

Chris Murphy

December 15, 2024

Scripture: Matthew 1: 18-25

Sermon Title: Joseph's Dream

Prayer...

Introduction:

Last Sunday, we took time to remember the story of Mary and the coming of the Angel Gabriel to give her the news that she would become the mother of Jesus. I mentioned that I wanted to give Mary her due since Protestants do not talk as much about Mary as do Catholics.

Someone after the service wondered if I will also give Joseph his due. I said yes, next week. So today we are remembering Joseph, the father of Jesus.

What might we learn from the story of Joseph? What does he model for us? How did God use him? How were dreams a part of his life?

This morning, I want to revisit our passage today and read it through prayerfully with you. It is a short story, but there is much to notice from it. We already read the story once. I am going to read it two more times and in between we will take some time for silence. We are going to read this story following a certain approach to reading Scripture called *Lectio Divina* or Divine Reading. It is reading the Bible for formation purposes rather than just for information.

(*Lectio Divina* of Passage: 1. Listen to word or phrase. 2. What feelings surface from those words? 3. What is God's invitation to you from this story?)

1. Invite People to share words and phrases.
2. My phrase was, "And you are to name him Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." After receiving this phrase I did a little research on the significance of the name of Jesus. I found some information on the origins of his name.

The name "Jesus" is the English transliteration of the Greek name "Iēsous," which itself is derived from the Hebrew name "Yeshua" or "Yehoshua." This name means "Yahweh is salvation" or "Yahweh saves." The choice of this name is deeply significant, as it encapsulates Jesus' mission and identity as the Savior. In the Jewish tradition, names were often symbolic, reflecting a person's character or destiny. By naming the child Jesus, the angel conveyed the divine purpose for which Jesus was sent into the world.

Luke's Gospel provides another perspective on the naming of Jesus. In Luke 1:26-31, the angel Gabriel visits Mary to announce the miraculous conception of Jesus. Gabriel tells Mary, "You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus." Similar to the account in Matthew, the naming of Jesus is presented as a divine directive. Gabriel's announcement underscores the heavenly origin and authority behind the name, reinforcing the theme that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah who comes to fulfill God's redemptive plan.

The significance of the name Jesus is further illuminated by its connection to the Old Testament. The name "Yeshua" is a variant of "Joshua," a prominent figure in the Hebrew Scriptures. Joshua, the

successor of Moses, led the Israelites into the Promised Land, symbolizing deliverance and fulfillment of God's promises. In a similar vein, Jesus is seen as the one who leads humanity into the ultimate promised land, the kingdom of God, through salvation from sin and death.

3. When I reflected on my feelings related to this phrase, I found myself grateful that Jesus is my Savior and is the one who forgives sins and brings salvation or freedom to me and others. I remembered that just as Mary's story points to the importance of Jesus, so does Joseph's story point to the importance of Jesus as our Savior.
4. When I thought about God's invitation to me through this story. I was drawn to Joseph's dream. Joseph met an angel in his dream. He woke up and did what the angel commanded by taking Mary as his wife. I also want to be in tune with God and the angels who visit me in my dreams and to follow God's commands.
5. (Share Your Dream) Fire outside in nature surrounded by people dancing, kind of like Celtic images you see of people dancing. As I get close to the flame, I feel myself starting to float. I lay back and the wind of the flame carries me up into the air. As I go higher at some point, I start to fly around. While I fly around, I feel God's presence of love and honestly I felt like spiritual guides or angels were with me around the fire. As I floated down to the ground near the end of my dream, I sensed God talking with the angels and giving me guidance on how to share the message of God's universal love and make God's love known through a relationship with Jesus.

Friends, Joseph was guided by an angel in a dream. He made a courageous decision to take Mary as his wife. He humbly named his son Jesus even though in his culture he could have named him Joseph like his own name. Joseph could have resisted God's message to him, but instead he stays faithful to Mary and raises his son to become a carpenter like himself. Joseph is an ordinary young man like Mary is an ordinary young women, but they show us that ordinary folks can do extraordinary things for God. This Christmas season we might want to listen to our dreams and see how God might be guiding us to point others to Jesus. How is God guiding your steps these days? We do not need to put Mary and Joseph on a pedestal. Instead, we are invited to be inspired by this young couple to lead others to our Savior, Jesus Christ our Lord.

AMEN.

T

Matthew 1:18-25

The Birth of Jesus the Messiah

18 Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah[a] took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be pregnant from the Holy Spirit. 19 Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. 20 But just when he had resolved to do 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 as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” 22 All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

23 “Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,”

which means, “God is with us.” 24 When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife 25 but had no marital relations with her until she had given birth to a son,[b] and he named him Jesus.