

17.12.23 am

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Date: 17 December 2023

Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[0 : 00] Good morning. A warm welcome to the service this morning and a special welcome to those who are visiting with us. I don't see too many faces I don't recognise, but I see some faces that I haven't seen for a wee while.

And it's good to have students and those who are working away back here with family at this time of year. So a warm welcome. If you're able to stay behind, there is tea and there's coffee and there's a whole load of quality cakes through in that place there.

So this is a good day to stay if you have the time. Your potatoes will survive another 10 minutes, I'm sure. The notices were on the screen before the service began. I'm not going to go through all the notices, but I will highlight a few.

The first is to say that the service this evening will be a communion service. We'll celebrate the sacrament of the Lord's Supper just in a very simple way towards the end of the service.

And for those who have never yet come to the table and professed faith in Christ, but who are believing, who are trusting, who are saved, there is the opportunity to come forward for the first time and take communion this evening.

[1 : 20] It's not just an opportunity. For those who are believers, for those who are saved, it's a command. Jesus doesn't say consider this. He says do this. If you're trusting him, if he has saved you with his blood, then our calling and our privilege is to come forward and to profess the fact that we are saved.

Remember the woman who touched the hem of Jesus' garment and the blood stopped. She was healed immediately and Jesus kept asking, who was it? Not because he didn't know, but because he wanted to give her the opportunity to come forward.

But anyway, I don't want to start preaching a sermon before I'm out of the intimations. Come forward if you are trusting in Jesus. The session's open. I'd be delighted to speak to anybody, as would any of the elders.

And this evening, we will welcome into the membership, we have already welcomed into the membership, but we'll enjoy sitting at the table with them, Chris, Kiki and Anna, and also Natalie, who is here somewhere.

And Natalie came forward at the very end, last communion. So we sat, she's over there, we sat at the table, and at the end of the service, it was very clear that Natalie should have come, but she hadn't come.

[2 : 45] So when we spoke, she did come, and she took the bread and she took the wine, just with two or three of us as elders. But tonight she gets to sit with the rest of her Christian family at the table.

So we look forward to sharing fellowship with Kiki and Anna and Natalie at the table, as well as everybody else who comes.

After the evening service, half past seven, the YFO meet, as usual. You will note that the kids' clubs on Fridays, Jam Rooted Connect, that's stopped now, and that will resume in the new year.

A few other things to note, the carol services, there's a carol service this Friday at seven o'clock, and that's at Talon Amara. That's a joint service with various denominations who are taking part at that, so a warm welcome to that service.

Next Sunday, which will be Christmas Eve, there's three services. The eleven o'clock service will be a Christmas family service, which will be very much aimed at the younger ones, and they'll be taking part in the service.

[3 : 56] So be encouraged to come together in worship as a church family. Six o'clock, we'll have the lessons and the carol service, so we'll have the nine carols and the nine readings. And then at half past eleven, it says eleven forty-five on the screen, it says eleven fifteen on my paper, but the poster said half past eleven, and I think half past eleven gives us time to have a short service that takes us through into Christmas morning.

So half past eleven is the time the service will begin, but if you come a bit early, there'll be tea, coffee, mince pies. And the last thing is to say that on the table at the door, there are the weekly offering envelopes for 2024 for every person in the congregation who used envelopes during 2023.

If anyone else wishes to resume or start this method to give their weekly offering, please advise Angus Alec or Mary Cameron, and the envelopes will be provided. So for those who'd rather go with paper and not go online, there's the opportunity to do that.

These, I think, are all the notices, and we'll now worship God and we'll sing to his praise, and we'll sing from Mission Praise 102.

Mission Praise 102, and it's that hymn that you sang last Sunday as well, actually. Come thou long-expected Jesus, born to set thy people free.

[5 : 25] And we'll sing this carol to the tune, Come thou fount of every blessing. Let us find our rest in thee.

Is that strength and consolation, home of all the earth thou art? Dear design of every nation, joy of every longing heart.

For thy people to deliver, born a child and yet a king.

Born to reign in us forever, where thy gracious kingdom bring. By thy own eternal spirit, rule in all our hearts alone.

By thy all-sufficient benefit, raise us to thy glorious throne. Let's unite our hearts now in prayer.

