

8.16.20
Immaculate Conception of the Son of God
Matthew 1:18-25

This morning we are going to continue our look at Matthew's Gospel by looking at the conception of Jesus and Mary and Joseph's response to what was happening.

Let's begin by reading **Matthew 1:18**, "**Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit.**"

Luke tells us a little more detail in his Gospel.

Luke 1:26-27, "**Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendant of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.**"

30-33, "**The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High God and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.'**"

Tying this into last week's sermon, our God is a promise keeping God. In this passage we see mentioned David and Jacob. Remember the genealogy of Jesus and the promises God made to Abraham and David.

Jacob was Abraham's grandson and his name was changed to Israel. This is origin of the name given to the people of God. The promises of Abraham were to make from his seed a great nation and to bless all of the families of the earth.

Israel was a great nation for a season and is still great in the sense that through Israel all the nations of the world have been blessed through the birth of the Israelite Jesus.

David of course was David of Goliath fame and the most successful and blessed king of the nation of Israel.

Some of the promises he was given by God was his kingdom would endure forever and the King of Kings that would rule this forever kingdom would come through his lineage. Within this passage we read the prophetic fulfillment of these promises.

“The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.”

1,000 years after this promise was given to David, 2,000 years after the promise was given Abraham, God moves to bring into the world a King who would rule forever.

As I said last week, God is a promise keeping God. His timing might be a little different than ours but He is faithful to His word.

Let’s go back to Luke for a minute. **Luke 1:34-35, 37, “Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I am a virgin?’ The angel answered and said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God. For nothing is impossible with God.”**

Let’s think about what is happening with Mary for a moment.

At this time Mary is probably a young woman of about sixteen. Nobody knows for sure but it was pretty common this was the age when a woman would get married and begin her family.

As some of us look back into the history of our families, we know even 70, 80 years ago getting married in one's teens was not uncommon. My mother and grandmother both married at this age.

A sixteen year old back then was a lot different then the sixteen year old today. Children grew up fast, taking on responsibilities and becoming a working part of the family at a very early age.

This was probably who Mary was but the fact that she was unique is clear. The angel called her favored one and stated the Lord is with her. But even with that being said from an angel I am sure Mary had more questions than answers.

Mary responded with what I think is one of the greatest lines from a person in all the Bible.

Luke 1:38, "And Mary said, "Behold, the bondservant of the Lord; may it be done unto me according to your word." And the angel departed from her."

The moment with the angel was over. The light, if there was one that accompanied the angel was fading, and Mary was left with her own thoughts.

How was this thing going to happen. What did it mean the Holy Spirit was going to conceive a child in my womb? Will I know when it happens? What about Joseph, will he believe me? What about my family? My hopes for my future? What comes next?

So many question but no answers. Only the lingering image and words of an angel and Mary's faith in God.

Let's go back to Joseph in Matthew.

Matthew 1:18-19, “Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows; when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly.”

It seems Joseph and Mary were married but had not consummated the marriage at this point.

I would assume that Mary told Joseph about the angel’s visit. I am sure it seemed odd to Joseph but I have no doubt that he saw something in Mary that he trusted and that was her faith in God. Remember it says that Joseph was a righteous man meaning, he walked with God and was sensitive to others who walk with God.

I am not sure of all Joseph’s motives for sending Mary away but we do know one thing, he wanted to protect her from the shame of being an unwed mother. He probably also knew that the Mosaic law required the stoning of someone who became pregnant out of wedlock.

Let’s read on. Joseph was considering his options when he had a dream.

Matthew 1:20-21, 24-25, “But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.’” And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took Mary as his wife, but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus.”

A couple of things we can learn from all we have read so far.

1. The **miracle** of the conception of Jesus

I have used a word before and that word is manifestation. Concerning things of the Bible, God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit, what does manifestation mean? Anyone?

