

14.12.25 am

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Date: 14 December 2025

Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[0 : 0 0] Welcome to the service this morning and a special welcome to those who are visiting with us.! It's good to have a few visitors who return regularly and it's good to have you today.

At the end of the service, tea and coffee as usual. Please stay behind if you're able to. And Cresce runs as usual today as does the Sunday school for primary school children.

But for the secondary school children, you'll stay in the service today. So just to let you know, you'll stay in the service today for a special reward.

You get to listen to the whole sermon. Which will be very simple and we're looking at the Christmas story. And so the secondary school kids can stay in.

The primary ones can go through to Sunday school after the second singing. The evening service tonight will be a communion service. So we will meet at six as usual.

[0 : 5 7] And it won't take much longer than usual, the service. Because I'm conscious the YF are going to Stornoway tonight. And the bus will leave here around about quarter past seven probably by the time the service is finished.

At quarter past five, the Kirk Session will meet in the wee room on my left. Just to speak with any who desire to go to the Lord's Table for the first time.

I expect to see at least one person coming forward this evening for the first time. But there is the opportunity for others to join them.

So if you are trusting the Lord Jesus and haven't yet come to the table, please be encouraged to come and speak to myself after the service. Or meet with the elders at quarter past five for a chat there.

A couple of things more to note. There's lots of notices, but you've got them in the email and they've been on the screen. But I'll highlight just a couple more that are out of the ordinary. Tomorrow evening at 6pm, a meeting of the Kirk Session.

[2 : 0 5] Please note that. Also note Road to Recovery on Tuesday at 7. It's a regular meeting. But I'm conscious that for those who struggle with addictions this time of year, it's a particularly difficult time of year.

So please note that meeting. And even if you don't attend, pray for those who may be battling at this point in time. Prayer meeting on Wednesday, Scott will take that meeting.

And that will be just a prayer meeting. He won't be preaching at it. It will just be a prayer meeting. Scott has lots of essays going on. So pray for him as the weight of academia sits on his shoulders at the moment.

But half past seven on Wednesday, the prayer meeting, Scott will lead that. Men's Bible study on Thursday. Please know that also. Friday the 19th, a date for your diary.

That's not this Friday. It is this Friday. We're getting very close to Christmas. Friday the 19th, there's a carol service at Talonamara. And the details have been on the screen.

[3 : 0 6] Service is next Sunday. 11 o'clock will be the family service. As we've had each year, a family service, which will be aimed at the children's level. So we'll all understand it.

And the children will take part in that service as well. And then the evening service lessons and carols at 6pm. Where we'll hear the Christmas story read from Old Testament through to New Testament.

And we'll sing through it as we go through the carols. So these, I think, are all the notices that I need to draw attention to just now. There's lots more, but you can look over them at your own convenience.

So let's worship God now and let's sing to his praise. We'll sing from Mission Praise 503. The words on the screen. A little town of Bethlehem.

How still we see you lie. O little town of Bethlehem.

[4 : 16] How still we see you lie. Above your deep and deep and deep let's see the silent stars go by.

Yet in your dark sleep shining is everlasting light.

The hopes and fears of all the years are met in you tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary and gathered all about.

While mortals sweep the angels deep their watch of pondering love.

[5 : 23] O morning stars together. O bring the holy word.

And praise the sing to God the King. And peace to Bethlehem.

And silently, how silently. And silently the wondrous gift is given.

So God imparts to human hearts. The blessings of his hand.

No real pain he and his drowning. But in this world of sin.

[6 : 25] Where me souls will receive him still. The dear Christ enters him.

O holy child of Bethlehem. Descend to us we pray.

Cast out our sin and enter in. Be born in us today.

We hear the Christmas angels. The great glad tidings tell.

O come to us. O come to us. Add with us. Our Lord Emmanuel.

[7 : 28] Well, let's bow our heads and let's unite our hearts in prayer.