[7 : 10] Let's pray together. Amen. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for this day. We thank you for your day. This gift that you have given to us where we are commanded to stop work and to be still and to know that you are God.

And we thank you for your people. And we thank you that as we come together as your people, as we come together in the name of Jesus, we have that promise that you will be with us. We thank you for these words in Scripture that give us that firm assurance that as we seek to draw near to you, you will not hold back, but you will draw near to us.

We thank you that we have the promise that if we return to you after a period of wandering, you will return to us. We thank you for the promise that everybody who comes to the Lord will not be cast out, but will be received.

And so we come this morning and we come in the name of Jesus. We come not in our own name and we come depending upon the finished work of Jesus, the blood that was shed on the cross for us, the body that was given for us.

We thank you that Jesus was born into this world and we remember that with great thanksgiving at this time of year. The word became flesh and made us dwelling amongst us.

[8 : 36] But we recognize, Lord, that he was born in order to live and to die in our place so that if we believe in him, we will have the promise of forgiveness of sin and everlasting life and a sure and certain hope.

And so we thank you for all that we remember as we come together on your day. We thank you that as Jesus is lifted up in our singing and as we read your word, we pray that we would be drawn to him.

Take away every distraction, we pray, all that would cause us to drift in our thinking and take our eyes off Jesus. We pray that you would remove these thoughts, the busyness of our lives, which crashes in to break our train of thought as we seek to meditate upon your word.

And we pray that you would cleanse us from sin, the sin that holds us at a distance from you. We thank you that the blood of Jesus is strong enough to cleanse us from all sin as we confess it.

And we pray that you would empty us of self and that you would fill us with the Holy Spirit, that we would be fixing our eyes on Jesus, that we would see the wonder of who he is and what he has done for us.

[9 : 57] That we would hear his voice as he speaks to us in the scriptures. And Lord, that you would give us the faith that we would believe, that we would trust in Jesus.

We pray for the service this morning. We pray for this evening also as we prepare to come to the Lord's table. We pray that you would give us that childlike understanding and faith.

Help us to see that we are great sinners. And help us to see and to profess and to believe that Jesus is our great Savior. We know that that's the grounds on which we come.

We come confessing our sin and we come trusting the Savior. And we pray that each one of us would do that. We pray for any who may be wrestling with this call, even at this time just now.

Those who, like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, may have been believing for a period, but secretly for fear of the people around them.

[11 : 02] We pray that you would give courage to those who believe, that you would give that courage to obey and to do this in remembrance of Jesus.

We pray, Lord, for those who may not yet see and understand the cross and all that Jesus did for them. And we ask, Lord, that in the power of the Holy Spirit, you would work.

We know that our words cannot change a heart. But we pray that through the power of your Spirit, you would be working in this place and in each of our hearts.

We thank you, Lord, that we're able to come together as your people around the table of the Lord, an expression of our unity as a people, an expression of the communion that we have with God.

And we pray that you would bless us. And we thank you especially for Kiki and for Anna and for Natalie. As we sit together with them, we pray that you would bless us and that you would bless them in a special way.

[12 : 07] We thank you for the students who are away and those who are returning and those who work hard over the course of time at home here as well. Bless them, we pray, and give them refreshment over this holiday period.

Be with all those who are visiting this morning. And we pray that they would know the joy of being together as families. And, Lord, that you would meet with them and that you would speak to them, Lord, as we pray that you would speak to each one of us.

Pray for those who are struggling this morning, those who are sick, those who are battling with all these bugs that are going around at this time. We pray that you would bring relief to those who are suffering.

Pray for those who have been in hospital and now are at home recovering. And we ask, Lord, that you would increase their strength, that you would be near to them. We pray for those in homes in Tarbert and in Leverborough.

And we ask that you would bless them, Lord, where they are. We thank you for those who have returned home. We think of Shona. We thank you for Nurse Margaret as well, having returned home on Friday.

[13 : 12] And we pray that you would bless them, that you would increase their strength. And we thank you that you are the God who hears and answers prayer. We thank you for the fact that you give gifts to people to care for each other in that medical sense.

And we thank you when we can see your hand of even miraculous power upon a life when all others would think that there is no medical hope.

