



The Quiet Man (Matthew 1:18-25, 2:13-15, 19-23)

GREAT SUPPORTING ACTS NATIVITY SCENE

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 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. 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 in the Bible about him. He was one of the "quiet men" of the Bible 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. But we find that Joseph was a righteous man - he was a decent bloke - and he wasn't in a hurry to disgrace her, which was what he could have done - he was going to "put her away privately".

But God intervened and explained what had happened and 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". It wasn't the only time Joseph met the angel. He was also warned that Herod was out to kill Jesus and took Mary and Jesus to Egypt until Herod died - we're going to look at that a bit on Sunday.

We learn some important things from Joseph. Even the smallest 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" 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. Joseph was that "righteous man" chosen because of the sort of father he would be. 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 His children.

The second thing we learn about Joseph was that he listened to what God was saying to him and followed it. He took a step of faith and did what God said through the angel. 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.

CROSS

Like Joseph, God has something to tell us too. Jesus came to this Earth for one purpose. Here it is. *For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.* John 3:16. 30 years or so after the first Christmas, 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.

GIFT

This morning God is offering forgiveness and a new way of living - eternal life. But like Joseph, to get it, we have to make a step of faith. 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.

MAKE GIFT OURS

We are all going to be receiving gifts this Christmas, but to make a gift ours, we need to take it and receive it for ourselves. Joseph continued to listen to what God was saying to him. We read later in Matthew 2, how Joseph was approached a third time by an angel and was told to go back and live in his own land. 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? You can do as Joseph did by accepting 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 for dying on the cross for me

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

TITLE

Matthew 1:18-25

18 This was how the birth of Jesus Christ took place. His mother Mary was engaged to Joseph, but before they were married, she found out that she was going to have a baby by the Holy Spirit.

19 Joseph was a man who always did what was right, but he did not want to disgrace Mary publicly; so he made plans to break the engagement privately.

20 While he was thinking about this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, descendant of David, do not be afraid to take Mary to be your wife. For it is by the Holy Spirit that she has conceived. 21 She will have a son, and you will name him Jesus--because he will save his people from their sins."

22 Now all this happened in order to make come true what the Lord had said through the prophet, 23 "A virgin will become pregnant and have a son, and he will be called Immanuel" (which means, "God is with us"). 24 So when Joseph woke up, he married Mary, as the angel of the Lord had told him to. 25 But he had no sexual relations with her before she gave birth to her son. And Joseph named him Jesus.