

4th Sunday in Advent
“The Sweetest of Dreams”
Matthew 1:18-21
December 21, 2025
Rev. Ed Weber

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for this 4th Sunday in Advent is from our Gospel reading Matthew 1:18-21.

“18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. 19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. 20 But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. 21 And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”

So far the text:

Who was Joseph? Well, our text tells us that he was a son of David. The first verses of Matthew give us the genealogy of Jesus, tracing His ancestry through King David. And it concludes by saying:

“And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ.” We notice that it doesn’t say Joseph begot Jesus. No, Jesus was born of Mary.

And that was what Joseph was wrestling with. He knew that his betrothed wife, Mary, was with child. And he also knew that he wasn’t the biological father. How he came to this knowledge God’s word does not tell us. Joseph knew that his wife went to visit her cousin Elizabeth and three months later she comes home pregnant.

What to do? Joseph thought about these things, wrestled with them. Sleepless days and nights one would imagine. He had a decision to make. It seemed that his wife had committed adultery. Now whether this was by consent or forced upon her, he didn’t

know. There were laws in the Bible which gave consequences for adultery, namely being stoned to death as we read in Deuteronomy 22. If the forced adultery happened outside the city and there was no one to come to Mary's aid, well she would not be punished, just the man.

But, our text gives us insight into who Joseph was spiritually, doesn't it? Joseph decided in his heart that he would divorce Mary quietly and not bring shame to her or her family. We see mercy flowing from Joseph's heart. He didn't seek revenge. It appeared to him that he had been wronged unjustly, and yet he was showing a forgiving heart towards Mary. He was about to find out of course that there was nothing to forgive Mary for doing because this was all God's doing!

Who was Joseph? Our text tells us where this mercy and love came from. God's word describes Joseph as a just man. This word means a righteous man. It describes Joseph's relationship with God, namely, that he was justified by faith. He was righteous by faith in the Lord. From the mercy that Joseph received from God, he showed mercy to Mary.

The word "just" or "righteous" describes the believer. Here are a few examples that show the separation of the believer from the unbeliever.

Matthew 5:45:

For He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

Matt 13:49

So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous

Luke 2:25

Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

Righteous describe Simeon's relationship with God by faith. Devout described Simeon's life that he led by faith.

1 Pet 3:12

For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”

And God’s ears were open to Joseph’s prayers and thoughts. And He sent an angel to Joseph to give him the full story of what God was doing with Mary, his betrothed wife.

“Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.”

This was no nightmare, but a dream of the greatest comfort and strength for Joseph. There is no fear now to take Mary as your wife. Yes, there are wedding jitters that men might experience on their wedding day, but there is nothing to fear about being the step-father of the Son of God.

And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”

For this Son will take away the greatest of fears, eternal punishment for all sin by saving His people from their sins.

He is the fulfillment of the prophecy spoken by Isaiah.

“Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which is translated, “God with us.”

If God is with us , we need not fear! So Joseph awoke from his dream, the sweetest of dreams, and did just as the Lord commanded him.

Dear brothers and sisters of Christ, maybe we are experiencing sleepless nights and restless days for many reasons that God surely knows about. Immanuel is with you also. He speaks to you through His inspired word.

Rom 5:19

For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.

This is not a dream but God's sure word of forgiveness and life for you! And God gives you the very body and blood of Immanuel for your forgiveness and salvation. Yes, Jesus, the name given to Him indeed has saved us from all our fears, problems and sins. Amen.

Amen

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)