We thank you for so many testimonies where we have seen strength given to those who the medical people didn't expect to see strengthened. So we thank you, Lord, for your hand upon all those who are recovering.

And we pray now that you would bless them as we pray that you would bless us. Hear our prayers. Take away our sin. Lead us and guide us in worship, we pray. We ask all this in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Boys and girls, would you like to come forward, please? Those of you who haven't got viruses and bugs and all these things.

[14 : 25] Now, you all well? Good? You've got a cough. Okay. Cover your mouth when you're coughing. Like the rest of us.

We've all got stuff. Anyways, you looking forward to Christmas? Yeah. Good stuff. Are you all organized and ready? No. No? But you've got a few days to get organized, yeah.

Yeah. I've got something to show you this morning on the screen. And before you put it on, don't put it on quite yet, doll. But I've got something this morning to show you. And this is possibly one of the most beautiful things I've ever seen.

The thing that's about to be on this screen is a thing of great beauty. And if you have taste, if you have a good eye, you will put your amen to that and see this thing.

So we'll maybe just put the photographs up on the screen now if that's okay. Look at that. Look at that. Now, there's a few heads here that are nodding.

[15 : 31] There are a few people here who are nodding. And there's, you know how in the Christmas story there's the wise men. There's a few wise men. Maybe women in the room as well. There's, I think there's two or three photographs.

Look at that. Do you know what that is? Do you know what that is? Yeah, Henry? Actually, no.

It's a car. It's a Volkswagen. Michael said it's a Volkswagen. And it's not just any Volkswagen. It's not just any car.

It's a Volkswagen Golf GTI. Is that the 16 valve, John? That's the 16 valve one in a kind of metallic-y black color.

And I think it's probably the most beautiful car in the world. In my eyes. It's a beautiful car. John's got a white one as well.

[16 : 33] And the reason I'm not showing John's one, I'm showing that one is... What do you notice about that car? Oh, I notice. Yeah?

Actually, I was going to say soon. Well, no, no. Let's not get straight to soon. No. No, let's just think about the car just now. What do you notice about the car?

Is it perfect? It's not perfect, is it? It's not perfect. It's a bit dusty. It's got some things on it.

There are some jobs that need to be done. But the jobs are going to get done. And this car is going to be restored to the way it should be.

And when it's fully restored, it will be even more beautiful than it already is. So it's a car that's... It's in a shed just now.

[17 : 31] I won't tell you what it is in case somebody goes and tries to steal it. I won't tell you whose it is. But it's a beautiful Golf GTI that's going to be restored.

Maybe sometime in the next few months or years, we'll get a picture of the car fully restored, looking absolutely magnificent.

If anybody wants to buy me a Christmas present, a Golf GTI Mark II 8 or 16 valve would be just ideal. Why am I telling you this?

Why am I telling you about a car that needs to be restored, but is going to be restored? Our God is a God who restores us.

We sing in Psalm 23 that He restores... Do you remember what we sing? He restores our what? He restores our hearts to...

[18 : 32] It's the same kind of word. He restores our soul. God is a God who restores our soul. So, Henry, you were wanting to talk about sin. And we know that sin is the thing that breaks us down.

But God is a God who loves us so much that He sent His Son into this world to be our Savior, to be our Restorer. And you know, I think that car is absolutely beautiful.

But God thinks that you're more beautiful even than a Volkswagen Golf Mark II GTI 16 valve. And that's pretty beautiful.

So, God loves you. It's the message. And God so loves you that He came into this world to save you.

And when you and I trust Him, He restores us. He restores our soul. And you know, when Jesus comes back, we're remembering just now the time of year when Jesus first came.

[19 : 41] But Jesus is coming back. And when Jesus comes back, not only will He restore our hearts, our souls, but He'll restore everything.

everything that's sad, everything that's broken, everything in this world that's falling apart. There's going to be a new heavens, a new earth.

And everything will be restored if we're trusting in Jesus. So let's be those who are trusting in Jesus. Let's pray.

Lord, we thank You for Your promise that You restore our souls. And we thank You that Jesus, Your Son, our Savior, came into this world to restore our souls.

We thank You that there's none of us who are beyond being restored. There's none of us who are like an old wreck in a shed somewhere that's left forever.