Let's pray. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you that we are able to come together on this, your day.

And we are able to bow our heads and close our eyes and ask that you would still our hearts. And

we thank you that as we speak, whether audibly or even sometimes without words, as we speak to you from our hearts, we thank you that you hear us.

We have sung in that hymn that you are the God who descends to us. And we thank you that as we pray, you, as it were, incline your ear to hear the cries of our hearts.

And we thank you, Lord, that you have answered the cry of our hearts because the real need that we have, the real cry of our hearts is to be saved.

[8 : 51] It is not only this world that is a place where there is sin, but we know that our hearts are full of sin. And we confess that we are sinners and we can think of many times over this last week where we have done things and said things and failed to do things and failed to say things which speak to us of the sin that's in us.

But we thank you that, Father, you sent your son into this world to be the saviour of sinners. He said he has come to seek and save the lost.

And we thank you that his name is Jesus, the one who came to save us from our sin. We thank you that his name is Emmanuel, which means God with us.

So we pray for that cleansing today. Cast out our sin and enter into our hearts and our lives, we pray.

For some of us, that may be the prayer that we need to pray for the first time. For many of us, this is a prayer that we take upon our lips day by day. As we cry out, have mercy on me, the sinner.

[10 : 11] Cast out my sin. Come back, Lord Jesus. And walk close with me. And we thank you that that's a prayer that's heard. And it's a prayer that's answered when we pray in sincerity and in truth.

So touch our hearts, Lord, we pray. Cleanse us from sin. Fill us with the Holy Spirit. And lead us as we seek to worship you together. We pray that as we sing these truths of the Christmas story.

And as we read it in your word. And as we meditate upon it in Sunday school and in the sermon.

We pray, Holy Spirit, that you would press the wonder of the Christmas story into our minds and our hearts.

That it wouldn't be so familiar. That it has no impact. Help us to be amazed afresh at the wonder of Emmanuel, God with us.

The word becoming flesh. And making his dwelling among us. And help us, Lord, we pray, not only today to think about the birth of Jesus.

[11 : 13] But as we approach the Lord's table. We are reminded of the death of Jesus. Of all that he did. To take the curse of sin from us.

To remove the sting of death. And to give us life that is everlasting. We thank you that he who knew no sin became sin.

So that we who are sinners could become righteous. And we pray that we would know that truth in our hearts. And that we would be amazed afresh at the grace of God shown to us.

We pray for many in this community who haven't yet realised that. We are always aware that there are more outside of church than there are inside of church.

And so, Lord, we pray that you would be moving in the power of your spirit. To awaken the hearts of those who are still sleeping in sin.

[12:13] That they may come to a realisation. That that is not an easy sleep. But that's a state of alarm to be in. And we pray that seeing their sin.

They may be directed through your word. And through your people to look to the Lord Jesus. So be at work, Lord, we pray. In this place and across this nation.

And across all nations. That many would look to Jesus today as he is lifted up. As carols are sung. Even in places which are not places of worship.

We pray that they would have impact in the hearts and the lives of those who sing them. That some who may gather for the sake of nostalgia. Would be arrested by your spirit.

And would see Jesus for the first time. And believe in him and be saved. We pray, Lord, for those who are struggling at this time. We pray for those who are sick.

[13:12] We continue to remember Lydia in Glasgow. We remember Shona. As she's at home going through treatment. At this time. We pray for Nurse Marian with us today.

And ask that your hand would be upon her also. We think of Finley Myrtle. And Scalpy. We think of Kenny. We think of many others as well. Who have been in hospital.

Some who are in hospital. Some who are at home. And have been for many years now. And as we think of them. We remember them. And ask that you would meet them at the point of their need.

And that they would know. As we pray that we would know. That you are God. And that you are with us. We pray for those who are battling with addictions. As we've mentioned them.

We ask that you would give them strength to get through this season. And that not only would they know a period. Where they are free from the taste of alcohol or drugs.

