

## Joseph<sup>1</sup>

Series: The Glory of Christ

Matthew 1:18-25

December 5, 2021

Welcome again to worship and the second week of Advent.

Our Advent series this year is “The Glory of Christmas.”

Last week, we talked about Mary and how all her plans for her life were changed. We said that God knows the plans He has for all of us. As crazy as those plans may seem at times, they are plans for our welfare and not for our evil. They are plans to give us hope and a future. And that future includes a capacity to experience and enjoy the glory of Christmas.

Today, we are going to look at Joseph.

VIDEO: JOSEPH

One of the aspects of the glory of Christmas is that Christmas is about precedents from God. No, I did not say Christmas is about presents from God. I said an aspect of the glory of Christmas is about precedents from God. God has a way throughout the stories recorded in the Bible that repeatedly show His affinity towards using some of the least likely people to do the most incredible tasks.

One of the reasons God does this over and over again is because He never gets tired of receiving glory in situations that only can be attributed to His own work through imperfect, lacking, weak, underwhelming and dependent people. God enjoys involving such people in His story that positions them to depend on Him to do what only He can do as they follow His lead and choose to be obedient to what they make themselves available to do. Joseph being chosen by God to be the earthly father of Jesus the Messiah, certainly qualifies as such an involvement that could lead to giving God great glory. And while Joseph uniquely was chosen by God to give glory to God in this role, this kind of “set up” has precedence by God throughout the Bible.

It is a precedent we see of God using imperfect people to execute His perfect plan that leads to great glory for Himself. If you do not believe me, just look at a few examples of God setting the precedent that leads to Him getting glory.

In Genesis chapters 12-22, God calls Abram to leave his country and follow Him to a place God would reveal along the way. God later would change Abram’s name to Abraham. He may have been considered too old to follow God away into such a task because he was 75 years old when God invited him into the opportunity. It would be another 25 years before Abraham would become a father of one; this would end up leading to being the father of many nations beyond the number of stars in the sky. God set a precedent of getting a kick out of receiving glory from people and situations that depended on God to make it all happen.

In Genesis chapters 25-35, we see God using a cheater and liar named Jacob to end up being used by God to be a blessing of many peoples all throughout the earth.

In Genesis chapters 37-50, God uses another Joseph, someone who would go through horrible abuse, trafficking and injustice, eventually to be used by God to have influence and give leadership to the whole nation of Israel. A terrible season of life that

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<sup>1</sup> Sermon based on “The Glory of Christmas” series by the Skit Guys

included famine affecting God's people would be solved through Joseph being dependent, faithful, and open to being used in difficult circumstances by God.

The whole book of Exodus is a story of God using a stutterer named Moses eventually to be the mouthpiece of God before Pharaoh who enslaved the people of God. God chose to use Moses in supernatural ways to share a supernatural message and lead the Israelites out of Egypt, through the wilderness, and onto the doorstep of the Promised Land of Canaan.

In Joshua 2, God decided to get glory through a woman named Rahab who was a prostitute. She was part of a plan to assist the Israelites in capturing the city of Jericho that was a major factor in God's people moving forward into the Promised Land.

Much of the Old Testament speaks of and echoes the story of David. While he is called "a man after God's own heart," he also is known for ungodly actions in his life including committing adultery with a married woman named Bathsheba, and then having her husband murdered after David found out Bathsheba was pregnant. And yet, the place that plays such an integral role in the Christmas story is Bethlehem; aka, "the City of David."

And through the lineage of King David that would one day be born in the City of David, a Savior would be born, who is Christ the Lord. When that day came in the fullness of time, one man whom God chose to be present to welcome and hold the newborn King of Kings and Lord of Lords as this baby took His first breathes on earth, was a carpenter from Nazareth named Joseph.

Matthew's gospel describes Joseph as a "just man," who also was just a man. And he had fears and second thoughts about continuing in the relationship that he was in with Mary once he found out that she was pregnant...and not by him! Before Joseph ever stood in the stable of Bethlehem holding God in the flesh after Mary gave birth to Jesus, God first had to convince Joseph that he could do this assignment...that he could be the next precedent in God's great story that would end up leading to more great glory for God. Matthew's gospel recounts the scene of the glory of Christmas.

