

Matthew 1 (Part 2) :18-25

The Birth of a Savior

Pastor Paul LeBoutillier · April 18, 2026

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

so open your Bibles to Matthew chapter 1 and we're going to continue on with our study through the New Testament as you can see we're just getting started here again with the New Testament case you weren't here with us last Sunday we've started over in our study through the Bible for the third time now here we go we are picking up Matthew chapter 1 at verse 18 let's go ahead and read it through the end of the chapter then we'll pray and then we'll ask the Lord to minister to our hearts it says in verse 18 and following 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 after 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 she will give birth to a son and you were 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 and 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 stop there let's pray Heavenly Father open our hearts to the ministry of your word and let it speak volumes to us today share us Lord with us Lord truth from this from this scripture and open our eyes to what is being said here we ask it in Jesus name Amen you know every year when we come to the Christmas holiday and I don't know how many of you got to hear like maybe a cantata this year they they're they're pretty popular well at least they used to be I guess I don't know how popular they are anymore but years ago I remember they they were every Christmas seems like you know every church was doing a musical cantata and and it would it's basically kind of a musical nativity you know telling the story of the birth of Christ and so forth but even if you weren't exposed to one of those this year perhaps you just heard a lot of Christmas music and you know there's so much music out there have you ever noticed about Mary and and and rightly so I mean she was an amazing woman I mean that God chose her

to be you know the the the mother of Jesus Christ you know to give birth to the the Holy Son of God wonderful powerful glorious obviously we don't come to the place of you know worshipping her you know but with respect and honor and all those things no problem but you ever notice how little we talk about Joseph and I I am so impressed by this man I mean I gotta tell you this this guy he just he's really impressive and and it's chances are very good that he was an older man in and I say older relative to the age of Mary we don't we don't hear anything about him during Jesus's earthly ministry which would lead us to believe that he had passed away by that time but he takes a fairly small portion of Scripture in terms of what it tells us about him and so forth but as much as we tend to think about the woman that God chose to give birth to the Son of God have you ever stopped to think that God took great care to pick out the man who was going to be married to the woman who gave birth to the Son of God and even though Joseph had no physical biological part in the birth of Jesus Christ he had a huge role to play as it relates to protecting Mary protecting the child over the course of his early few years and and just his own personal heart and attitude of obedience I am so impressed by this man and I want to bring out some things this morning some lessons that this passage shows us talks to us about the person of Joseph things that you and I can learn things that we can even emulate in terms of his response to the circumstances and please understand people these were extraordinary circumstances I mean wow but anyway so we come to this whole thing and having you know Matthew having established in the first 17 verses of this chapter the legal connection between Joseph and Jesus remember again Joseph wasn't the biological father of Jesus but because he was considered the father of Jesus from a human legal standpoint Matthew gives us the lineage of Joseph in the first 17 verses of the chapter and then he goes on to give us the details of the birth of Jesus and he explains to us here in this passage that his mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph and what we're basically saying is and in our kind of cultural sort of a connection is that they were engaged all right that's really kind of the closest parallel that our culture offers to Jewish betrothal but whereas an engagement period in our culture is really kind of time given to the the bride and her family to prepare for the wedding it wasn't that that wasn't the case in Jewish culture a betrothal period was would last one year and it really had one primary purpose well no that's not right it was there were more purposes but there there was one major purpose of the betrothal period okay you ready for this to make sure the woman wasn't pregnant by another man that's true they would they would set one year from the betrothal period until the day when they actually took their vows and became you know married in that official way of living together to make sure that the woman was pure and no better way to test her purity than to basically say all right we've made this agreement we're gonna get married but we're gonna wait one year to make sure that there hasn't any been any hanky-panky going on sort of a thing and and and so the the betrothal period was largely a test of purity for the woman and and you know isn't it interesting that it tells us here