[14:05] But we pray that more than that. They would come to know Christ as Saviour. The one who releases us. From the chains of addiction. And we pray for those who are grieving.

Again Lord we are conscious. Of those who have lost loved ones in the past few days. And we ask Lord. That you would comfort them. That you would bless them.

And that as we come together as a community once more. To mourn for those who have passed. We pray that we would hear the gospel. And that we would believe.

And know the assurance of life. Everlasting in Christ. So hear our prayers. Take away our sin. Bless us we ask. In Jesus name. Amen. Boys and girls would you like to come out please.

Amen. Amen. I like your wellies luckily.

[15:15] You take a wee seat down there. Now. Boys and girls. I was wondering. If you.

Noticed anything. Different. About the church today. Not so much. Inside the church. But did you notice anything different.

Over the last few days. Outside of the church. I think. Shawnee you had your hand up first. There's a. There's a.

There's a picture in the window. And that's. Good to notice that. Tells us about who Jesus is. He's Emmanuel. He's God with us. So that's one thing.

And I thought you would say that. But have you noticed anything else. Nothing. Okay. Take a look. Take a look. Over. Over that way in particular.

[16:11] Look out that window. Just now. Stand up. Take a look over there. Is there anything missing that used to be there. Yeah.

The bushes. Excellent. Sit down now. The bushes. There was a big. Hedge. Bush thing. That was all along there.

And we were always having to cut it. And always having to look after it. And it would grow. And it would grow. And it would be messy. And so. Our expert gardeners. DJ.

And all. Lala. Got their gardening gear on. Which was basically like a JCB. I think. I don't know what it was. And they took this bush. Maybe they had other helpers as well.

I didn't see the whole job. They took the bush. And they chopped it off. So. Some might say. Well why did they do that? Because we like bushes.

[17:08] Why? You know. The bushes go green in the summertime. Oh. We'll miss the bush. So some people might say. Well. I wish the bush had stayed. I'm quite happy the bush is gone.

But do you know what makes it really good? That the bush is gone. Joseph. Do you know what was inside that bush? There was something inside that bush.

What do you think it was? Hiding in the bush. Right in the middle of the bush. Something bad and dark. What's hiding?

Benjamin. You had your hand up first. Pardon? Bird. A bird. Not a bird. Katie. A wasp.

A wasp's nest. I knew it. You knew it. So. When we were sitting here in the summertime.

[18:11] And every time you opened the window. Wasps buzzing. And I could see people distracted. I was more distracted than anyone. Because I'm terrified of the things. Having a cup of tea and a cake. Wasps buzzing.

Front door. Wasps buzzing. And I was saying. There must be a wasp's nest here somewhere. And someone. Not me. Has to get rid of it. And so.

When the guys went. And did the chopping. There was a massive big. Thankfully empty. Wasp's nest. So in the summertime. When the wasps come back.

To North Harris Free Church. And look for their house. They'll see. Not only is their house gone. But the whole bush is gone. So off you go somewhere else. Yes. So.

What on earth. Has that got to do with Christmas? Why don't we like wasps? Benjamin. Because they sting.

[19:11] We don't like wasps. Because they sting. And you know the Bible tells us. That the thing in our heart. That is dark. Is called what?

It's called sin. And there's a verse. In the Bible. That says. Well what does. What does. When sin came into the world. People started to get sick.

And when sin came into the world. People started to die. Because there was no death. Before sin. But when sin came in. So did death. And so.

What happens at Christmas? Who came into the world at Christmas? Yeah. Who came into the world at the very first Christmas? Stuart. You've got work to do. Shawnee.

Jesus did. And why did Jesus come into the world? Really? To take away our sin. And if he takes sin away.

[20:13] Then he takes death away. Death's sting. Is gone. So today. We're thankful. That the wasps are all gone. And all the stings.

That they carry are gone. But we're even more thankful. As we come into Christmas. That Jesus came into this world. To take away our sin.

