

SERMON NOTES 18 December 2022

sunnysidechurch

Bible Reading: Matthew 1:18-25

Questions for Discussion

1. What are your feelings about the part Joseph played in the Christmas story?
2. What do the descriptions of Jesus as “he will save his people from their sins” and Immanuel “God with us” mean to you?
3. What do you see as the relative importance of Christmas and Easter? Is one more important than the other?
4. How can “the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, the perseverance of the wise men, the obedience of Joseph and Mary, and the peace of the Christ-child” be our this Christmas?

Main points of the sermon

I once was involved in a wedding where the bride was pregnant and the bridegroom wasn't the father. In our gospel reading for today, Mary is engaged to be married to Joseph, Mary is pregnant but Joseph isn't the father. We read that Joseph “considered” the matter. I wonder what Joseph really felt, righteous though he was, he must have felt anger and betrayal, and wondering whether he could trust Mary again.

I often wonder whether Joseph has been given the full credit for what he did, to continue with his proposed marriage to Mary. At what must have been a low point the angel appeared to him in a dream. Mary had been faithful after all, the child had been conceived by the Holy Spirit. When he

woke up, he went through with his marriage with Mary and he became a faithful and loving husband and father.

In a dream Joseph is reminded that he is the son of David. (This chapter in Matthew's gospel begins with a family tree which shows that Joseph is descended from David and Abraham). The child will be called Jesus for “he will save his people from their sins” (there is a play on the words in Aramaic, which Joseph and Mary would have spoken). Matthew quotes from Isaiah 7 about the virgin birth and the name Emmanuel meaning “God with us”.

Joseph's part in the Christmas story was vital. From the family of David, Israel's greatest king, he became the faithful husband of Mary and guardian of Jesus. Like Joseph may we be faithful in obeying the call of God and play our part in serving our Lord and Saviour.

A Prayer

God our Father
who from the family of your servant David
raised up Joseph the carpenter
to be the guardian of your incarnate Son
and husband of the blessed Virgin Mary
give us grace to follow him
in faithful obedience to your commands
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

John Kirkby