweh saves
 2. v. 23: Immanuel = God with us
 - B. The first thing Jesus' presence brings into Joseph's life is devastation and sense of betrayal
 1. Engagements in 1st century were legally binding relationships that required a "divorce" to break them up. Engagement was a year-long process where the couple was considered "husband and wife" but didn't yet live together.
 2. Joseph would have been devastated to hear about Mary becoming pregnant
 3. But Joseph responds very graciously and chooses to divorce Mary privately rather than publically
 - C. The second thing Jesus' presence brings is utter surprise and awe
 1. An angel comes and tells Joseph his wife is telling the truth
 2. Joseph obeys and takes Mary home as his wife
 - Everyone will assume the child is his. He therefore takes on himself the stigma and shame associated with having a child out of wedlock in that conservative culture
- II. Scene 2 (Mt 2:1-12)

The visit of some very surprising men (wise men from the east) while the obvious people (Jewish leadership in Jerusalem) doesn't worship Jesus
- III. Scene 3 (Mt 2:13-18)

Joseph is commanded to flee to Egypt for an unspecified amount of time

 1. Egypt is 200 miles away—a long journey to a completely different culture
 2. The angel says "stay there until I tell you"
 - Joseph has no idea how long that will be, but he obeys and starts a completely different life in Egypt with his family
- IV. Scene 4: Mt 2:19-23

Joseph is commanded to return to Israel and settle in Nazareth

Nazareth is a tiny town on the outskirts in the hill country of Galilee

A town of obscurity and insignificance

Conclusion

- I. When Christ comes into a life he brings incredible surprises and changes

- A. For Joseph, Christ's presence meant, humiliation, adventure, leaving friends, home, family, etc. The center of gravity completely changed: his entire life now revolved around this child.
 - B. For us, Jesus similarly wants to be at the center of our lives. He wants to be in charge
 - 1. Luke 14:25ff: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple. In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple."
 - a. Jesus is saying he must be first in our lives: we must love him most
 - b. We have to hold everything else loosely
 - 2. Joseph held everything else loosely and was willing to let Jesus be in charge
 - C. Who is at the center of our lives?
 - 1. Do we determine a life of our own choosing and demand that Christ make the adjustments needed to give our lives meaning and satisfaction? (Christ must fit in my schedule, my budget, my relationships, etc.)
 - 2. Or, do we let Christ and his words in scripture determine our lives and do we make the necessary adjustments (in our schedule, budget, etc.) in order to live lives that are obedient to him?
- II. Joseph is a great example of putting Christ at the center and humbly obeying
- A. Joseph's quiet, humble, immediate obedience. Notice in each scene (1:20-21 and 1:24; 2:13 and 2:14; 2:20 and 2:21) Joseph's response is perfect obedience to what the angel commanded
 - B. Joseph never speaks in the gospels
 - Dale Bruner: "In every scene Joseph simply acts without speaking. His speech is to do the will of God. His hallmark is obedience—prompt, simple, and unspectacular obedience."
 - C. That's what faith is all about
 - = Hearing God's word, trusting it, and acting on it
 - D. So, in what situations are you are being called to simply obey?

Discussion Questions

1. As you consider challenges and demands placed on Joseph in Matthew 1-2, what impressed you or struck you most about the story?
2. Discuss your reaction to the following question posed on Sunday: In your relationship with Jesus, who adapts to whom? Do you adapt your life to Jesus and his commands, or do you ask Jesus to adapt his work to the life and goals you've already carved out for yourself?
3. Where is there a situation or area in your life where you hope to grow in following Joseph's simple, quiet, humble obedience to God?