And to take away the sting. Of death. If we believe in him. There's a verse. That says. And this is Paul. In 1 Corinthians 15.

And he believes in Jesus. And this is what he says. He says. O death. Where is your victory? O death. Where is your sting?

The answer was. Jesus. Had taken it away. So let's pray. And thank the Lord. For all that he has done. Lord Jesus. We thank you.

[21:10] That you came into this world. Because you loved us. And you saw us in our sin. And you saw. That we needed to be saved. From our sin. And have the death. The sting of death.

Taken away. So help us. We pray. To be believing. In you. And to be able to say. With Paul. Death. Where is your sting? And thankful. That we are saved.

So. Hear our prayers. And go before us. We ask. In Jesus name. Amen. We are going to sing again now. And we will sing another carol. Mission Praise 71. Child in a Manger.

Bluetooth Bluetooth Bluetooth Bluetooth Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[23:24] Amen. Amen. Amen.

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

Matthew chapter 1 and reading verse 1.

And we'll be looking at this whole chapter really today. We'll look at the second half in the evening specifically. And we'll focus mainly from verse 18 down to verse 20, 21 this morning.

But we'll begin and we'll touch a little on the names that were given here in this list. I probably won't go through all of them, but let's read from Matthew chapter 1 verse 1. The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

[25 : 14] Abraham was the father of Isaac and Isaac the father of Jacob. And Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers. And Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamir.

And Perez the father of Hezron. And Hezron the father of Ram. And Ram the father of Amminadab. And Amminadab the father of Nashon. And Nashon the father of Salmon. And Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab.

And Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth. And Obed the father of Jesse. And Jesse the father of David the king. And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah.

And Solomon the father of Rehoboam. And so the list goes on through lots and lots of names. And then at verse 16 we pick up where we read that Jacob is the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary. Of whom Jesus was born. Who is called Christ. So all the generations from Abraham to David were 14 generations. And from David to deportation to Babylon, 14 generations.

[26 : 22] And from deportation to Babylon to the Christ, 14 generations. Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way.

When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.

But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife.

For that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son and you shall call his name Jesus. For he will save his people from their sins.

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son. And they shall call his name Emmanuel, which means God with us.

[27 : 27] When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him. He took his wife, but he knew her not until she had given birth to a son.

And he called his name Jesus. Amen. And may God bless that reading of his word to us. We're going to sing now from Psalm 72.

Psalm 72. And we will sing verses 17 and verse 18 of the Psalm.

Psalm 72 verses 17 and 18. We sing in Gaelic. His name forever shall endure. Last like the sun it shall.

Men shall be blessed in him. And blessed all nations shall him call. Now blessed be the Lord our God, the God of Israel. For he alone doth wondrous works and glory that excel.

[28 : 26] These two stanzas of Psalm 72 to God's praise. We'll remain seated to sing in Gaelic.

Bluetooth Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[31 : 10] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Hello. Hello. Hello. Hello. Hello. to death so that those who are sinners can be saved so that we can be your people so that we through Christ can become children of God so help us we pray to grasp something more today of the the vastness of the love of the Father the wondrous works of God the Son Holy Spirit we pray that you would move in us and amongst us take away every distraction everything that would draw our minds away from what you have to say to us and give to us faith that we wouldn't only hear and remember and read familiar stories but that we would actually respond by believing and becoming children of God and we ask this in Jesus name Amen if your Bibles are open at Matthew chapter 1 what I'd like to do this morning is stay in Matthew's gospel for those who are visiting I think you'll know that we've been in

