

The Unsung Hero of Christmas

[Matthew 1:18-25](#)

Mat 1:18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.

Mat 1:19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily.

Mat 1:20 But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.

Mat 1:21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

Mat 1:22 Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying,

Mat 1:23 Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

Mat 1:24 Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife:

Mat 1:25 And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.

Every year during this season, we hear a lot about the various characters of Christmas. People like Mary, the shepherds, the wise men (Who incidentally didn't even show up until a couple of years later! Go figure!). Even the sheep, donkeys and turtle doves are portrayed and the event is reenacted year after year. (⇒ I won't even mention all the modern additions we have made to the Christmas story, some of whom are more real to our children than Jesus Himself!)

However, one fellow, namely Joseph, is treated merely as an extra. Now, he shows up in the Christmas program, but he brings no gifts, he sings no songs and he makes no speeches. He just stands there in his sandals and his robes, watching the scene unfold around him.

Well, this morning, I want to set the record straight! As I read the Christmas story, I am convinced that Joseph possessed certain elements in his life that make him stand out as The Unsung Hero Of Christmas. The characteristics we see evidenced in this man's life teach us how we should go about the business of serving God, even if he is an unsung hero of the faith.

Let's look in on this scene from Joseph's life and see what it is, that makes this man stand out as a hero in this story. By the way, those elements that were active in the life of Joseph can make us useful to the Lord too, if they are found active in our lives!

I. Joseph's Character

Mat 1:18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.

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A. He Was a Consecrated Man

The Bible tells us that Joseph was A "just" man. This is the Greek word *dikaios*, and it means *equitable* (in character or act); by implication *innocent, holy* (absolutely or relatively). If we take all the big words out of the way, this means that Joseph was a man who lived for God. As far as the Law was concerned, he was blameless. As far as his heart was concerned, he walked by faith in the Lord. He was a righteous man!

B. He Was a Compassionate Man

For just a moment, try to put yourself in Joseph's place. You are betrothed to Mary, which is the same as a legal marriage, except there is to be no physical intimacy. And all of a sudden, you discover that this woman is pregnant. Of course, you would think the worse. I mean this is the kind of thing guaranteed to raise at least one of your eyebrows.

Yet, when Joseph hears all these things, instead of reacting in anger, he responds in love and compassion toward Mary. He seeks a way to sever their relationship without publicly humiliating her.

What he could have done?

Deu 22:13 If any man take a wife, and go in unto her, and hate her,

Deu 22:14 And give occasions of speech against her, and bring up an evil name upon her, and say, I took this woman, and when I came to her, I found her not a maid:

Deu 22:15 Then shall the father of the damsel, and her mother, take and bring forth *the tokens of the damsel's virginity* unto the elders of the city in the gate:

Deu 22:16 And the damsel's father shall say unto the elders, I gave my daughter unto this man to wife, and he hateth her;

Deu 22:17 And, lo, he hath given occasions of speech *against her*, saying, I found not thy daughter a maid; and yet these *are the tokens of my daughter's virginity*. And they shall spread the cloth before the elders of the city.

Deu 22:18 And the elders of that city shall take that man and chastise him;

Deu 22:19 And they shall amerce him in an hundred *shekels* of silver, and give *them* unto the father of the damsel, because he hath brought up an evil name upon a virgin of Israel: and she shall be his wife; he may not put her away all his days.

Deu 22:20 But if this thing be true, *and the tokens of virginity* be not found for the damsel:

Deu 22:21 Then they shall bring out the damsel to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her with stones that she die: because she hath wrought folly in Israel, to play the whore in her father's house: so shalt thou put evil away from among you.

See, the Law afforded Joseph the opportunity to have Mary put to death. At the least, a public divorce would have left her destitute financially, and because of the baby, no man would have wanted to marry her. Joseph just wanted to do what was right by Mary! Our text tells us that he didn't want to make a public example of her, and had decided to make this go away privately.

⇒ Imagine how the Christmas story would have been altered had Joseph reacted differently! How we respond in a crisis reveals a lot about our character. When things are going smoothly we are able to hide a lot of things that become evident in a time of crisis.

These two truths concerning Joseph's character are a lesson for all those who want to be used by God. You see, God uses those who are clean and He uses those who are tender hearted. Of course, these were traits found in the life of the Lord Jesus Himself. Jesus was God, but as a boy, He saw godly behavior modeled by his surrogate father Joseph.

II. Joseph's Call

Mat 1:20 But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.

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Mat 1:22 Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying,

Mat 1:23 Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

As Joseph deliberated the entire situation he found himself in, the Lord spoke to him and placed a call on his life, just as he had done with Mary. This call to service was, spiritually speaking, a great call and one that would have honored any man. However, from a purely human standpoint, it was a call that placed a huge amount of weight on this man's shoulders. This was also a call that would force him to endure a great amount of shame. His was a call that involved three elements.

A. The Revelation of a Person

Mat 1:20 But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.