[20 : 41] We thank You that You are able to restore, to save any one of us if we look to You. And we thank You that when You begin our work in us, You see that work through to completion.

We thank You that You never give up on us. And even though sometimes we lose our grip on You, even though sometimes we drift and we fall and we make a mess of things, we thank You that when You take hold of us, Lord Jesus, You never let us go.

Your work of restoration is a work that never stops. And we thank You that when we go from this world to be with Jesus, if we are trusting in Him, we have the promise that we will be made perfect, that we will be made like Him.

So give us faith, we pray, that we would be trusting in You, that we would be saved, that we would be restored, that we would know the joy and the peace of being in Jesus.

And we ask all this in Jesus' name and for His sake. Amen. We're going to sing now Mission Praise 503. Words on the screen. O little town of Bethlehem.

[21 : 48] O little town of Bethlehem, How still we see You lie.

Above your deep and dimly The silent stars go by Yet in your heart's dreams shining His everlasting light The hopes and fears of all the years Are met in You tonight For Christ is born of many And gathered all of us While mortals speak The angels keep Their watch of wandering love O morning stars together

O name the holy word And praise the same to God the King And peace to men on earth How sliantly, how sliantly The wondrous gift is given So God imparts to human hearts The blessings of His hand No ear may hear His coming But in this world of sin Where we see Him still The dear Christ enters in O holy child of Bethlehem

Descend to us, we pray Cast out our sin and entering, be born in us today.

We hear the Christmas angels, burn in the tidings still.

[24 : 51] O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel.

And if we could turn in our Bibles to Matthew chapter 1, please.

Matthew chapter 1. So we turn to a familiar passage, which is probably going to be the beginning of a new series.

I think we'll begin to step through Matthew. It's the only gospel that we haven't gone through yet. So Matthew chapter 1, and we'll read from verses 18 to verse 25.

And we'll focus on this passage both morning and evening today. So you'll see from verses 1 to verse 17, we have the genealogy of Jesus.

[26 : 34] We've got a record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. And there's all these names. I think we actually studied this last Christmas, although I wouldn't expect you to remember it if I can't properly.

And we come to the end of a list of long names. And we're told in verse 17, there were 14 generations in all from Abraham to David, 14 from David to the exile in Babylon, 14 from the exile to the Christ.

So this family line is heading towards Jesus. And then we have the birth of Jesus Christ, verse 18. This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. His mother, Mary, was pledged to be married to Joseph.

But before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph, her husband, was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

But when 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.

[27 : 47] 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 be with child and will give birth to a son and they will call him Emmanuel, 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 had no union with her until she gave birth to a son and he gave him the name Jesus. Amen. And may God bless that reading of his word to us.

We're going to sing now from Psalm 23. Psalm 23. And we'll sing verses 1 to 3. The first two stanzas of the Psalm in Gaelic.

Psalm 23. The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want. He makes me down to lie. In pastures green, he leadeth me the quiet waters by. My soul he doth restore again.

[28 : 53] And me to walk doth make. And so on. We'll sing the first two stanzas of that in Gaelic. To God's praise. We'll remain seated to sing in Gaelic. The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want.

Chalini Amdi. Chalini Amdi. Chalini Amdi. Chalini Amdi. Chalini Amdi. Chalini Amdi.
Chalini Amdi.

Chalini Amdi. Chalini Amdi. Chalini Amdi. Chalini Amdi. Chalini Amdi.