that that whereas that betrothal period was meant to expose the potential of a woman's impurity that is what it appeared to expose in Mary because it goes on to say as Matthew tells the story that before they came together and that means before they came together in their union as husband and wife to consummate the relationship it says Mary was found to be with child which of course you know obviously means she was pregnant so she's beginning to show and there's and and and and so forth and this of course would have been devastating to the whole family and so much more to Joseph himself I mean here's a man who has found this woman with whom we assume he is in love and he and she have entered into this pact called a betrothal which is frankly more binding than our own engagement period and during this in this betrothal period she is then found to be in fact pregnant and so Joseph is faced with a very tough decision about what to do and how to handle this situation and part of that concern is given to us if you look again with me here in verse 19 it says that 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 now first of all you might be a little bit surprised at the word divorce it's like wait wait a minute I thought they were just engaged where are we talking divorce the reason is as I said before a Jewish betrothal was more binding than our engagement period today if someone is engaged and they decide to call it off all they got to do is call it off but in those days they actually had to get a divorce from their betrothal in fact they would refer to each other as husband and wife during the betrothal period so that woman even though she still lives with her parents and I still live with my parents and we're in that one-year period she's my wife and I'm her husband and if I'm gonna call this thing off there has to be a divorce but and so this is what Joseph is facing and you can see that he wanted to do it quietly but that too was a challenge because you see in order to do a divorce in Israel you had to give her a written declaration of intention to divorce her and it had to be given to her in the presence of two or three witnesses that's pretty tough to keep things quiet when you have to do things in front of witnesses so obviously Joseph was forced to try to find some people of discretion who were not going to blab this thing to a bunch of other people. And so he's probably already thinking through in his mind, okay, well, you know, I'm going to divorce her, we're going to break off our betrothal. But I'm going to have to find some people, you know, to do this in front of who are going to be very discreet and going to hold their tongue because I don't, you know, want this thing to get out. And so here's the \$64 question that I want to take just a moment here this morning to try to kind of identify with you. And it's a very simple question.

Why? And the question in longer form is, why is Joseph bending over backwards to trying to protect this woman? I mean, why? I mean, if you think about it for a second, at this point, at this point in the game, Joseph has, you know, no reason to believe that she is anything but an adulterer. He has no reason to

believe any other explanation for this pregnancy, other than the fact that there has been impurity, there has been immorality, and there has been betrayal.

And this is a betrayal of the most intimate and hurtful kind. And at this juncture in the game, Joseph has not been spoken to yet by any kind of an angel telling him anything else. And this is just one big fat rotten situation as far as Joseph is concerned. And he's been hurt. This is a very hurtful thing to learn.

This beautiful girl that you're going to marry begins to show and it comes out, she's pregnant. Oh, you know, can you imagine the devastation, the feelings of just, I thought I knew you. I thought I knew the kind of person that you were. And then you go and do this. Do you know, can you can you understand how hurtful that is?

Can you understand how powerfully devastating that is? Well, now, think about that. And now put it together with Joseph's response. And he doesn't want to hurt her. Oh, Lord, give me more like this.

Make my heart like this, where when I am hurt, I am not motivated to hurt back. And that is what we see. And so the answer to that question I posed a moment ago, why? Well, the why is actually given to us in those first few words of verse 19. It says, because Joseph, her husband, was a righteous man.

Now, the new NIV actually says, because he was faithful to the law, which I don't like, or your Bible may say, because he was a just man. But however you slice it, the bottom line is this, guys, Joseph was a godly man. And that's why. Christians, this is what godly men do when they're hurt. They don't hurt back.

And that is one of the most powerful illustrations of godliness that I think we find in the word of God. Joseph is flat out amazing. Because you and I both know that the flesh wants to hurt back. The flesh wants some kind of satisfaction. When I'm hurting and it's all about me, then I want to try to satisfy that part of me that is hurting.

But it says, because Joseph was a godly man. That wasn't his heart. And even though he was a man who had been, as I said before, betrayed by the woman that he loved, and that had to hurt big, he was, and listen, people, he was determined not to let the hurt that he felt in his heart dictate his actions toward this woman. And while a lesser man might have taken out his anger or his hurt by shaming her in front of others, and you know, according even to the law, there was a freedom there to have the woman stoned. Now keep in mind, they're under Roman occupation at this time.

The whole area is under Roman occupation. And they don't have the right to execute that kind of capital punishment. The Romans took it away when they came and occupied the land. That's not to say the

Jews didn't try to do it from time to time. There was a few choice opportunities that the Jews had, and they picked up stones to stone Jesus.

There were even some times, you know, when they tried to, and even successfully stoned Paul, you know. So they did it from time to time, even though it was illegal to do. And whether or not, well, obviously, that didn't go through Joseph's mind in any way, shape, or form. But, you know, to a lesser man that may have occurred, you know, the possibility of that, but not to Joseph. And so I'm kind of forced to ask myself the question, what would I have done had I been in Joseph's situation?

