

Advent 2022

Joseph's Yes Part 2

Last Sunday we looked at Joseph and the importance of his “Yes” to the Lord. I want to look again at Joseph, at his character and at how that yes played out in his life.

We mentioned last week we don't have a lot of biblical information about Joseph. He seems to remain in the background. There is however, more to Joseph and the role he plays than meets the eye. We never hear him speak but we certainly see his actions and there are some important lessons we can learn from Joseph.

As we look at his life, let me say a word about the importance of fathers. No offense to single moms. I respect you and commend you for your effort to raise your children, to provide for your family and serve the Lord, but God saw the need for a father and chose Joseph to be the father who would raise Jesus. Again, no offense to single parents, but ideally it was God's original design that children would be raised by a mother and father in a committed covenant of marriage. Whether we call Joseph a foster father or an adoptive father or a step-father, whatever you call him, the truth is Joseph was the man who, at the instruction of the angel, “gave him the name Jesus.” It was Joseph who cared for and brought Mary and Jesus into his home and into his heart. Joseph would be the first human face to whom Jesus would have said, “Abba, Father.” It was Joseph who gave his name to Jesus so that in his hometown, they referred to Jesus as the son of the carpenter. Joseph, in spite of his silent role, was very much a father to Jesus. Look again at the passage we read last Sunday from Matthew 1 and then I want to point out some important things about Joseph.

“This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet 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 fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ‘The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him 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. But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.” Matthew 1:18-25

The first thing we notice in verse 19, **Joseph was a righteous man.** Joseph wanted to please God and obey the Law of God. We see evidence of this in several ways. It was because he was a righteous man that he thought to divorce Mary quietly. He wanted to obey God’s law concerning what appeared to be an unfaithful spouse, but he also wanted to show compassion and mercy to Mary. His choices and actions in all this show he was a righteous man.

We mentioned last Sunday Joseph’s self-discipline. He brought Mary home as his wife but did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to her son. He respected his wife and respected what the angel had said concerning this extraordinary son that was to be born. It’s a righteous man who will deny himself and make every effort to obey the Lord and please Him.

Luke 2 shows additional evidence of Joseph’s desire to obey God’s law. **“On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise him, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he had been conceived. When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord...” Luke 2:21-22** Joseph made sure Jesus was circumcised on the eighth day according to the Law and then presented him to the Lord at the temple and offered sacrifice there in keeping with the Law concerning a firstborn son. Luke tells us **“Every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover.” Luke 2:41** It was no small journey for them, but it was part of what it meant for Joseph to be obedient to God and to keep the Law.

We noted last Sunday that Joseph’s yes to God was found in verse 24. **“When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him.” Matthew 1:24** That wasn’t the only time we see Joseph’s immediate response and obedience to God. **“...an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. ‘Get up, 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 2:13-15** After Herod died, an angel spoke again to Joseph and told him to take Jesus and Mary back to Israel. **Joseph was a righteous man who continued to say “Yes” to God as a husband and father.** This was how he lived his life, obeying the written word of God and obeying the instructions given to him by the angel.

Whatever the Lord told him to do, Joseph immediately said “Yes!” How are you doing Dad? Husband? Are you saying Yes to God’s plans for you and your family? God’s plans are better. Trust him and say Yes!

Joseph was a provider for his family. We notice it first when they went to Bethlehem to pay their taxes and be counted in the census. There was no room in the inn, but Joseph made provision for Mary. It wasn’t exactly the best accommodations, but he did what he could to make her comfortable for the birth of her child.

When Joseph was told to take his family to Egypt to keep them safe, he didn’t hesitate or protest. He wanted to obey God but he also accepted the responsibility to care for, to protect and provide for his family. Are you hearing me Dads? It was a sacrifice. Joseph left his home, his business, his family. There was no way to communicate with family or friends back home. It was like joining the Federal Witness Protection Program. Hiding with new identities in a foreign country, but Joseph wasn’t going to let anything happen to his family, whatever that required, whatever the sacrifice. In fact, I doubt he saw any of this as a sacrifice, this is just what it meant to be a husband and a father. Joseph was going to do the right thing!

Joseph was told in another dream that Herod was dead and he was instructed to return to Israel but notice we are told, **“When he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee, and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth.”**

Matthew 2:22 It doesn’t say the angel told him to move back to Nazareth. Before the warning voice in the dream, Joseph already decided it might not be safe for his family to live where Herod’s son was ruling. He had already decided to take care of his family.