Chalini Amdi. Chalini Amdi. key it SIRS DE KUNYE KRACE SCHIEH KUNYE KRACE
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KRACE hold of these young ones in the early years that they would know from their
earliest consciousness that you are the God who loves them you're that you're the God
who made them and you're the God who calls them to come to you so we pray your
blessing upon them and we pray that you would help us to to bring them to Jesus and not
to hinder them from coming to Jesus we pray for the churches as well that are around us
the different denominations whatever Christ crucified is preached we pray that you would
be working that you would be adding your blessing that you would be building your church
Lord Jesus and we pray for the congregations that we are connected with those on
holiday today who go to churches elsewhere we pray that you would bless them here and
that you would be with those that meet in different places that they would normally be with
and that you would work in these congregations also so hear our prayers and help us now
we ask in Jesus name amen there's people here from different places this morning and I
don't think it would really matter where we were it could be Trafalgar Square London or
Tarbert it could be Manchester or Manish it's very clear even when I went to US last
weekend even if I'd never been told I would know there was something special about this
time of year this is some kind of a festival and so there's signs all over the place that that
show to us that this is Christmas time there's lights and there's trees and there's the music
and there's dinners and there's social events there's school assemblies and and parties
and all these things are in place at this time of year to help us to to celebrate Christmas
and I think that's a good thing in the main I know there's always a few Scrooges around
the place but I think that's a good thing in the main I personally I like the way the place
looks this time of year I like the the way the place feels I love the turkey stuffing and the
wee sausages with the bacon I even like the Brussels Sprites the way they're done at this
time of the year the chocolate yule locks the presents families coming together I love all
that stuff you know these are things that are there for for us to enjoy but it's a busy time of
year the irony is that sometimes it's so busy that we can become distracted from from
Jesus we can lose sight of Jesus

Jesus so today what I I'd like us to do very very simply is focus on the the passage that we read Matthew 1 from 18 to 25 and I want to just think about the essence of Christmas in the morning we'll think about salvation Christmas is about salvation it's about the grace that comes from God to us and in the evening we'll think about communion and the peace that comes from God to us the peace that we enjoy with God if we are trusting in Jesus so this morning the sort of the big banner over everything is uh we're speaking about grace is uh we're speaking about grace from God the gift of grace that comes from God and as we think about that that that story of grace that salvation story it begins with uh two two normal people to the first point is uh mundane lives there's two uh mundane lives uh this verse 18 is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about his mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph so we have Mary and we are very familiar with Mary as we have uh read through the Christmas narrative over so many years what do we know about Mary well Mary was just a teenager don't know exactly how old uh she was but she was just a teenager she's a teenage girl and she's just an ordinary girl she's not a superhuman there's nothing of the deity about Mary she's just an ordinary girl she's living an ordinary mundane life and it's so unremarkable we have no details about it but she's a girl who who trusted God so we have Mary and then Mary is engaged to Joseph so if we think about Joseph who's Joseph well we don't have much to say about Joseph either uh he's a little known probably teenage lad some of the commentators speculate that he he might have been older than Mary because we don't hear about Joseph after uh Jesus teenage years so they surmise maybe he he died before then maybe he was an older man we don't know we're not told we just know that he was an ordinary guy living an unremarkable mundane uh life and yet he and Mary uh they trusted God and God determines that he will work through this couple uh God has has plans for for Mary and Joseph he's going to break in to these mundane lives and this tends to be how God works he tends to to take ordinary people he doesn't go searching in the in the realm of celebrity he doesn't tend to go and look for the super humans he just takes the ordinary people people living mundane lives and if we're trusting him he can use us and he will use us think about the disciples a very unremarkable bunch of guys very flawed very full of failures and yet yet yet God used them think about the people if you're a Christian who influenced you most in your life

that brought you to the place where you are today if you are a Christian they're probably not super evangelists they're just old Botox and Kaliox and normal people who trusted Jesus and you saw Jesus in their ordinary lives so so Mary she is a girl who is living an ordinary mundane life and she was young but she she was to be used by God and that's a point we could probably know as well there's no one who's too young and there's no one who's too old to be to be used for God and there's no family that's too complicated or too messy for God to to work through we never read verses 1 to 17 of of the chapter the names are a bit of a tongue twister but in the the first 17 verses of Matthew 1

Matthew he rewinds through the generations of Joseph's family and there's some interesting characters there there's some names there and if we were to dig into the the story behind the name there's some embarrassing stories there's some pretty grim stories but God had plans for that family he worked through that messy family line and there's encouragement for for you and I in that as well none of us are perfect there may be sins that still haunt us as we think about them there may be past scandals in our family things that we'd rather forget but none of these things are a barrier to God we trust him if we seek forgiveness no matter who we are no matter how mundane our lives appear to be no matter how ordinary we feel

God can use us the greatest thing that we need to to have in order for God to use us is availability that's the big thing it's very easy to say no are you able to do this no are you able to help with that no too busy too busy too busy if you're available God will use you Mary and Joseph they were unremarkable but they were available and God was going to use them mundane lives point one point number two miracle there's a miracle verse 18 but before they came together before Mary and Joseph came together Mary she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit so we've got Mary we've got Joseph they've never been with each other in any kind of intimate way and yet Mary is found to be with child which must have seemed to be an absolute disaster for them