*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 Immanuel" (which means, God with us). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.<sup>2</sup>*

As we think about Joseph and the role God invites him to play in the Christmas story, we see a beloved character who, quite frankly, probably had more than one moment where he found himself scratching his head in wonder.

How could I possibly be in a relationship like this?

Who will ever believe a story like this about a girl like Mary and a guy like me?

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<sup>2</sup> Matthew 1:18-25 (ESV)

I never asked for a marriage like this.  
What will everybody think of me...of us?

How can I be who God wants me to be when so much of this situation makes so little sense on the surface?

Why would God decide to identify someone like Joseph to play the role of Jesus' earthly father? Because God sets precedence throughout the Bible that shows His consistency in choosing the least likely people that ultimately will give God great glory when put in the position to do so.

Our "Joseph" character that was depicted in the video probably was not at all what the Joseph in the Bible story of Christmas was really like on many levels. However, he likely was similar on at least one front that was articulated by the director towards the end of the scene. Do you remember what was said about Joseph in the video?

"I understand that Joseph is radically underqualified for all he's about to encounter. But isn't that the type of people God uses? The most unlikely folks to do the biggest things. It seems like those are the ones He always picks because He is a God who will never give up on us."

There is so much truth in those lines and so much glory to be given this Christmas to God if we find ourselves relating with Joseph as one who is underqualified. How many of us feel radically underqualified to do what is on our plate in a way that gives glory to God this Christmas?

For the one who feels afraid about the future...

For the one who feels inadequate to take care of your family like you think you should...

For the one who feels like you are in a dead-end job...

For the one who feels stretched between taking care of kids and aging parents...

For the one who feels misunderstood...

For the one who feels burned unjustly by what was posted on social media...

For the one who feels in over your head with responsibilities that were not part of your plan...

You are the kind of person God desires to use to bring Him great glory this Christmas. Although you may feel like the most unlikely person to do something great for God, please do not give up on God this Christmas. He will never give up on you. He wants you to know that He is with you and for you this Christmas. He wants you to know that like Joseph, He desires you to trust Him and not be afraid in your circumstances. Day by day you can find courage and strength as you follow God's lead in your life to do what He wants you to do and say what He wants you to say.

You have been identified by God to be the only one in your unique circumstances and situation who can bring Him the kind of glory He uniquely desires from you this Christmas. If you feel like you are the only one who is radically underqualified to do such a thing, remember, part of the glory of Christmas is that Christmas is about precedents from God. He regularly uses those who find themselves in less than ideal circumstances to bring Him the greatest glory. You uniquely have been positioned to step into the moment of this Christmas season, not be afraid, trust in God, and make yourself fully available to Him no matter what happens.

Remember what the angel of the Lord said to Joseph in his dream.

*“...do not fear to take Mary as your wife...”<sup>3</sup>*

How would you fill in that blank this Christmas season as you think about your life and the responsibilities before you today?

*“Do not be afraid to \_\_\_\_\_.”*

What is God asking you to step towards with faith in Him as you trust in Him and choose not to be afraid? If you feel radically underqualified, know that you are in good company from a precedence standpoint. Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, David... and certainly Mary's husband, Joseph, all can identify with you in some way or another. And yet, God got great glory from each one and so many others we did not have time and space to name because it is one of the things God specializes in with people. He finds great joy and gets great glory when His people choose to trust Him and see how He will come through if they only will leave the outcome to God rather than try and control a situation that is way beyond human capacity and understanding.

Will you choose to make yourself available to God this Christmas to get glory out of your life and situation based on the precedent of how He seems to have done similar things in other stories from the Bible? Will you be like Joseph and choose to trust and not be afraid to step forward with God regardless of how inadequate you may feel? Will you be available to be the next precedent God can point to when others find themselves feeling similar emotions that you may feel today?

God wants to use your life and circumstance to bring Him glory this Christmas. In Joseph's case, the Scripture says:

*When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him...<sup>4</sup>*

How will you respond in your situation and life this Christmas?

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<sup>3</sup> Matthew 1:20 (ESV)

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 1:24 (ESV)