Coming from the spiritual realm into being a physical reality. This is what occurred when the Holy Spirit came upon Mary and in her womb an egg was fertilized. For the Spirit of God to come upon her, inside of her reproductive system, it is truly amazing.

Such are the miracles of God. In all of creation, in every move of God, He shakes the physical world around us with His Spirit and a miracle occurs. Something that could not happen in the physical realm, an impossibility of matter occurs. But as we have read, as the angel has said, nothing is impossible with God.

The miracle of the immaculate conception by the Holy Spirit into the body of a virgin occurs. The life of the physical Son of God begins at conception and His life will never end.

This story should give us pause more than once a year. Once a day would probably be more in line of what it is worthy of.

Thinking back to Joseph and the dream he had. Verse 24 tells us this.

“And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded.

Sometimes I wish an angel of the Lord would give me direction don't you? Sometimes I wish a blinding light would occur or a loud voice from heaven would be heard. But we do have the Holy Spirit don't we? We have God's word which, when we read it resonates with the Spirit inside of us as truth and will give us direction.

I think wisdom is when the Holy Spirit takes the word of God that we have placed in our minds and hearts and shows us how to apply it in any given circumstance. When things are going on, on earth, heaven's messenger is dispatched to give us holy direction. The question is,

2. Are we, like Joseph, obedient to the Holy Spirit's promptings

As Joseph was considering his options sleep came upon him and that is when the Lord spoke to him. I don't know about you but this seems the time when the Lord speaks the most clear to me, in the middle of the night.

I go to bed pondering and praying over a situation or decision and about 3:00 in the morning I will wake up with great clarity about what to do. I have no doubt this is usually God. I know night time is when my mind is uncluttered and I don't have a hundred answers to my problem going through my head.

I wake up in the morning confident of what I must do and my resolve is steadfast. But what can happen as the day wears on? If you are like me you can begin to question the answer you received. You begin to question, reason and even wrestle a bit with God and before long you may choose to take the path of least resistance or the one that makes sense of fulfills you wants and desires.

Or, are we like Mary, may it be done unto me according to Your will even though what He is telling us makes no sense.

3. God's direction may not make sense to our human perceptions

Joseph and Mary had faith in God even though what God was asking them to do was way beyond human comprehension and even human ability.

Are some of the things God is asking you to do the same? Do they not make sense? Maybe you can't see how His way is going to work. How that person you are to forgive is going to be positively affected. How that circumstance could possibly work out through the path God wants you to take.

Let's admit it, we are practical people and our belief in the supernatural is limited. But that is who God is isn't He? He is the supernatural and He desires to do the supernatural in and through you.

4. When we obey the promptings of the Holy Spirit, no matter how random, how far-fetched they seem, miracles occur

Last week there was someone I knew who was hurting but they seemed unapproachable. I had a random thought that I should do something but that I should do it quietly and in a way that they would not know it was from me. I was obedient to the prompting and it worked. The person was ministered to.

Do you think that what I had was just a random thought? No. It was generated by God through the Holy Spirit. And when I was obedient what I could not do in the flesh God did. It was a miracle. God becoming flesh and accomplishing His purposes.

We will never be like Mary, physically birth the Son of God. But we can birth Him spiritually as we are obedient to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and just like what happened with Mary, miracles happen.

Couple thought in closing.

As we are obedient to the promptings of the Holy Spirit we are changed ever so slightly in that moment. As this happens over and over again, we can look back at our lives and see how far spiritually in the likeness of Christ we have become.

A couple of scriptures to remember and even put to memory.

Luke 16:10a, “The person who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much...”

Our faith in God builds in the little things, the little promptings and as we are faithful in those, when the big things come along we are ready for them.

In the parable of the steward Jesus said the following.

Matthew 13:12a, “For to everyone who has, more shall be given and they will have an abundance.”

Jesus is saying that those who are faithful with what they have been given more will be given to them.

When we are faithful to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, bigger miracles, bigger surprises, bigger Jesus in and through our lives can be expected and that is what we want amen?

Let's pray