

“The sacrifices we make” Matthew 2:13-18 Holy Innocents 2024

There was a Christmas play where a little boy desperately wanted to be Joseph. But when the parts were handed out, his biggest rival was given that part, and he was assigned to be the inn keeper instead. He was really bitter about this. So, during all the rehearsals he kept plotting in his mind what he might do to get even with his rival who was Joseph. Finally, the night of the performance, Mary and Joseph walked across the stage. They knocked on the door of the inn, and the innkeeper opened the door and asked them what they wanted. Joseph answered, “We’d like to have a room for the night.” Suddenly the innkeeper threw the door open wide and said, “Great, come on in and I’ll give you the best room in the house.” “That wasn’t in the script!” Joseph thought. For a few long seconds poor little Joseph didn’t know what to do. Then finally, an idea occurred to him. He pretended to look inside “the inn” and then - turning to Mary he said: “No wife of mine is going to stay in dump like this. Come on, Mary, let’s go to the barn.”

Now, did Joseph ever say anything like that in the Gospels? No! In fact I’ve done a study on the nativity stories in Matthew and Luke, and I found that Joseph never said anything, anywhere in the Gospels. Not a single word.

In Matthew 1:18-24 we’re told: “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. But after he had considered this, 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 are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins. All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet: ‘The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him

“The sacrifices we make” Matthew 2:13-18 Holy Innocents 2024 Immanuel’— which means, ‘God with us.’ When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.” Matthew 1:24. Joseph never said a single word. He simply obeyed God and took Mary to be his wife.

In Matthew 2:13-15 we’re told that “When (the Wisemen) had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him." So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod.” Matthew 2: 15 Again, Joseph never says a word. He simply obeyed God and went to Egypt.

Then, in Matthew 2:22 we read “When he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee.” Matthew 2:22. Again, Joseph never says a word. He simply obeyed God and went to Nazareth.

Joseph was kind of like the “silent partner” in the story. He never speaks up, never complains. He just does what he’s told. And you need believe that this couldn’t have been easy. Let me put it this way: Joseph didn’t expect to raise a boy that he wasn’t the father of. He didn’t expect to be traipsing around countryside on the run from Herod’s soldiers. He didn’t expect to live in Egypt. And he didn’t expect to be responsible for the training and protection of Son of God. I mean, before Mary got pregnant, his future was predictable. He was a skilled craftsman... known for his honesty & righteousness. He knew what to do and when to do it. His life was comfortable. His was not exactly a 9 to 5 workday, but his town and his family would support him as he did what husbands and fathers

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were supposed to do. He was just an ordinary guy, from an ordinary family, living
in an ordinary town, with an ordinary job. (Chris Tiller)

But then Jesus came along, and life got complicated quickly. For the next 5
years his family was constantly on the move. In Bethlehem they ended up staying
in a barn; then they probably lived with relatives for a couple years. Then Joseph
had to take his family into a foreign country for about 2 years. And if Herod ever
found them... well, that would not have been a good thing! When Joseph
proposed to Mary... that wasn't what he signed up for. But because of Jesus,
Joseph's life became unpredictable and confusing. He literally sacrificed his future
for Jesus!

The question is: was it worth it for Joseph to do that? Was it worth it for him
to sacrifice his future for Jesus? Well... yeah! First, God knew Joseph by name.
Joseph may not have said much but God mentioned Joseph's name about fifteen
times in the Gospels. And every time the Christmas story is told... there's Joseph;
And God tells us “Joseph (Mary's) husband was a righteous man...” (Matthew
1:19). Not many men are called righteous men in Scripture: in a brief search I
only found a few men who were called “righteous men”: Abel, Enoch, Noah,
Abraham... that's about it. Joseph was one of a very select group of men that God
wanted you and I to know about... because they were righteous. God was saying –
“Try to be like these guys because those men are the kind who impresses Me!”; so
Joseph was a “righteous man” - and that's probably why God chose him to be the
earthly step-father for Jesus. God knew Joseph could be trusted to do what God
wanted done. God spoke, and Joseph obeyed; and lastly, God supplied for Joseph's
needs. When Joseph and Mary had to go down into Egypt... a journey of about
430 miles. And God supplied financial help they needed to survive – the Gold,

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Frankincense, and Myrrh. As Psalm 34:19 says “A righteous man may have many troubles, but the LORD delivers him from them all.”

So, it was worth it for Joseph to go through all he did to be used by God. But – make no mistake – Joseph sacrificed because Jesus was in his life. And let’s face it, everybody that Jesus touches... is called to sacrifice. Jesus said “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. Luke 9:23

If Jesus is in our lives, we are called to a life of sacrifice - to deny ourselves; to pick up our cross every day; and to follow Jesus! In fact, Jesus said “Whoever does NOT take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.” Matthew 10:38-39

Now, here’s the deal – you and I - our lives have a plan! When you became a Christian by the power of the Holy Spirit, you signed on to being used by God. So now you and I have a purpose in our lives. Our lives have meaning and value... because God has given us purpose. Ephesians 2:10 “We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” When you first became a Christian, God started working on you (we’re His workmanship). God created you in Christ Jesus to do good works that He had prepared beforehand just for you to walk in them. That means we’ve got a reason to get up in the morning. We have something important to do for God. We are valuable to God.

Now a little bit ago I listed all the all the sacrifices that Joseph made when Jesus came into his life. But what’s interesting about Joseph’s story is... he never complained! God spoke, Joseph listened... and then Joseph obeyed. His whole life was turned upside down, but he simply trusted and obeyed. Someone once noted that one of the undercurrents in the Christmas story is that the people who were

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the major players were really inconvenienced by Jesus’ birth. They literally sacrificed parts of their lives for Jesus.

The Wisemen were inconvenienced. They left their homes and families and traveled several hundred miles to a foreign country. It would have been so much easier for them to send a letter of congratulations; The shepherds were inconvenienced... having to leave their flocks and travel several miles on foot to find Jesus in the manger; Mary was inconvenienced. She had to give birth in a stable. She might have hoped for a bed with clean sheets instead of bed of hay but that’s NOT what she got! And of course, there was Joseph: Joseph was inconvenienced. And yet, none of these folks ever complained. Why not?

Do you remember after Jesus rose from the dead he sat down to eat with His disciples? Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon, son of John, do you love me ...?’ And Peter said to him, ‘Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Feed my lambs.’

A bunch of us pastors get together every month, and one of the things we talk about is sermons. And one of them mentioned they were going to ask this question of his congregation: What have you sacrificed for Jesus? But I’m not going to ask that question this morning. Instead, I’m going to ask you to imagine Jesus asking you: Do you love Me? And if you say yes, imagine Jesus saying: If you love me feed my lambs; tend to my sheep; feed my sheep. If you love me, do whatever you’ve gotta do to take care of my people – my sheep - because I know you love me.

Amen.