[35 : 04] Matthew's gospel over the last few months the whole year actually we've been in Matthew's gospel in the morning and we had reached Matthew chapter 18 what I want to do this

morning is rewind from Matthew chapter 18 to Matthew chapter 1 now in Matthew chapter 18 we see Jesus he's probably 32 or 33 years old at that point he is in the busyness of ministry at that point that we left in Matthew 18 in Matthew chapter 18 in Matthew chapter 18 we go back in time 30 plus years to Matthew's account of the birth of Jesus and families often do that when we think about it especially when we gather together at Christmas and New Year time the it used to be in my day the photo albums would come out these days I guess it's all digital photos that are flashed up on a screen but when we come together as families often what we do is we we go back and we look at photos of the early years we remember how life began for this child that has grown up into a man or or a woman and really that's what we're doing this morning we're going back to revisit this familiar story of Jesus being born into this world we'll structure our thoughts as we'll just step through the verses we'll structure our thoughts under four headings the first thing is the blessing that is promised the second thing we'll note is that the birth of Jesus Christ it took place it happened history the third thing is we see a betrothal an engagement that is at risk it looks like it's about to be broken and then the last thing we'll see is we'll behold the angel of the Lord as the angel comes to Joseph to tell him what to do so we'll just step through this story and we begin with the the blessing that is promised now the first few lines of any book are always really important lines for anybody who's written a book I haven't but for anybody who's written a book or for anybody who reads a book we know that when we pick up a novel the first few lines are really important lines and publishers will say to those who are writing books make sure that you have a gripping exciting engaging introduction so that when the readers pick up they're going to get hooked and they're going to be drawn into to the story now as we open Matthew and start reading at verse one we would be forgiven for thinking that Matthew hasn't had any kind of conversation with the with the publishing agent because Matthew chapter one verses one through to verse 17 it doesn't appear to be the most gripping introduction if you just scan through the first 17 verses we have a long list of names some of these names we can pick out and we're familiar with we could speak about Abraham we could speak about Isaac we could speak about Jacob we could speak about David we could speak about Solomon we could speak about Ruth and Boaz if I was to ask for some biographical information on Manasseh or Rehoboam or Abijah

or Jehoshaphat we might be waiting for a wee while longer because these are names that were we're not quite so familiar with we don't have their stories at the forefront of our minds so some names are familiar some names are actually quite remote they're hard for us to try and really connect with so we might want to ask the question of Matthew why start with the names you know why start this book that you're writing this gospel with with such a dry list of names why not Matthew just just launch in at verse 18 and tell us about the birth maybe append the names in a in a list at the end that we we can look at if we have to and the answer that Matthew would give us is that the names are there because they remind us of God's blessing that was promised

God made a promise to bless his people and these names speak to us of that unfolding promise in the evenings those who come along in the evenings we've been in Genesis for most of the last year and in Genesis chapter 12 God comes to Abraham and God says Abraham I'm going to bless you and I'm going to bring blessing to to millions of people through your family line through all the names that will follow in your family line I'm going to deliver blessing says God to to Abraham and so Matthew in this first 17 verses he records for us this family line so just briefly before we move on to the second point what do we know about this family line if we scan the names is this a list of names of saintly figures who all lived perfect lives if we ask that question and then we go and do a little bit of exploration we will very quickly see that this list is full not of saints with perfect lives it's full of sinners we have a long list of sinners here we have a lot of dark history that is attached to this family line so we ask the question where will the blessing come from we actually have to follow the family line all the way through the generations

Abraham Isaac Jacob and on and on through sinner after sinner until we get to Jesus the Christ we just sang a moment ago in Psalm 72 and at verse 17 men shall be blessed in him and who do we see as we come to the climax of this list we see him we see the Christ we see Jesus the blessing that was promised we'd come through Jesus the sinless son of God all the other names all the other lists it's a list of people who are sinners they can't save no more than we can save the only one who could save was the sinless son of God who would be born in Bethlehem as was promised in Micah chapter 5 and verse 2 that's where we sang the first hymn

O little town in Bethlehem how still we see thee lie above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight the blessing promised it came in and through Jesus and this morning if you and I are looking for the blessing of God there's only one way there's only one name there's only one place that we can go we cannot procure God's blessing through our good works we can't earn God's blessing by sitting through a certain number of sermons we can't buy it we can't discover the blessing of God through some eastern religion there's one name there's one way and Matthew takes us all the way through this line to the last name and it's

