



The Quiet Man

Matt 1:18-25

Iain Duncan-Smith – the quiet man. People remember him because in making himself out as The Quiet Man he rather shot himself in the foot politically as most people including his own party felt it was better to have somebody loud and opinionated – like politicians are supposed to be!

Tonight I'm going to look at another character who was central to the Christmas story. He's Mary's "other half", Joseph. Here he is depicted in a stained glass nativity scene – he's the one with the sombrero on! No words of his have ever been recorded – he's the Quiet Man of the Christmas Story.

The Christmas story tends to focus on Jesus and His birth - and quite right too as He is the focus of what it is all about. We remember all the other characters in Christmas too - Mary, the shepherds, the angels, the wise men, King Herod - but one guy we never really talk much about is Joseph.

Who was he? A carpenter. He was a regular kind of guy able to give the young woman he was engaged to a good financially stable marriage. He was a respectable chap, of the royal line of King David, although that was centuries ago and he was just an respectable working bloke living in an unspectacular town, Nazareth.

You can therefore imagine his surprise when he discovers she is expecting a child and he knows he's not the father. There is not that much about him but we can learn as much from people who said little as from those who said a lot!

You can imagine his first reaction from his point of view. "She's cheated on me! That's it." In those days a betrothal was as good as a marriage, but the girl being married was expected to be a virgin until the wedding day. The bridegroom had every right to stop the wedding if he thought the girl was not a virgin. In fact, girls found pregnant out of wedlock were usually publicly humiliated and even stoned – although the Roman governors didn't like that and banned it. But it brought disgrace on the girls family and on the family of the man who got her pregnant.

But we find that Joseph was a decent chap (a righteous man) and he wasn't in a hurry to disgrace her - he was going to "put her away privately". After all, as I said this morning if you were here then, who was going to believe Mary's story that she was pregnant because the Holy Spirit had caused her to conceive as a virgin. It just didn't happen.

But God intervened through an angel in a dream and explained what had happened. So Joseph realised that God had given him a special job to do - to act as a father to Mary's son even though he was not the father because that special child was who was to be "God with us". And Joseph married her, even though he knew that tongues were going to wag. The rest as they say is history.

We learn some important things from Joseph.

◆ Even the most ordinary of us are important to God

Joseph was just a carpenter from a not very important town in Galilee - Nazareth. He was just a "regular bloke" – a decent chap, yet God gave him a special job. To act as a father to His Son, Jesus Christ. Joseph brought Jesus up as his son and taught Him his trade and about life. We often speak of Mary but

forget forget that important role Joseph had - Jesus had two earthly parents. Although both Joseph and Jesus knew the truth about Jesus' true identity, to the world, Jesus was Joseph's son until the time He started to preach and teach.

This underlines an important truth in the Bible - we are all just as important to God. God loves each one of us and just as He blessed Joseph by giving him Jesus to look after. I'm special and you're special. In fact, God loves us so much that He wants to make us part of His family.

◆ Joseph listened to what God was saying to him and followed it

The first Christmas happened because Joseph was prepared to listen to what God was saying to him and taking it seriously. In fact, their lives depended on it when Joseph was told to go to Egypt.

Like Joseph, God has something to tell us too. Jesus came to this Earth for one purpose, because 30 years or so after these events, Jesus died on the cross but was raised again three days later. He died so that we could find forgiveness for the bad things and the mistakes that we have done in life, for the way in which we have displeased God - and we can find forgiveness and eternal life.

This evening God is offering us relationship with God and a new way of living that stretches eternally. And God isn't asking you to jump through hoops to get it, He's offering it to you as a gift. But like Joseph, to get it, we have to make a step of faith and do something about it. He listened to the angel and married Mary despite the risk that it would bring disgrace on him. We have to come before God and say we are sorry for the way we have ignored God and lived without Him and accept his gift of eternal life.

We are all going to be receiving gifts this Christmas, what about the one God is offering you - are you going to take it? Or pass?

◆ Joseph continued to listen to what God was saying to him

It wasn't the only time Joseph met the angel in a dream. He was also guided on three other occasions afterwards - to go to Egypt, to go home and to go to Nazareth and that's all in chapter 2 which we didn't read this evening. On the first occasion it was critical for their lives, in the other two it was more mundane guidance. It seemed a small thing to do - just part of life. God wants to be involved in all parts of our lives - He is a loving Father who is interested in all His children. He's there to walk with us day by day through all the difficulties and all the joys of life - to give it purpose and meaning.

God wants to know you personally this morning and to walk with you day by day. Do you know Him? As I said, the gift of knowing Him is there for you now. All you need to do is accept that Jesus has died for you on the Cross to bring you into relationship with God. You can accept Jesus into your life right now.

Why not pray this prayer with me:

Father God
I want to know you.
I need you.
Thank you that you have always loved me.
Thank you for sending Jesus
Thank you that He died for me for me so that I might know You.
Please forgive me for all the sins I have committed.
I accept Your gift of eternal life
I turn from all the things that displease you
And to desire to follow You in newness of life.
In Jesus' name
Amen