**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes from 12-24-2021(Christmas Eve)
Christmas Through the Eyes of Mary & Joseph**

I don’t know if any of you have enjoyed the character Superman over the years, but it is fascinating, and kind of funny, how that pair of glasses makes all the difference. No one recognizes him because he has these glasses on.

But the truth is that when we can see things from someone else’s perspective, it is like putting on a pair of spectacles. Each pair of spectacles will help us see something more fully as we grasp something from someone else’s vantage point.

During these weeks leading to Christmas, we have been seeking to put on several different spectacles, so to speak. These glasses are not literal of course, and unfortunately, they will not transform us from Superman. But what they are doing is actually more important, as they help us to see Christmas a little more clearly.

We have been looking at Christmas through the eyes of all different perspectives – from cruel King Herod, to devout Simeon and Anna, to the humble shepherds who were living out in the fields of Bethlehem, to the wise men who came from far away to worship Jesus. Each perspective can help us more fully appreciate Christmas.

Today, on this Christmas Eve, we are privileged to consider another very important set of spectacles, that of Mary & Joseph. What a privilege it is to attempt to grasp Christmas through their eyes!

When it comes to Mary and Joseph, there have been movies like Jesus of Nazareth and Christian shows like *The Chosen* that have sought to help people to see Christmas through the eyes of Mary & Joseph.

But the best way to do this is by turning to God’s Word directly hearing this amazing true story.

But before we do that, I would just like to add that there is perhaps nothing more surprising about the entire Christmas story then the journeys of Mary & Joseph. Here we find two Jewish peasants that were rather poor and who were recently betrothed to one another and their lives would be completely turned upside down in ways neither of them could have imagined.

In the Jewish culture at that time, to be betrothed was to be considered all but married to someone. It was stronger than our engagement period today. The only things not to be a part of the betrothal period were the exchange of the vows at the wedding ceremony and the consummation of the marriage. But betrothed couples were considered married and a divorce would be needed to break up that relationship.

Also, at that time, women were typically married around the age of 14 or 15 and men would typically be married somewhere between their late teenager years to their early thirties. This was normal in their culture, but what followed this betrothal was anything but normal.

Everything changed with one powerful encounter between Mary and the angel Gabriel.

Please turn with me to Luke 1:26-38 as we hear this amazing story. May it help us to begin to put on these spectacles of Mary and Joseph.

**26In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, 27to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. 28The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.”**

**29Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. 30But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. 31You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. 32He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, 33and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”**

**34“How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”**

**35The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called[**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+1%3A26-38&version=NIV#fen-NIV-24929a)**] the Son of God. 36Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. 37For no word from God will ever fail.”**

**38“I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.” Then the angel left her.**

Friends, in this one brief conversation, not only does Mary’s life change forever, but God’s plan to rescue the world from sin become much clearer.

Picture yourself as Mary for a moment. A faithful teenager saddled with an enormous responsibility and honor. To be the mom of her Savior and the Savior of the world. To raise deity, this little child who would be both fully human and fully God. To be overwhelmed, knowing that as godly a man as Joseph was, that he probably wouldn’t believe her story.

To realize that God made her life much more complicated and more challenging than she could have imagined.

***But in this encounter with Gabriel, Mary chooses to trust in God and to offer herself into God’s hands as a servant of God.* How beautiful is that?**

She doesn’t have all the answers, she doesn’t know how everything will play out, but she believes and she trusts. And she allowed God to be God. **What a picture of faith and surrender to God’s will.**

Now let us switch gears to look at things from Joseph’s perspective. We find this in Matthew 1:18-25:

**18This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about[**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+1%3A18-25&version=NIV#fen-NIV-23163a)**]: 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. 19Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet[**[**b**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+1%3A18-25&version=NIV#fen-NIV-23164b)**] did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.**

**20But 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. 21She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus,[**[**c**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+1%3A18-25&version=NIV#fen-NIV-23166c)**] because he will save his people from their sins.”**

**22All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 23“The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel”[**[**d**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+1%3A18-25&version=NIV#fen-NIV-23168d)**] (which means “God with us”).**

**24When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. 25But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.**

Now, let’s attempt to see Christmas through the eyes of Joesph. Truly, Joseph was a godly man. Matthew writes that Joseph was faithful to the law. Joseph loved the Lord and he wanted to honor and please Him.

We are told from Matthew’s gospel that he learned that Mary was pregnant, he was going to divorce her quietly. This is actually an amazing act of love. I really appreciate how Christian leader Brandon Robbins describes what Joseph did. He says that in his plan to divorce Mary quietly, Joseph knew that eventually it would become clear that Mary was pregnant. But by divorcing Mary quietly, Joseph was willing to make it look like he got Mary pregnant and then abandoned her. This would bring all of the shame upon himself, rather than Mary.