[44 : 49] Jesus the blessing came in and through Jesus that's the first point and that takes us beyond the 17 verses of names the second point is the birth of Jesus Christ took place verse 18 now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way now what is this book this book is the gospel according to Matthew so what is the gospel what is a gospel well the gospel a gospel is a record of news good news news now all of us we can we can open up our phones we can pick up newspapers we can tune in to the tv and we can get news stories so if I go on here to sky news I can read stories of various things that are happening in the world generally not good news there's lots of bad news but it's accounts of things that took place and Matthew wants us to know in his gospel that the birth of

Jesus Christ took place Matthew is not writing a nostalgic novel he's not writing a book of nursery rhymes and fairy stories he's giving us a historical record of what happened the birth of Jesus Christ took place and because the birth of Jesus Christ took place we know that the blessing that God promised to a broken world had come true and because the birth of Jesus Christ took place we know that the word of God is trustworthy and we should just pause for a moment to give thanks for that because we live in a world where many promises are made but very often these promises are broken and I could speak to any of you just now and you could ask me and we all have stories of people and companies who have made promises to us that we have put our faith in and they've broken these promises and we've been hurt through that we live in a world where many words are spoken but very early on in our lives we learn that we can't always trust the words that are spoken but as we think about the first

Christmas we're given a reminder that God always keeps his promises as we think about the first Christmas we're given a reminder of the fact that we can always trust the word of God the blessing that was promised it was delivered when the birth of Jesus Christ took place so we see that we can trust the word of God as we consider the birth of Jesus and actually we see that we can trust the word of God even more clearly when we remember as we will this evening the death of Jesus you see for you and I to receive the blessing of God

Jesus God the Son he had to remove the curse of our sin and the curse of our sin wouldn't be removed at the time of the birth of Christ in a cradle the curse of our sin would be removed at the point of the death of Christ on the cross we just we just sang it Jesus this child who was born would become the child who inherits all our transgressions all our demerits on him fall which is a sobering thing to think about as we visualise in the

Christmas story this child this human cute little boy laid in a manger because there's no room for him in a nice place as people look down on this perfect little human being this was the child who in 33 years time would have all the transgression the demerit the sin of the whole world in him the question I want to ask before we move on from this point is have you asked Jesus to take all your transgressions all your demerits all your sin away that's what he came to do and he promises that if you ask him to do it he will do it so every swear word every bitter thought every cruel text wrongful look every page on your phone that you shouldn't have swiped to every sin every transgression every time we have fallen short he promises if we will tell him about it and ask him to take it away he will do it he will wipe them away come says

[52 : 22] Jesus as we think about the words of Isaiah he's pointing forward to Christ come let us reason together says the Lord though your sins are like scarlet they shall be made as white as snow through this little child born in the cradle destined for the cross if you've asked him to take your sin away you're forgiven you can rejoice in that you can be assured of that but if you're forgiven and if he has cleansed you you need to come to the table to remember and to proclaim that he died for me and I'm trusting him as my saviour the birth of Jesus Christ took place this is history this is news that Matthew is giving us the blessing that was promised is delivered in and through

