

Meet the Parents! - 12 / 13 / 20

Introduction — Margaret Nix of Portsmouth, Virginia, said about her daughter one December: “I did not realize just how closely my 18-month-old toddler had been listening to Christmas carols until she picked the peas off her plate, threw them on the floor, and said with an excited smile, ‘peas on earth.’ ”

Another parent, Marcia Garland, told about her family: “The story of baby Jesus is a favorite with our 4-year-old daughter, who has much of it memorized. One day, my husband was quizzing her on colors, and he pulled out a silver crayon and asked her its name. ‘Gold,’ she replied. ‘No, not gold. Guess again.’ My daughter paused for a moment, then flashed a big grin as she triumphantly cried out, ‘Frankincense!’ ”

It is great to be a parent during this time of year, especially when your children are small. but— what was it like to be a parent in the months leading up to that First Christmas? What was it like being the parents of the most important birth in all of human history?

There were two parents involved. Let’s consider them this morning:

I. FIRST PARENT — MARY (Luke 1: 26—38)

1. Could God have chosen ANYONE to carry the Son of God for nine months and give birth? (God can do whatever God wants!!)

2. God wanted a woman of deep faith and strong devotion to God — a woman worthy of bearing the Son of God.

3. Notice how God told Mary that He had chosen her. God sent the angel Gabriel, who was the “Announcer” angel of God.

4. Notice the Message itself: “You have found favor with God” means that God is very pleased with her faith and life.

5. “You will be with child (become pregnant) and give birth to a son . . . name (Him) Jesus” because ‘Jesus’ is the Greek version of the of the Hebrew name ‘Joshua’ — the name, in all three languages, means “the Lord saves .”

6. “He will be called Son of the Most High” — “Most High” was a common phrase then for the God of Israel, and “Son of the Most High” was a clear reference to the MESSIAH, as was the promise that Jesus will receive the THRONE of DAVID, and will reign forever— His reign will never end. The MESSIAH was / is the Anointed One of God, promised by the prophets and His coming was highly expected in Mary’s day.

7. Mary knew this — she knew this was the fulfillment of the promise of the Messiah. Of course, she objected: Though pledged to be married, she was still a virgin, probably only 14 or 15 years of age.

8. Gabriel promised a miracle. The Lord will do it, Gabriel promised. Even your long—barren cousin Elizabeth is six months pregnant — God can do anything!

9. Then, the key response from Mary: “i am the lord’s servant. May it be to me as you have said.” God had chosen well fo the mother of the son of God on earth.

II. Second parent — Joseph (Matthew 1: 18—24)

1. The second parent, the earthly father of the son of God, could have been more of a problem.

2. Tho’ a name isn’t mentioned, it surely was Gabriel , the same angel who had spoken to Mary. It seemed to have happened several days or weeks after Gabriel had appeared to Mary— at some point, she must have told Joseph, probably before she began to show that she was pregnant! Matthew tells us that Joseph would “divorce” her, (let her out of the marriage), because he surely thought that the story she had told— of an angel appearing, and her bearing the savior of the world!! — was just too fantastic!! “there is some other guy,” Joseph thought — and Joseph,

being a good, kind, caring, and Godly man, determined to step out of the way and let the other guy— >>“do the right thing.”

3. The very night that he had decided to step aside, Gabriel appeared to Joseph, this time in a dream and he said to Joseph: (read mt. 1:20b-21)

3. What was Joseph to do???? The normal thing to do was to figure that it was a bad dream , and go ahead with his plans to end the planned marriage to Mary! But— like Mary, Joseph believed the angel of God. Joseph trusted God!! Joseph “believed the unbelievable!”

4. Remember — faith in Christ— trusting Christ— is more than an intellectual decision: it is a moral decision! We know what it will mean if we choose to believe!! It will mean that our lives will change , and some people do not want that change

5. Praise God that he chose wisely— Joseph was willing to go through the changes and ace the embarrassment of staying engaged to Mary, to face the whispering and the looks of condemnation because he would be blamed for not “waiting” to consummate their marriage until after the ceremony. Joseph was willing to go through with the marriage, even tho’ their first son was not “biologically” his. His love for Mary, and his love for and trust in God overcame all objections and doubts.

This morning, let us all start to have:

III. Have the faith of Mary and Joseph

1. Mary was praised by God for her: faith in God;

2. Mary was praised by God for her: trust in God;

3. Mary was praised by God for her: humility before God, who chose her to bear the messiah, even tho’ she felt unworthy;

4. Mary was praised by God for her: willingness to face the unknown and unknowable future problems.

5. Joseph was chosen by God because: he was willing to believe God's messenger, the angel, and the lord himself;

6. Joseph was chosen by God because: his love for Mary, and his faith in and devotion to God helped him overcome the disapproval and judgment of their neighbors in Nazareth;

7. Joseph was chosen by God because: he trusted God that God was doing something incredible, for the good of Israel and all humankind, through Mary and himself — bringing the messiah, the son of God, into the world. Joseph knew that Jesus would bring God's love, and forgiveness, and salvation to everyone in the world.

8. So — show your trust in God ---- give generously to your church; volunteer with, or give to, the good shepherd center

9. Show your willingness to face the future into which God will lead you . . .

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10. Show the same faith and trust in God that Mary and Joseph had by demonstrating love and forgiveness to those around you — forgive someone who has hurt or offended you

Conclusion — you may remember Clara Barton, who founded the American red cross. One day, a reporter asked her about an especially cruel thing that had been done to her years before. Miss Barton seemed not to recall the incident. “Don't you remember?” Asked the reporter. “no,” said miss Barton, “I distinctly remember forgetting that incident.” A Christian keeps working with God until the memory of a grievance no longer has any power or “zing” in it. Bill Bouknight, a great Methodist preacher in Memphis, adds this: don't misunderstand biblical forgiveness. Forgiveness does not mean excusing something or pretending it didn't happen. Some people think if you forgive someone who has bullied, cheated or abused you, you must pretend the

offense didn't really happen or that it wasn't so bad after all. Not so! Nor does it mean you have to expose yourself to more bullying, cheating or abuse. The object is not to distort reality. The object is to cleanse your heart of poison, the poison of resentment. That poison can wreck your relationship with God, spoil your disposition, harm you physically and steal your joy.

This Christmas season — in the spirit of Mary and Joseph— give someone the gift of forgiveness . . . In the name of our savior, who was born in Bethlehem