The Lord's call to Joseph was designed to help him deal with his hurts and fears. The angel of the Lord told him plainly that this child growing in Mary's womb was the Son of God. The Lord was calling Joseph to be the surrogate father to the Messiah!

B. The Revelation of a Purpose

Mat 1:21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

This verse tells us the child's gender, the child's name and the child's purpose in life. Joseph is told that this child will be THE One Who will provide salvation from sin.

C. The Revelation of a Plan

Mat 1:22 Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying,

Mat 1:23 Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

Then, Joseph is told that God is working out His eternal purpose in the lives of Mary and Joseph. God is going to bring to pass all the prophecies concerning the Messiah and He is going to use Joseph to be a part of it!

In all of this, Joseph is an example to other believers. When a crisis arose in his life, he sought the Lord's face. Instead of reacting harshly and abruptly, Joseph reacted in faith waiting on the Lord for guidance and direction, and he was helped by God!)

Joseph's call is also an encouragement to people like you and me. When we consider that Joseph was a humble character and that he was basically a nobody, it gives hope to you and me! In my opinion, to be called to be part of God's plan is an honor beyond compare, and it is an honor shared by every child of God! Look with me at the apostle Paul's assessment his call to minister.

1Ti 1:12 And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry;

1Ti 1:13 Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did *it* ignorantly in unbelief.

1Ti 1:14 And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

1Ti 1:15 This *is* a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

1Ti 1:16 Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

III. Joseph's Conduct

Mat 1:24 Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife:

Mat 1:25 And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.

When Joseph received his call from God, he altered all of his plans and put away all of his considerations and simply went and did what the Lord said to do. Notice what the Bible says about Joseph's conduct.

A. He Was Submissive

Very simply, Joseph did what the Lord told him to do! I want you to see:

1. **His Humility** - According to history, there were three theories surrounding Mary's pregnancy. They are:
 - A. The baby was Joseph's.
 - B. The baby belonged to Mary's secret lover.
 - C. Mary had been raped by a Roman soldier.

Any of these situations would have produced a situation that would bring shame on both Mary and Joseph. Yet, when Joseph went ahead and married Mary, most people probably assumed that she and Joseph had not been willing to wait until the appropriate time to consummate their marriage. Of course, there were some in that day who continued to call Jesus' birth into question throughout His ministry.

Joh 6:41 The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven.

Joh 6:42 And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven?

One more passage:

Joh 8:37 I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you.

Joh 8:38 I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father.

Joh 8:39 They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.

Joh 8:40 But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham.

Joh 8:41 Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, *even* God.

Of course, all of this brought shame to the life of Joseph, but just like his adopted Son, he despised the shame and because of the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross!

In this, Joseph is a lesson for every person who wants to serve the Lord this evening. Our duty before the Lord is to humbles ourselves under God's mighty hand.

Jas 4:6 But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

And because of this, just like Joseph we are to do what it says in verse 7.

Jas 4:7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

1Pe 5:6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

1Pe 5:7 Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

Regardless of the call God places on our lives, there will be times when the world, the flesh and the devil will try to make us ashamed of who we are what we stand for. Yet, we should submit ourselves to the will of God and bear His shame regardless of what it may involve!

Look also at:

2. His Obedience - Without quibbling or hesitation, Joseph did that which he had been commanded to do. What a lesson for the children of God! Often the voice of God will come to us and we will debate with God and with ourselves and hesitate instead of responding in swift obedience. Let us learn the truth this morning that obedience to the Lord is far more blessed than anything else we can do for Him.

1Sa 15:22 And Samuel said (to Saul), Hath the LORD *as great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey *is better* than sacrifice, *and* to hearken than the fat of rams.

1Sa 15:23 For rebellion *is as* the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness *is as* iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from *being* king.

Obedience is what He desires and truthfully it is the one thing we can always deliver! Whether we do it or not is another story.

Finally this morning, I would like you to see that:

B. Joseph Was Surrendered

Mat 1:25 And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.

[Verse 25](#) tells us that Joseph was a man who was willing to place the will of the Lord ahead of his own rights and desires. He respected Mary's virginity until after Jesus had been born! Even when it was inconvenient, Joseph willingly laid aside his own rights so that he could honor the Lord! What an example for you and me!

There are times when doing what God's wants you to do isn't the easiest thing to do. There are times when doing His will is not the most convenient thing to do. However, doing His will is always the RIGHT thing to do! We should commit in our lives to come to the place where we lose our will to the will of God! Wouldn't it be great to be remembered as a person that was surrendered to the plan of God without reservation and without compromise! My brothers and sisters that is varsity. Maybe that should be at the top of our resolutions in the coming year.

Eventually, Mary delivered her baby. On that great night, Joseph did as he had been commanded when he took his Creator into his arms and called his name JESUS. Now, this year in Christmas plays and programs all around the world Joseph will take a backseat to shepherds, wise men, animals and other characters. However, to me, this man stands out as the real hero of Christmas, because of the lessons he teaches us about obedience to God and surrender to God. Let's take these lessons from the life of Joseph and make sure the same characteristics are found in us, not just at Christmas, but every day of the year!