Jesus the third point as we shift the camera to Joseph and Mary but particularly Joseph we see here a betrothal or an engagement which is a risk it looks like is about to break so it says in verse 18 when his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph before they came together she was found to be with child pregnant from the Holy Spirit and her husband Joseph being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame resolved to divorce her quietly now I'm looking across the congregation here we have a number of couples in the congregation at present who are engaged who are planning their weddings just now but they're not just planning their wedding day because the day it's just a day it's a special day but it's only a day what they're as couples actually thinking about and looking forward to and putting real focus into it's their married lives yes the wedding day but the greater focus is the married life the couples are talking about the wedding day but they're really looking forward to spending their whole lives with each other and as we think about Mary and Joseph that's where they were at engagement in their culture was even more of a commitment than it is in ours when we are engaged we might put down a deposit with a hotel we might send a few cards out saying save the date so there's a commitment to a date there's a commitment to some transactions but in that culture at that time if you were betrothed if you were engaged it was a formal legal commitment the couple actually came together and they stood in a legal place before witnesses and they took vows it was essentially being married without the coming together if I could put it that way it was a huge legal commitment to be betrothed so it would take something huge and it would actually also require a legal divorce for a couple who were betrothed to be separated and not go through with the marriage but in

Joseph's experience something huge has happened because he's learned that Mary is pregnant and he knows that he is not the father so what would Joseph do so we have to remember this is real people real situation historical situation Joseph in love with this girl planning to be married thinking about the wedding day thinking about their lives together all of a sudden she's pregnant he knows it's nothing to do with him what would he do well verse 19 tells us that Joseph is a just man but we imagine that he's a heartbroken man when he hears the news he loves Mary and we can see in his reactions here he doesn't actually want to do any harm to

Mary he doesn't want to go on Facebook and social media and shame her he doesn't want to tell everybody about the scandal of this that she's expecting a child and it's not his he doesn't want to go on a blog and tell the world about rather in verse 19 it says that in his own mind he resolved to divorce her quietly we might kind of wonder as we think this one through what kind of conversations happen between Joseph and Mary when he discovers that she's pregnant and the likelihood is there was no conversation there's no record of a conversation and it's likely that there was actually no conversation because in that culture the engaged couple they didn't actually spend any time alone together that was the way it was but

Mary would have expected and known and Joseph certainly knew that this betrothal this engagement this marriage is at risk so that's the story and I know you've heard that a hundred times but we need to think ourselves into it what was going on in the mind of Joseph what was going on in the mind of teenage Mary and the question that we should probably ask as well is are there any lessons that we can take from this from their story into our experience into our lives I know that this is a story that went on 2,000 years ago in a place that was about 3,500 miles from here so what possible impact can it have on my life in years are there any lessons that we can take from this well I think one lesson that we can note is that when

[59 : 25] God breaks into our lives as he was breaking into the life of Mary and Joseph and when God is at work in our lives sometimes it can be actually really disruptive as it was for Mary and Joseph and sometimes when God is at work in our lives we have no idea we can't see what he's doing but God is God and it tells us in Isaiah 55 that his ways are higher than our ways and his thoughts are higher than our thoughts so sometimes all we can do is just trust him Joseph and Mary they teach us at this point the birth of

Jesus that all they could do was trust God they couldn't comprehend the extent of what God was doing and Mary and Joseph as they thought about the future all they could see was uncertainty and a scary future what on earth is going to happen here but they trust God and if we go from Mary and Joseph to the disciples if we go from Mary and Joseph at the birth to the disciples at the death of Jesus as they stand watching the cross they teach us the same lesson think about the disciples as they watched Jesus suffer and die all they could see was tragedy and all they could see was loss but through the birth of

