

Matthew 1:18-23
The Promise Fulfilled, Part 1

Main idea: God often keeps His promises in the most unexpected ways.

I hope you've enjoyed our Christmas variety program today. I think it's a great way to celebrate Christmas.

But why do we celebrate Christmas? I hope you know that we don't just celebrate Christmas because it's a fun holiday. Christmas is far more than just another holiday. And even though Christmas is historical, Christmas is even more than history. We celebrate the birth of Jesus because He's the Savior, and He came just when we needed Him most. He came when we were lost in our sin, wandering in darkness. He came according to all the promises that God made to us about His coming in the Hebrew Scriptures, because God is faithful, and God always keeps His promises.

And yet, when Jesus was born, most people didn't understand what God was doing. Jesus was born in a barn and laid in a manger, because no one really realized the significance of His birth. And even Joseph, at first, didn't know what God was up to. We can read his experience in Matthew 1. And in looking at Joseph's experience of Christmas, I want us each to ask ourselves: what is your experience with Christmas today?

Matthew 1:18-23.

The birth of Jesus Christ came about this way: After his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, it was discovered before they came together that she was pregnant from the Holy Spirit. So her husband, Joseph, being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her publicly, decided to divorce her secretly. But after he had considered these things, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because what has been conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: See, the virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they will name him Immanuel, which is translated "God is with us." (Matthew 1:18-23)

Father, as we think about this story very briefly this morning, direct our hearts to experience the meaning of Christmas. Direct us to experience Jesus. In Jesus's name, Amen.

So what's your experience with Christmas this year? Maybe it's a good Christmas, in that everything seems just right, and you're happy to get together with family, and if that's you, that's awesome! But I suspect that for most people, Christmas isn't quite as joyful as we'd like. Maybe it reminds you how you're estranged from your family, or it reminds you of loved ones you've lost, or it's just empty of any kind of significance at all because you've just come to doubt God's promises.

Well, the first Christmas was kind of confusing for Joseph, too. Joseph didn't know what God was up to at first. He wanted to marry his fiancée Mary, but then she got pregnant, and he knew he wasn't the father, and he just didn't know what was going on. So he considered breaking things off.

Maybe you've considered putting an end to Christmas before. Maybe to you, Christmas is just more trouble than it's worth. I think that's how Joseph felt. He was angry, and confused, and afraid, and as the first Christmas quickly approached, he wanted nothing to do with it.

But then an angel appeared to him in a dream, telling him, “Joseph, don’t be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because what has been conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.” And then the angel explained that this was to fulfill what we read in Isaiah last week, that the virgin would become pregnant and give birth to a son.

So we saw last week that God makes specific promises, and this week, we see that God keeps His promises. The virgin Mary conceived by the Holy Spirit, and she gave birth to Jesus.

I don’t want to be overly simplistic about whatever you might be facing this Christmas season, but I do want you to know that whatever might be the cause of your sadness this Christmas, Jesus is the answer. Through Jesus, God keeps all of His promises to us.

If you feel lost, Christmas reminds you that Jesus came to save you from your sins.

If you feel estranged, Christmas reminds you that Jesus came to reconcile you to God.

If you feel lonely, Christmas reminds you that God became a man, Jesus, in order to be with you. He’s Immanuel, God with us.

So I want you to know this morning that no matter how you’ve been experiencing Christmas this year or maybe for several years, God wants to fulfill His promises to you through Jesus.

Because on Christmas, the Savior was born, who is Christ, the Lord.