

# Who Needs Jesus, Anyway? (Matthew says WE do.)

Reconnect – December 6, 2009

**Text:** Matthew 1:18-25; I Timothy 5:24-25

**Key Thought:** We need Jesus to help us live life alongside God.

Now this is how Jesus the Messiah was born. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant by the Holy Spirit. Joseph, her fiancé, being a just man, decided to break the engagement quietly, so as not to disgrace her publicly. As he considered this, he fell asleep, and an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. "Joseph, son of David," the angel said, "do not be afraid to go ahead with your marriage to Mary. For the child within her has been conceived by the Holy Spirit. And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All of this happened to fulfill the Lord's message through his prophet: *Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and he will be called Immanuel (meaning, God is with us.)* When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord commanded. He brought Mary home to be his wife, but she remained a virgin until her son was born. And Joseph named him Jesus. Matthew 1:18-25, NLT

## Pre-Intro: Breath of Heaven (song)

### Intro: When God speaks

- It's a song that has always touched me, one of my Christmas favourites – haunting, actually, to think about a teenage mom, who is favoured by God but once the news breaks, by no-one else
- Mary is the one who has the angel appear to her – she's the one that moment by moment, treasures everything that's happening – she has this special connection with God, this miracle of life in her
- But everyone else is another degree of separation away – and while it's one thing for Mary to be comforted in her social rejection by the fact that God has chosen her, it's another thing for those around her to be comforted by that fact, too
- Like Joseph – her fiancé – or stronger, in that time, her "betrothed" – there was no going back once that happened – the marriage had basically happened, but just not yet – if you wanted to break this off now, it would take a divorce – it was everything but the sex still to come – they are husband and wife, but she is still living at her father's house – could last up to a year
- She sees angels – he sees disaster – she praises God – he reaches for the Tums
- And yet Matthew, biographer of Jesus, chooses instead of focusing on Mary's story, to tell Jesus' birth through the eyes of Joseph, the adoptive dad

### Read Text: Matthew 1:18-25

**Now this is how Jesus the Messiah was born. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant by the Holy Spirit. Joseph, her fiancé, being a just man, decided to break the engagement quietly, so as not to disgrace her publicly.**

- Smalltown kids in Nazareth
- Tradition says that Joseph was older than Mary – linked to him likely dying before Jesus became a man, since he's not mentioned after Jesus' childhood – but we just don't know
- At any rate, their families would have known each other well, and they would have been set up with each other, perhaps years ago, with it being initiated by Joseph's family
- By this time money has changed hands (the "bride price", where the husband compensates the wife's family for her loss) and everything is ready to go
- **"just man"** – Greek *dikaios* – "righteous" – righteous! – someone who does the right thing, who fulfills all their obligations

- Joseph has the option of either a public trial, to salvage his honour and ensure that everyone knows whose fault this all is, that Mary is an adulteress... or he can quietly divorce her in front of just two witnesses
- But continuing on together is not an option – her adultery has destroyed the marriage – there is nothing left to save
- Joseph does the right thing – that’s who he is, who he’s always been – so he’s going to do the “right” thing, which is get divorced – but he also wants to at least be kind about it, because Mary seems to really believe that God got her pregnant, which would seem to make her a little soft in the head – mentally altered
- But maybe it’s more than that – maybe God is at work in Joseph’s heart, in spite of himself thinking that he knows exactly what should be – God is trying to break in on Joseph – or break out of the box that Joseph has Him in

**As he considered this, he fell asleep, and an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. “Joseph, son of David,” the angel said, “do not be afraid to go ahead with your marriage to Mary. For the child within her has been conceived by the Holy Spirit. And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”**

- Joseph, being like most of us guys, thinks about what he’s going to do long and hard – so long and hard, in fact, that he falls asleep
- Joseph falls asleep a lot, actually – and it’s how God speaks to him
- “son of David” – Joseph, you’re a king – you have to do this
- “you are to name him Jesus” – you are to truly make him your own, not just in name only
- “Jesus” – Joshua – God saves
- Everyone is naming their kid Joshua, hoping that God will use them to save their people from the Roman occupation – a military champion, a hero for the world
- But Matthew makes it less about fighting and more about personal conduct – save from their sins, not from their oppressors

**All of this happened to fulfill the Lord’s message through his prophet:**

***Look! The virgin will conceive a child!***

***She will give birth to a son,***

***And he will be called Immanuel***

***(meaning, God is with us.)***

- “Immanuel” – God is with us – a life lived with God – incredible, what a dream
- God is with us, showing us what it means to really live life alongside God, in a way that pleases him – a righteous life
- God is not only going to save, but He’s going to do it up close and personally – with the people who need Him, not from a distance

**When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord commanded. He brought Mary home to be his wife, but she remained a virgin until her son was born.**

