

## LIVING EXTRAORDINARILY; Matthew 1:18-25

You know the moment on Christmas day, you sat down to “The Meal.” Everyone’s at the table and like the Grinch says “And they feast and feast on rare roast beast.” When you’re done, you’re so full, you say, I’ll never eat another bite again.

- ***Then at 6 o’clock you’re in the kitchen looking more.***

**Looking for more**, that’s what we’re talking about today. ***We’re looking for more about Joseph!*** It seems he gets the least attention in the Christmas story. We hear about Mary, Jesus, shepherds and wise men. But not much about Joseph.

- When you look at the Christmas story in Matthew 1 and 2, and Luke 1 and 2, Joseph doesn’t say a word. Almost like he’s got a bit part, not really in the background; but he doesn’t have any lines either.
- But on the other hand, Joseph’s life is a message to us. *We watch* Joseph, we don’t *hear* Joseph, his actions speak louder than words. He’s just an ordinary guy, **but Joseph teaches us about living an extraordinary life.**

As we look at Joseph’s life, **I want us to remember one important question - How does God want to use you to accomplish His will in somebody else’s life?** That’s what we’re going to look at, “How God wants to use you and me to accomplish his will **in someone else’s life.**”

We’re looking at Matthew 1, we read, *“This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.”*

- Why would he divorce her if they’re only engaged? In Jewish culture, when you’re engaged, it’s a legally binding relationship. The only way out was death or divorce. **He’s engaged to Mary and decided “quiet divorce.”**

When we meet Joseph, he’s a broken, confused man. His fiancé is pregnant and it’s not his kid. Think of the heartache he’s feeling, the shame, and the disgust.

**How would you feel if you got that news?** You’d feel angry, betrayed and sad. Joseph heard Mary’s story, and likely thought it a lame excuse, too much to believe.

- Who can blame him? Who could believe a story like Mary’s? **It seems impossible this could happen, so how could he possibly believe her?** As he’s trying to decide what to do, he could have considered killing her. Before you judge him, it was legal in Jewish culture - an adulterous woman could be stoned to death.

- Joseph likely thought about divorcing her publicly. Making a spectacle of her. Degrading her in front of everybody so they knew it wasn't his fault and shaming her in front of the world. After all, **Joseph had questions**, "Who's the father of this child? Who's the guy that has ruined my life? I thought I knew Mary. I thought I could trust her?"
- He could have thought, "Mary is either lying or she's crazy. Who in their right mind would make up a story – that God made her pregnant? **But she's so convinced that her story is true.** Maybe that's the problem, she lost her mind. If Mary is delusional, then for me to publicly shame her, isn't good for her. I do love her, but I can't go on like this. So maybe the only thing I can do is divorce Mary quietly and somehow move on with my life.

That's what it seems Joseph did because the Bible tells us in verse 19, "*Because Joseph was a righteous man he decided not to expose her to public disgrace but to divorce her quietly.*" Because he was a righteous man and made this decision.

### **What does this tell you about a righteous person?**

- *The world portrays righteous people as harsh, judgmental, mean spirited. But that's not righteous. That's self-righteous.*

**One of the lessons we learn from Joseph's life is that a righteous man, a righteous woman doesn't seek revenge.** A righteous person is merciful and gentle; they don't drag other people's failures out in front of the whole world and shame. A righteous person is not willing to disgrace another person publicly.

But Joseph probably felt his dreams of a future was over and he had to start his life over again. The girl everyone knew he was going to marry and the life he was looking forward to... had ended. **Or so he thought!**

- So he goes to bed, exhausted in mind, body and spirit. He prays he can fall asleep, because life feels like a nightmare.

**But as we're about to see God intervene the life of an ordinary man for extraordinary purposes.**

**Before we move on in the story, I must ask, what are your dreams?** Do you think of yourself as an ordinary person? What does your future look like?

Whatever your dreams are, what will you do if God decides to interrupt them? What will you do if God shows you that he's got a plan, you weren't planning on? [So, let's look at some principles on how to live an extraordinary life.](#)

- **OBEY GOD IN SPITE OF THE IMPOSSIBILITY.**

Mary's story sounded impossible... but there is a verse, people like to quote, "*Nothing is impossible with God.*" You might even have it on your refrigerator or bumper sticker. Nothing is impossible with God.

**You know where "nothing is impossible with God" comes from? It comes from Mary's story of her pregnancy.** In Luke chapter 1. So the angel has told Mary what's about to happen. And she says "*How will this be, Mary asked the angel, 'since I am a virgin?' The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God.'*"

So it's in the context of this life that's about to happen, that this miracle takes place and the angel says nothing is impossible with God.

- ***What does it mean when the Bible says, nothing is impossible with God?***

When you look at the word "nothing" in Greek, it isn't referring to events or something. The word "nothing" actually means "no word." It's used in the Greek language as the word *rhema*. If you do a word study, you'll find that *rhema*, is the Greek word for "spoken word."

**What it means is, "That which has been spoken, was by a living voice."** So the angel is saying "No spoken word of God is impossible. If God says it, he can do it."

- **No word of God will lack the power of God for its fulfillment.**

If God says it, God has the power to make it happen, no matter how impossible it seems. If God can create life from the dust of the ground just by the Word of his mouth and the power of his Holy Spirit, then God can certainly create life in the womb of a virgin simply by saying it, and the power of his Spirit.