[43 : 48] I mean what a storm for them in their lives and yet so often God works in the storms he works through the storms so when storms crash into our lives just as a note in passing let's be careful to stop and to pray and to ask God what would you have me do in the middle of this storm so Mary and Joseph they've never been together she is with child as it says in verse 18 how is it possible then that Mary is with child well the explanation we're given is that it's through the Holy Spirit so what does that mean well essentially it just means it's a miracle we can't explain this we can't understand this and even if God tried to to explain to us the the intricacies of the way he works in a miraculous way we just can't do it because he is God and we are not he is infinite and we are final so this is just a miracle and the miracle here actually is it's not the virgin birth we talk about the virgin birth the birth was natural

Mary gave birth just like anybody else gave birth the miracle was the conception God the Son the one who spoke the world into being was in the womb of Mary T.S. Lewis famously wrote once in our world a stable once in our world a stable had something in it that was bigger than our whole world at this point in time in Mary's womb is God the Son the one who's bigger than our minds can comprehend the one that is bigger than the whole world at C.S. Lewis puts it and he is he has humbled himself to the extent that he is in the womb of this this young girl so the story of our salvation it begins with a miracle and as one commentator often says you either believe it or you don't so I'm not going to make a case this morning to try and sort of put some science in front of you you either believe this or you don't and if you don't it's your problem if you don't your God is too small because to be a Christian you need to believe in the supernatural to be a Christian you need to believe in miracles and that's the message that's coming through here at the beginning of Jesus life in this world there is the miracle of conception and at the end of Jesus life in this world there is the miracle of resurrection it's like two bookmarks through which God is saying if you want to be a Christian if you want to follow me you need to believe in the supernatural you need to believe in miracles you've got a problem with miracles you can't pass goal so take the encouragement this morning our God if you're a Christian your God our God is a God of miracles he is able to do to do as the Apostle Paul put it abundantly more than all we can ask or think so remember that when you pray remember that when you're praying for the salvation of somebody who seems so hard and so far away and so impossible to reach nothing's impossible for God pray when you're thinking about situations that just seem so impossible to resolve situations that seem so complicated

I can think of situations even now internationally nationally and locally in our community things that as I look at them I can't figure out how on earth will we get through this we don't have to figure that out we just pass it over to the God who is able to do more than we can ask or think the God of miracles our children in the Sunday school sing our God is so big so strong and so mighty there's nothing our God cannot do we see that in the Christmas story mundane lives but into these mundane lives God works in a miraculous way point number three there is a mind that is in turmoil it says there because Joseph her husband verse 19 was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace he had in his mind to divorce her quietly now tradition tends to focus on Mary in the

Christmas story but think about what was going through the mind of Joseph at this point he loves this girl Mary and she's good and she's faithful and he's so set on her that he has plans to marry her he wants to marry her so in our world you could say the church was booked the minister has the date and the diary the invitations have gone out the mother-in-law has chosen her dress the family is near bankrupt the preparations are well on everybody knows about this this wedding everyone is delighted for this couple and now Joseph learns that Mary his fiancée is pregnant and Joseph knows the child is not his so what would you do if you were in his situation I think the temptation would be to go off onto first century Facebook and tell the world how you've been cheated on and tell the world how you're feeling that's what would happen today there'd be a scandal as Joseph tries to make himself look good in this situation that that is difficult for him the temptation for him would have been just to blurt all this out to share it with some untrustworthy friends so that

Mary would be exposed to public disgrace and he would get off scot-free but Joseph is as it says they're a righteous man he is upright he is holy so he's planning in his mind a quiet divorce in these days an engagement was a formal legal arrangement if you got engaged to somebody and you were going to break it off there had to be a legal process that allowed that and that's what Joseph is planning in his mind he's planning this break up with Mary but what does he actually do well he does nothing immediately he does nothing he seems to he seems to wait upon the Lord in this situation rather than immediately charge off and try to fix things JC Ryle says let us observe the conduct of Joseph described in these verses it's a beautiful example of godly wisdom and tender consideration for others he saw quotes the appearance of evil in her who was his espoused wife but he did nothing rashly he waited patiently to have the line of duty made clear in all probability he laid the matter before