And I think it's probably a worthy question for each one of us this morning. What would I have done? What would you have done? If you'd have been in a similar sort of a circumstance, maybe you don't have to go very far in the answer to that question. Maybe you've been in a similar circumstance, or you've been the recipient of betrayal.

And that kind of, that level of hurt, and what was your response? Was it to actually protect the individual who did the hurting? Because that's what Joseph's doing. Make no mistake about it. Are you getting more impressed with Joseph, the more we talk about this?

Are you seeing that God chose just the right guy who was going to protect the woman who was carrying the Holy Son of God, into whose mind it never even occurred to stone the woman to death, let alone even shame her publicly? Now, it also seems fairly apparent to me from the text that there was one other option that Joseph did not consider as well. But it was one that was actually suggested to him by God. Look with me at verse 20. It says, but after he had considered this, and that means after he rolled these various options around in his mind, it says an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream to basically suggest an option he hadn't considered.

And the angel 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. Ah, here we are people. Isn't this wonderful? You know, just about the time you and I think we got the thing dialed in and we decided what we're going to do, God comes along and expands the peripheral of our, our vision and our ability to look at the situation and come up with even additional options that we perhaps haven't considered for some reason or another. And I just I find that I find that I mean, it kind of just kind of even tickles me a little bit, even to read that verse.

God often, well, let me clarify that this way, when we take time to come to him, and to ask, God many times will open our understanding to a greater view of what actually lies before us. And although Joseph appeared to be doing in his mind, the right thing by a breaking the engagement, but be not wanting to do it

in a way that was going to cause her any undue discomfort, the angel comes along. And it is through God's guidance that then Joseph has helped to make the best decision. Joseph was making a decision. And I will even get go so far as to say it was a godly decision.

But it was not the best decision. It took God's input for Joseph to reach the best conclusion of the whole thing. And sometimes you and I, I'm sure are going to be quick to admit that the light that the Holy Spirit sheds on our issues and our questions and our conundrums is often the very thing that we need to allow us to see things that we would have never, you know, even considered. I don't think Joseph really considered this option. I think he just kind of realized that because the bonds, you know, had been broken through this obvious expression of immorality, that this dear girl had been engaged in, that there was really nothing that he could do.

except break the engagement. I think he felt trapped. But his righteousness, his right standing in his his godliness drove him to to consider the, you know, doing that in a in a in a way that wasn't going to hurt her. But yet along comes God and and and and so forth and and helps him to see things even in a higher and more powerful light. And Joseph's decision now think about this now even even now the angel comes along and gives this new option of what to do.

And we read in the text that it says and then Joseph, you know, woke up and he obeyed. But that wasn't easy either. This was not an easy option to consider that. Did you ever stop to think that by marrying this girl it would appear that Joseph was the one who got her pregnant before they'd actually come together and been officially married? Did you ever stop to think that?

I mean, by putting by by divorcing her, Joseph was basically saying I had no part of this. But by marrying this girl, Joseph, it would have been assumed by their society that Joseph was a participant in unrighteousness. And don't you know, there are always people in this world who will not stick around for an explanation. They will rush to judgment based on what small threads of information they can find and they will come up with the worst possible conclusion that their minds can conceive and they will run with it. And Joseph had to know that.

So this angel comes along and makes a suggestion related to this whole thing that isn't the most comfortable thing for Joseph. First of all, it requires a whole heap and help and a faith, right? To believe that this is all anything more than just a bad pizza that I ate this this dream that I had. And and and then I've got to walk into this situation that by implication makes me out to be an immoral person. And remember, Joseph is a righteous man, he is a godly man, there's something to be lost here, you see, there is something to be sacrificed, it'd be one thing if he was a carouser and a player and all the other things, but

this was a righteous man who had a standing in the community, there was the potential of losing business over this thing, and and and and his his well being could be in And and and and his his well being could be in question and in danger by implicating himself in an in an arrangement that people would look at and and cast, you know, a judgmental eye upon.