But rather than protecting his own reputation by publicly divorcing Mary, Joseph was willing to take all of cultural shame of this perceived illegitimate pregnancy upon himself. This speaks volumes about the character of Joseph.

Thankfully though, Joseph has an angel of the Lord appear to him in a dream to explain to him that Mary was speaking the truth and that he is to continue his betrothal and to marry Mary, no matter what anybody in Nazareth thinks. And Joseph obeys.

This was truly a loving and godly couple whom God the Father chose to be the earthly parents for His Son.

From these readings we do not even get to the many events that still await Mary & Joseph leading to Christmas.

We have Joseph and Mary traveling about 80 miles late in her pregnancy, in order to register for the census in Bethlehem. We have them not being given a comfortable guest room in the house of his relatives in Bethlehem, but instead a dirty manger on the bottom floor out with the animals.

The truth is that most homes had a manger, where they could keep their household animals warm at night. But Mary was about to become ritually unclean through giving birth and most likely the head of this home did not want everyone in the family to be impacted by her soon-to-be uncleanness, so they said that Joseph and Mary could use the manger, but not the guestroom.

And it was there, in the midst of the manure and the animals that she gives birth.

This life was not what either of them planned, but both of them chose to be servants in God’s hands for something far bigger that God had in mind.

Brothers and Sisters, as we consider Christmas through the Eyes of Mary & Joseph and what we can take about from their perspective at Christmas, what are we to make of it for our lives today?

And I believe that it is this. **When we seek to live as humble servants of God, surrendering to His will, our Lord will do far more in and through us than we can possibly imagine.**

**Mary & Joseph teach us that it is not about us.** It is not about our reputation. It is not about the plans that we make for ourselves. It is about discovering and surrendering to, and following God’s plan for our lives.

In some ways, Mary & Joseph epitomize the gospel in these Christmas scenes. The gospel is about deny yourself as the center of the universe and choosing Jesus to be the center of your universe. Allowing Him to be birthed in us – thankfully not literally like Mary. But we all must be born again. Born in Him.

Mary and Joseph’s lives after Christmas did not necessarily become easier. Matthew records how Joseph is woken in the night giving instructions to flee to Egypt in the night with Mary & Jesus, because Herod was seeking to kill the child.

Mary & Joseph eventually settled back in Nazareth, where the couple were likely stigmatized by the locals for many years as having a perceived “illegitimate pregnancy.”

And while Joseph likely passed on to heaven prior to Jesus beginning His public ministry, Mary would be there through it all, including watching her Son suffer and die on a Roman cross.

Truly, Simeon, who spoke at Jesus’ circumcision was right, Mary would have much pain in her life.

But despite all of these challenges, friends, it was so worth it for both Joseph and Mary to be Jesus’ earthly parents.

Joseph & Mary were poor peasants, but they were rich towards God and Jesus was blessed to have them as His earthly parents.

Joseph and Mary remind us that our lives are really not about us. Rather, our lives are about being servants of God. It is not about trying to make our name great or our reputation great. Our life is to be about making God’s Name great and to live as His servants in this world.

Truly, when we live that way, we live like God. Our Triune God is a humble God who came to serve and who came to offer His life for our sins.

So truly, there is much that we can gain by seeking to see Christmas through eyes of Mary & Joseph.

They did not feel prepared for all that God was calling them. They probably felt thoughts like “who am I to raise the Messiah? I’m just an ordinary person.”

But the truth is that they weren’t just ordinary people. Joesph and Mary were faithful servants of God. They embody Christlike service and sacrifice even before they go to meet Christ, their Son and their Savior.

Their Son, Jesus, would later live as a servant and willingly take our sins and our shame upon Himself in order to redeem lost humanity. And this same Jesus would rise in victory over death and promise to be with us everyday as we follow Him.

Sisters and brothers, may these Scriptures help us to see Christmas through the eyes of humble and faithful Mary & Joseph.

And friends, I trust that as we seek to live for Jesus every day, the Lord sees us not so much as ordinary, but as great in the Kingdom of God as well. And it is not by our efforts, but by humbly yielding ourselves to God’s gracious plan for our lives and allowing Jesus to be our Lord and our Savior. **It’s not about us or about our reputations. But it is about surrendering to our Triune God each day and letting Him lead us through life. The Lord can do much through us, as He did through Mary & Joseph that first Christmas. Amen.**

Resources:

www.Biblegateway.com

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2cam-xnd9RM&t=1431s>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=68n3tJFTYVg>

<https://www.biblestudy.org/maps/the-journeys-of-mary-and-joseph.html>

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