[52 : 07] God in prayer and there's a lesson there for us and the lesson is simply be like Joseph because inevitably in our lives at times we will face crisis and when we do the temptation is just to jump off at the deep end or to take matters into our own hands and try to fix everything the best course in these storms of life when they crash in is always to wait upon the Lord and that doesn't mean that we do nothing we're just idle and passive it means that we it means that we do what it says in Proverbs chapter 3 and verses 5 and 6 trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding in all your ways acknowledge him and he will make straight your paths there's a mind in turmoil and into that mind that is in turmoil

Joseph he takes a breath he seems to wait upon the Lord and then fourthly there's a message from God verse 20 but after he had considered this after Joseph had considered this an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said Joseph the 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 again just try to put yourself in the shoes of Joseph for a minute imagine him he's had this news and he went to his bed that night and in all likelihood he wasn't just drifting off to sleep remember as we think about this Joseph didn't he couldn't like take out his phone and check the app that he's using that gave him a

Bible verse and evening meditation he couldn't put something on to Spotify some kind of spiritual Sam's music that would soothe him to sleep Joseph couldn't even pick up a Bible and pray and say Lord can you speak to me please because they didn't have Bibles they didn't have pocket Bibles like we have they had very expensive and very hard to access handwritten scrolls so Joseph he goes to sleep his mind is bursting his mind is in turmoil he's wrestling with his own secret thoughts he's thinking to himself what on earth is going on and what do I do next and into Joseph's dreams God sends a messenger that's what an angel is simply a messenger from God and this angel of the Lord he appears to Joseph he calls him by his name his personal name and he calls him by his family name that family name with all the interesting characters in it the angel uses that name

Joseph son of David and the angel brings the word of God to Joseph the angel tells him the truth about Mary you might wonder why did Mary not just speak to Joseph there don't seem to be any dialogue here back in that day when a couple were engaged to be married there was virtually no social contact they weren't doing everything together like couples are today there was virtually no social contact for that period of engagement they came together when they were married but in the in between period they were kind of at a distance and so Joseph isolated in the midst of all this God breaks into his stream through this messenger tells him the truth about Mary and tells him what to do and tells him not to be afraid because that's the message don't be afraid says the messenger to trust and obey the Lord don't be afraid

Joseph to take this child that's going to be born into your life that was the message from God and you know that's still the message from God that's the message that comes to us today that's perhaps the message that I would want to underline more than any other message in this sermon today God speaks into Joseph's life God speaks into your life life and my life and he says don't be afraid to take Jesus into your life there are people here who I believe are afraid to take Jesus into their lives there are people who are watching at a distance who are afraid to take Jesus into your life and God says to them and God says to us don't be afraid now for

[57 : 48] Joseph taking Jesus into his life was going to be disruptive it was going to be scary it was going to be costly he was going to be criticized so there was a cost that he was going to have to count but what a blessing that came to Joseph and what a blessing that came through Joseph because he trusted and obeyed God what a blessing came to him and through him because he accepted Jesus into his life and there is still such blessing offered and promised to those who will accept Jesus think about the hymn that we often sing in Christ alone there's a line in that hymn that says no guilt in life no fear in death this is the power of

Christ in me what a blessing how many are here today and you're carrying guilt and it's weighing you down how many are fearful as they put their head on the pillow at night because you're not ready to die there's blessings offered to you if you accept Jesus no guilt in life his blood washes away your sin no fear in death because he promises resurrection this is the power of Christ in me he's got to be in me got to be trusting him there's another hymn that we often sing that has the chorus there's love there's life there's lasting joy Lord Jesus found in thee that's what we're looking for we're looking for love we've been designed that way we're looking to experience a true life we're looking for joy not just the buzz of a

Friday night that ends up in a headache on a Saturday morning it's found in thee everything our souls long for peace joy purpose hope we receive when we take Jesus into our lives by faith and the last point that we come to this morning is the message that becomes apparent to Mary and Joseph together this child is the Messiah the message comes from God and it's the message of a Messiah she will give birth verse 21 to a son and you are to give him the name Jesus because he will save his people from their sins now we sang the words of the carol O little town of Bethlehem how still we see thee lie above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by yet in thy dark street shineth the everlasting light the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight for