Jesus and the life of Jesus and the death of Jesus and the resurrection of Jesus our eternal salvation was being secured the curse of our sin the sting of death was being removed and the blessing of God was being given to all who would believe in the God who was doing and who still does much more than our eyes can see so we see a betrothal at risk and the last thing in this story as we step through the verses as we see the angel of the Lord breaking into Joseph's experience his dream behold an angel of the Lord verse 20 but as Joseph considered these things behold an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream saying Joseph son of David do not fear to take Mary as your wife for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit now we don't know very much about Joseph if this was a YF group just now I would ask you to tell me tell me all the things that you know about Joseph and it wouldn't take us long to exhaust everything that we know about Joseph we don't know much about him but everything that we know about Joseph to me seems impressive we catch him at a point in his life where he is under the most extreme pressure but what we can see is that he's not rash he's not bad tempered he's not bitter even though the whole of his world is crashing in and even though his heart is broken he's still kind to Mary and he considers everything before he does anything he's the opposite of us sometimes we tend to just do everything before we consider anything but Joseph even though all this stuff is going on he seems to quietly consider everything before he says or does anything at all if we want a picture of what it looks like to as Isaiah 40 says wait upon the Lord we've probably got it in Joseph he waits upon the Lord and in that waiting time as Joseph goes to his bed that night more than likely troubled with the whole weight of the world on his shoulders wondering what on earth am I going to do God sends an angel into the dreams of Joseph with a message and the message is do not fear that's the message do do not fear to take [65 : 09] Mary as your wife that's part of the message to Joseph but the main message for Joseph actually is do not fear to take Jesus into your life because for Joseph he's probably thinking this child has nothing to do with me wherever this child has come from this is not my child so the thing that we would expect him to do is walk just get on with his life he doesn't need this hassle doesn't need this relationship but God comes through the stream with this messenger and says don't fear to take Mary as your wife don't fear to take Jesus into your life and that message as we finish it comes not just to

Joseph it comes to you and it comes to me today through this Christmas story and through the whole of the gospel message we are told time and time again do not fear to take Jesus into your life and I expect there's some people who are here this morning who are secretly saying well I do fear I fear the cost of accepting Jesus I fear the cost of becoming a Christian I fear what people might say people who think I'm intelligent a scientific mind then I trust Jesus what are my friends going to say about me that fills me with fear or the teenager in school hearing the call of Jesus to come wrestling with this gospel call to trust Jesus to take him into our lives and wondering what will my friends say?

What will they say on the football pitch? What will they say in the common room? These are the kind of things that fill us with fear. Maybe we're hearing the call to become a Christian and we're fearing the disruption and the uncertainty of a life where I don't make the decisions but Jesus does. These are fears that may be flying through our minds right now. And yet when you think about it Joseph could have said all these things with far greater force.

[68 : 15] For Joseph to take Mary as his wife with a child that she carried there would be many critical voices. Many people would say he says he's not the father.

He says they didn't do anything. But who's going to believe that? There would be many pointing fingers. Why is he going with her?

Why is he talking all this nonsense? For Joseph there would be huge personal cost and risk and uncertainty and disruption.

His whole life's plans would go right out the window. So he's going to be fearful. But the angel of the Lord comes and says do not fear Joseph because there would be far greater blessing that would come to him and through him as he personally and publicly took Jesus into his life.

So that's what Joseph did. He takes Jesus into his life. He takes Mary as his wife.

[69 : 43] He obeys the word of God. He receives the blessing of God. And the question for us to finish is will we do the same?

Will we accept Jesus into our lives as our Savior and our Lord? It's a personal decision.

No one else can make it for you. It has to be yours. Not your parents, not your grandparents, not your husbands, not your wives. It's your decision and you will make it.

And it's a public decision. Because if we take Jesus into our lives, we can't keep him a secret any more than Joseph could.

So what will you do? the Lord says to us, do not fear to take Jesus into your life.

[70 : 58] And if you've done that, do not fear to tell people that as you come to his table. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for this account of your son, your eternal son who was born into this world.

We thank you for the details that we have of the lives of Mary and Joseph that were turned upside down as you worked in their experience.

And we thank you for the lessons and the challenges that come to us as we consider all these things with Joseph. In a sense, we know that we are being asked to take the Lord Jesus into our lives.

And we are fearful often that we pray that we would hear that same voice coming to us today, do not fear, and that we would trust, and that we would obey the call of God.

[72 : 20] And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. We'll sing to finish Mission Praise 337 in the bleak mid winter. frosty wind be warm, as to thine as I am, water like a stone.

Snow up up up Oh Oh Oh

Oh Oh Oh Oh Oh Oh Oh Oh Oh Oh Oh Oh Oh 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.