- Joseph does the right thing, as always – He brings Mary home and they’re married – he balances obedience with compassion (Wilkins, Matthew, 88)

**And Joseph named him Jesus.**

- Joseph perfectly obeys the angel – and even though in the eyes of their village/family/friends/neighbours/hangers-on, this is not Joseph’s baby (nudge/nudge, wink/wink), he makes this baby his own – he will raise him right

**“Righteousness” – a loaded word**

- A great Bible word – used over and over again – sometimes to talk about what God gives us, the good that spills over on us because of his love for us – and other times, about how we need to do the right thing with his help
- And yet sadly, that’s a ruined word for too many in our society today – because the word they associate most with it comes right before it – “self” → self-righteous – Christians – religious people – do-gooders who look down on everyone else and aren’t really compassionate – they’re just RIGHT, or at least they want to be, all the time
- But we’ve got to take a stab at this word if we want to understand Matthew – this *dikaos* word is huge for him – he uses it 24x in the book, and if you were hearing it read out loud, it would echo again and again – and it keeps coming around to Jesus
  - Righteousness – the righteous life with God – what is it, and what does it look like
  - 3:15 – Jesus and John the Baptist – we must fulfill ALL righteousness
  - 4 – Jesus resists the devil
  - 5-7 – the sermon on the mount – those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be filled
  - 6:33 – seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you
  - 27:19 – even pilate’s wife calls jesus righteous (innocent)
- **Definition:** “the right conduct of man which follows the will of God and is pleasing to Him” (vol. 2 p.198 TDNT Schrenk)
- Conformity to God’s will in all areas of life (DJG p.411 Scot McKnight) – more specifically, conformity to Jesus’ teachings, for Matthew
- For Matthew, “righteousness is behavioural” (McKnight, Ibid) – so how are we going to get there?

## Following the process

- I work at a Bank – and the way we get complicated things right (or we’re supposed to be able to get them right, anyway) is by following a process – a procedure – something you can write down, that others can duplicate, that in theory, with care, anyone can do
- In theory...
- “Follow the process” – we use process talk a lot in Ottawa, because it makes us think that we’re accomplishing things and doing good while in the bigger picture, nothing actually happens – policies and procedures are what we hide behind when we don’t want to help – they’re there for a reason – if you’re new or you don’t know what to do, there they are – but if you’ve been in the game for a certain amount of time, it shouldn’t be about following them anymore – it should just be about doing the right thing – and you know what it is, and you know how to do it, and you can take the quickest route to get there – but you need those policies and procedures to get you to that point of “getting it”
- We envision righteousness – doing the right thing – like policies and procedures that we have to “get right”, but really, it’s living a life of love – with reference guides if we need it, but otherwise, living in an upright way and helping others the whole time we do
- Joseph does the right thing – that’s obedience – but he does it with compassion – that’s godliness
- Obedience comes from two things: knowing God better and better (what exactly DOES HE want, anyway?) and secondly, having the humility to do it

## Looking for a guide

- Jesus brings wisdom - living in the Kingdom of Heaven, sermon on the mount, that kind of thing).
- True righteousness – in the Kingdom of Heaven – how to live life with God
- Jesus the teacher in Matthew – five great sections of the book – Jesus brings wisdom, how to live your life, and his answer is righteousness – this is what you and I should be aiming for - applied knowledge, about the Kingdom of Heaven, life with God – how to live life with God
- We need a guide, we need help to show us what to do – Immanuel – God with us – AND Joshua – God saves us – like the clip from The Incredibles, where Mr. Incredible is helping the little old lady get the justice she needs by guiding her through a process, a procedure
- Unfortunately, it seems so often that we envision God not as the helper, but as the little man doing the yelling – and we’re trying to get by the best that we can, but it’s miserable!
- (remember, God is with you to HELP you, not to condemn you or obstruct you)

## Key Thought:

### **We need Jesus to help us live life alongside God.**

The sins of some are obvious, reaching the place of judgment ahead of them; the sins of others trail behind them. In the same way, good deeds are obvious, and even those that are not cannot remain hidden forever. (I Timothy 5:24-25, TNIV)

## **Conclusion: downtown Ottawa and “righteousness” (life with God)**

“I love you, you’re perfect, now change”

People that need help to figure out their lives, to get them through – guidance on how to live, that can be helped by others reaching out, but ultimately truly by God intervening  
(mention CCM?)

Wordle Matthew – the verbs – it’s about acting, it’s about doing, it’s about living – getting into your life and the lives of others and making a difference – that’s righteousness, that’s life with God – Immanuel and Joshua, Manny and Josh

## **Response: “righteousness” (obedience)**

Silent meditation – then closing – can you tell someone?

(remember, God is with you to HELP you, not to condemn you or obstruct you)