Joseph Fornieri, a professor and author wrote, **“One can point to Joseph as the greatest advocate of adoption...Joseph testifies to the nobility of a self-giving love that transcends blood and genetics.”** **Joseph Fornieri** Joseph loved Jesus as his very own. God bless all you adoptive and foster parents and your children. Joseph shows us what his obedient “Yes” to God looks like as he cares for his son. Thank God for the adoptive and foster parents and your Yes!

Remember the time Joseph and Mary and Jesus went to Jerusalem for Passover? Jesus was 12. When they started back home, they thought he was with other family in the caravan, hanging out with cousins. Turns out he had stayed behind in Jerusalem. When they found him Mary said, **“Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously**

searching for you.” Luke 2:48 I’m telling you this so you will understand, it wasn’t some weird “he’s the Son of God, divinity in the flesh so look out.” Jesus never said, “You’re not my father so don’t tell me what to do.” Joseph was a father in every sense of the word to Jesus. When he said Yes to the angel, Joseph accepted that responsibility to protect and care for and teach and train and nurture Jesus as his own son.

Dad’s take notice. There is such a need for fathers to accept this role as provider and protector in your home and family. I’m not talking about arming yourself with automatic weapons, but protect your children from the violence and immorality that permeates music and media, and video games and life. Pay attention to the influences that target children and teenagers and protect them every way you can. And here is the best way you can protect them. Don’t just preach at your children, live a godly life of integrity in front of them. Protect your family not just by holding up a strong standard of righteousness for them but by living by it. Be a godly example in your home. Be like Joseph and if sacrifice is required, do whatever it takes to protect your family! That brings us to this last point.

Joseph led his family by example. Luke tells us, **“Then he [Jesus] went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them...And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and men.” Luke 2:51-52** Jesus grew in all the ways a young man would grow – spiritually, socially, intellectually, emotionally, vocationally. Who do you think was responsible for teaching him how to be a godly, righteous man? Joseph! One scholar wrote, “While God’s Son assumed humanity in his mother’s womb, it was Joseph who taught him what it means to be a man. Thus Joseph was to leave the forming mark of his own manhood on the God-Man. Jesus, in his hometown, was known as ‘the carpenter’s son.’ Matthew 13:55.”

Because Joseph was a carpenter by trade, we have every reason to believe he taught Jesus that trade as well. In fact, in Mark 6:3, when Jesus taught and performed miracles in his hometown, people asked where he got this wisdom and power and noted, **“Isn’t this the carpenter?” Mark 6:3** He was the carpenter’s son and he was himself a carpenter. Jesus affirmed the dignity of manual labor. Joseph showed Jesus by example that being a godly man meant there was no shame in working with your hands, doing an honest day’s work.

We mentioned earlier the example’s given of Joseph obeying the law concerning the birth of the child. Luke writes, **“When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. And the child**

**grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom and the grace of God was upon him.”
Luke 2:39-40.**

Joseph and Mary taught Jesus by example how to live according to the whole Law of God. Joseph would have taught him the Scripture and the prayers to pray each day. He taught him what it meant to be an observant Jew in a Roman world. Joseph taught his son, this special son of Mary, what it meant to obey God and to refuse to compromise, to love God and to love others, even if there was a price to be paid, a sacrifice to be made. What an example of love; what a lesson of righteous living taught by this good man.

Joseph, a carpenter, a good, just and righteous man. We don't know what happened but tradition says he died before Jesus' public ministry began. I doubt he ever thought he would be spoken about centuries later. In the 12th century, Bernard of Clairvaux wrote concerning Joseph, **“To him it was given to see what many kings and prophets had longed to see, but had not seen, and to hear, but had not heard. And he was given, not only to see and to hear, but also to carry, to lead, to embrace, to kiss, to nurture and to guard.” ... Bernard of Clairvaux**

In spite of all the angel said to Joseph and in spite of all Simeon and Anna spoke concerning this holy child, I doubt Joseph ever really understood the role he was playing as he protected and carried and led and embraced and kissed and nurtured and guarded the Savior of the world. All Joseph knew for sure was he was doing the right thing as he daily made the choice to say Yes to God and live for Him. That's the key lesson in all of this. It's about saying Yes to God on a daily basis. We can't always judge our life by the great moments of victory or the outstanding accomplishments, but there is much to be said for the difference one person can make who insists on obeying God and doing what is right, faithfully and consistently, for a lifetime. What a difference this one life made by saying Yes to God. What an example for us as fathers and for us as believers. Day by day, moment by moment obedience and surrender. A life of saying YES to Jesus. It's “long obedience in the same direction.”

The next time you see a nativity scene, give some thought to Joseph and the importance of His Yes to God as he protected and cared for the one of whom the angel said, “You are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” Way to go Joseph! Well done!