Christ is born in Mary that's the reason that all these things are there that's the reason for the light that's the reason for the joy Christ is born the Messiah is born and that was the news that Joseph received the child that was to be born was the Messiah not the son of Joseph but the son of God and there's a theological lesson there and it's a lesson that humbles us where does salvation come from where can we get salvation is it to do with us is it to do with our works is it to do with our name it's nothing to do with us we can't climb up in order to get salvation salvation had to come down from God Joseph played no part in the story of salvation

Galatians 4:4 says that God's son was born of a woman. Joseph was not mentioned. There's nothing we can do to save ourselves; that's humbling, but it's true. Salvation had to come down from God, so Joseph learns that this child is not his son. This child is the son of God. He is the Messiah, and Joseph wouldn't have the freedom to choose a name for this child. Either we see couples these days buy books for the names you can track the names. The names usually align with the celebrities of the passing age. Joseph and Mary would never be able to sit down and choose a name for this child because the name for this child was chosen before time, and the name would be

[63 : 29] Jesus within the Trinity it had been determined that the name for the child would be Jesus because he would save his people from their sins. So think about this all that this young couple were having to try to take in as new parents, their minds must have been bursting when we become parents, those of us who are parents in the first few days and in the period of pregnancy you wonder what will this child be like, what will this child's life look like, what will they do, where will they go, what will life be like for this wee one. These are the kind of questions that go through our minds when we think about the children that we love. We don't know the answer to these questions, but this child, this child that

Mary and Joseph would soon be cradling this child. His life would be marked out so what would he do? He would save his people from their sins and where would he go? He would go to Calvary, he would go to a cross to die in our place. We'll sing at the end, child in the manger, infant of Mary, outcast and stranger. Imagine thinking that about your child, outcast and stranger, and yet the Lord of all, child who inherits all our transgressions, all our demerits on him, fall that was what was in the plan for this child, so what is

Christmas all about? It's all about salvation, it's all about the birth of Jesus, the Messiah, the one who came to suffer and die so that we could be saved, the one who came so that we could receive eternal life if we believe in him, and we may ask the question just now, how is this fair? How is it fair that the Lord of all would be an outcast and stranger? How is it fair that the child in the manger would inherit all our transgressions and all our demerits? How is that fair? It's not fair, this is grace, this is grace from

God, this is the greatest gift that has ever been offered, this is the greatest gift that will ever be offered, forgiveness of sin, eternal life, peace with God, the promise and the assurance of a place in heaven, and it's a gift and it's freely offered to us, it costs us nothing because it cost Jesus everything, his body was broken, the bread, his blood was shed, the wine, and it was for us. Isaiah in the prophecy said he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities, the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, by his wounds we are healed, and tonight for those who will come back will remember all that

Jesus did for us, and he did it because he loved us, he did it because he wanted to save us. Christmas is all about salvation, it's all about the gift of grace offered in Jesus, the Savior, so be encouraged, please, to receive that grace, be encouraged to accept the free gift of salvation, and then tonight come to the table, come to the table of the Savior, and remember all that he did to save you. We'll pray, heavenly Father, we pray that you would help us to understand this, help us to take this in, and help us to see the wonder of the grace that is offered to us in

[69 : 41] Christ, the wonder of the gift of salvation that is offered to us in Christ, we pray that you would give us the faith, each one of us, to receive Jesus, to accept salvation, and to come to the table, and to profess that our faith is in him as our Savior. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. We'll sing to finish the words of the hymn that we quoted just a minute ago, child in the manger, infant of Mary, we are in James and Methylen of and through. In the manger, infant of me,

A cast and slinger, Lord of all, Child to the parents, all our transgressions, All our remeries, all in form.

An simple story, child of salvation, Gentle and glory, live me, Lord.

Now our turn, glorious, mighty Redeemer, See him victorious, almighty show.

Prophets foretold him, infants of wonder, Angels behold him on his throne.

[71 : 52] Worthy and saviour of all your praises, Happy forever on his own.

And now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, The love of God the Father, And the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit, Be with us all, now and forevermore. Amen.