**So: What has God said to you that seems to be impossible?** What promise has he given you that seems to be impossible? If God said it, God can make it happen.

- **My impossibility is God's opportunity.**

If God tells you something, don't tell God it's impossible. **Joseph was about to find out that his impossibility really was possible.**

Let's continue on in Matthew 1. "*After he had considered this, [after he had made up his mind to divorce Mary] an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you [Joseph] are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins' . . . When Joseph woke up, [everybody say "woke up"] he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as*

*his wife. But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name, Jesus.”*

**So God spoke to this brokenhearted ordinary man, spoke to Joseph in a dream and gave him an assignment that would change the world. It was about to cost him dearly, because Joseph was about to step into somebody else’s story.**

**Let me ask: Have you ever gotten caught up in somebody else’s story?** You’re going along in life. You’ve got your plans and all of a sudden, you find yourself in the middle of something you didn’t want or start. But, you know in your heart of hearts it’s the right thing to do, so you lay your plan aside and you help or support that person to see what God wants to do in their life.

**That’s what happened to Joseph.** Also, the angel called him Joseph, son of David. That’s God saying, “Joseph, I know you and I’m giving you an assignment, a destiny, that is bigger than any dream you will ever have, it will change the world.

Mary is telling the truth and you have a role to play in her life.

- Joseph, you’re going to be the guardian of the Messiah, and you’re to give him the name – Jesus. You’re going to help me accomplish my will in Mary’s life and help me accomplish my will for the world. I’ve got a plan for you.

Our simple steps of obedience when God asks us to do something there’s a ripple effect to your obedience. What you do may seem small and insignificant. But you don’t know the impact that your act of obedience could have. **Are you willing to do what God says even if it seems impossible?**

- **OBEY GOD IN SPITE OF THE INCONVENIENCE.**

Luke chapter 2 *“In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world . . . And everyone went to his own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. [Remember the angels said, Joseph, son of David. He belonged to the line of David...] He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.”*

- **Think about this trip. Mary’s 9 months pregnant and must go from Nazareth to Bethlehem. That’s 80 miles on a donkey, 9 months pregnant.**
- **The trip wasn’t Joseph’s idea, it was Caesar’s. He wanted a census to see how many people live in his kingdom so he could see what revenue the taxes would make. Caesar wanted everyone to go to their hometown to be counted.**

Can you imagine the confusion and inconvenience? Can you imagine the economic upheaval and turmoil that Caesar put all these people through? Because people have to close businesses, so they can go some other place to be counted. Why can't they be counted where they were?

- *Sometimes, God uses human stupidity to accomplish his will and that's what God did. Jesus had to be born in Bethlehem, but Joseph and Mary are in Nazareth. So God used Caesar to bring them to Bethlehem.*
- *In fact, a prophecy in Micah 5 said, "But you Bethlehem out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel whose origins are from of old, from days of eternity." So Jesus had to be born in Bethlehem.*
- So while Mary carried Jesus, and Joseph carried Mary. He protected and provided for Mary. Because Joseph did what God told him to do, Mary was able to complete her mission and do what God told her to do.

*Let's ask again, "How does God want to use you to accomplish his will in somebody else's life? That person going through a difficult time, a test, a trial, or hardship and they need your support? Who do you know has been called by God to be involved in a ministry and they need your support, your help so they can do it?"*

**God placed you in another person's life for a reason, but you might be thinking "I really don't want to be bothered right now."** It's not a good time. I've got stuff going on. I've got my own life to live.

- Have you considered the possibility that in this moment, *the purpose for your life isn't really about your life at all?* It might be about accomplishing God's will in someone else's life. To support and encourage them and help them.

**Because Joseph said yes to God and did what he was told to do, Joseph's hands were the first hands to touch Jesus. What a reward!**

- **OBEY GOD IN SPITE OF THE COST.**

Obey God in spite of the cost. The Bible says this in Matthew 1:24. We're about to see what this cost him. It says "*When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded.*" When Joseph woke up, it wasn't just a physical awakening – it was a spiritual awakening. Joseph awakened to what God was doing.

There are two more times in Joseph's story we see in Matthew 2 we read of times where God told Joseph to get up and do something, and Joseph gets up and does it. *I think we can summarize all of this, the keys to an extraordinary life in this last verse. From Psalm 119:60 "I will hurry, without delay, to obey your commands."*

**Let's pray:**

- Heavenly Father, I want to be like Joseph. I want to be a person you can trust to obey you immediately. That's the kind of person you work through in the Bible. And I want to be the kind of person that you can work through today.
- Help me not to fear anything but you. Help me not to be selective in my obedience.
- Lord as I enter this New Year may I do so with a new heart, with new ears, with new faith and a new commitment to obey you in spite of the impossibility, in spite of the inconvenience, and in spite of the cost.
- Maybe you've never opened your life to Jesus. Maybe this is the moment that you've been waiting for, to invite the Lord into your life and make things right with him so that you can enter into his plan for you. If you've never opened your life to Jesus before **then pray this way in your heart:**

Just say, Lord I don't even understand all of this, I know that you came to save the world and I need you to save me from my sins and from myself. So Lord, as much as I know how I open my heart to you and I ask you, Jesus, come into my life. By your Spirit come into my life. Forgive me of my sins. And put me on a pathway to living the kind of life you meant me to live.

Teach me to be a person who lives according to your Word, and use me in a way that will change the world. Even if that means that I support someone else. I give my life to you now. In Jesus name I pray. Amen.