This was not an easy thing for Joseph to do. So, we kind of see here that Joseph is a pretty amazing guy. First, despite the the hurt of betrayal, the feelings of that that were going through his heart, and despite the stigma of being lumped in with people's opinions of him, which would be less than honorable, this man decides to do what God has told him to do. He decides to obey the Lord. And so do you see what a powerful witness Joseph is to you and I, do you see what a powerful to you and I, do you see what a powerful picture this man presents for you and I?

It is so how do I want to say this? It is so different for us to see an example of someone who refuses to be ruled by their emotions is so contrary to what we often see in our own circles when someone does something like Joseph and and he determines that that he is going to reject emotional decision making. Boy, that's a that's something to think about, isn't it? Emotional decision making. I think I've learned now after about 25 years of pastoring that emotional decision making isn't very good.

It carries some pretty rotten consequences. And it's getting it's becomes very plain to me in this situation that Joseph picked the right man to be Mary's husband. And just about the time that we become willing to walk as the Lord would have us walk, we come to an understanding that God had a bigger picture in plan. Look at verse 21 with me. Because this is the next thing about this thing.

It says, here's what the angel tells Joseph, she will give birth to a son and you were to give him the name Jesus because he will save his people from their sins. Wow, I mean, wow, Joseph. Here was a man who could have made this whole scenario all about him. He could have made it all about his hurt, his, you know, the betrayal that was aimed at him. He could have made it all about himself.

And come to find out. God has a plan in all of this. And a huge one at that. But see, that's what we don't usually stop to consider. And do you know, Christians loved by the Lord, that Satan loves to try to cloud your eyes, your mind and your vision from understanding God's larger picture, even when and especially when you are hurt.

When someone does something to hurt your feelings. It is the intention of the enemy to come and depress all the right buttons to get you to focus so much on yourself that you couldn't see God's plan in all of this if it smacked you in the face and you are now nothing but obsessed with how this thing affects you.

And believe me, people talking to myself at the same time, because I am no different than you are all the same emotions, all the same passions, all the same weaknesses. But look how much we miss. What if Joseph would have acted like you and I have acted and made it all about him?

Well, I'm hurt and I have a right and I'm the victim here. I didn't do anything wrong. You know, is that Joseph doesn't take on that victim mentality that our society wants to cast on us? Like, you know, we have a right to be the victim. We have the right, you know, to stick out our lower lip and make sure everybody we come in contact with knows that I'm hurt.

And I'm going to spread that to just as many people as I can come into contact. Did you hear what she did to me? I'm going to make an example of her. Women shouldn't do this kind of a thing to men. I didn't I didn't do anything like that to her, but look what she did.

Shame on her. And it's all about me. And what happens? We miss. What God wants to do and his purpose and his plan by taking those things that we might otherwise give to him and say, Lord, I surrender this thing to you, I give this into your hands that you might be, Lord, even of this thing.

And now let your purpose and let your plan be discovered in the midst of even this. You know, there's a there's a verse that we love to quote. When challenging things happen, I'll put it up on the screen for you. You all know Romans 8:28 is probably on your refrigerator for we all or we know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love him and are called according to his purpose. And and and, you know, many of us have memorized this verse.

It's in some cases it's even our life verse or something like that. And and. But you know what I've noticed, I've noticed the Christians kind of use this as a spiritual get out of jail free card. And what I mean by that is they use it in such a way as to allow them to make whatever stupid or disobedient decisions they want to, because after all, God promised it's all going to work out in the end. You know, so I can go around and I can be a dork head and I can and I can do the things that I want to do and I can operate out of my flesh.

But then I can come later on, I can say, well, you know, but. God works all things together for good of those who love him and are called according to his purpose. And so, you know, we're just kind of all we got this thing, you know, it's OK, you know, we all make mistakes, right? And then we justify ourselves by saying things like that. You know, we're not I'm not perfect, you know, as if we.

needed to hear that, you know, and then we kind of throw out, we pull out the but, here's my get out of jail free card. God works all things together for the good of those who love him. Praise God. You know,

it's interesting though, if you really look at that verse though, you have to kind of say, well, what's really going on here? I mean, obviously, I don't think Paul is giving us a get out of jail free expression in this verse.

Paul wrote here that God works for the good of those who love him. The good of those who love him. And you know, what's interesting about that is that Jesus told us in no uncertain terms that love is expressed by obedience. Do you remember when he did that? The next verse that I'm going to show you up here actually says it.

If you love me, you'll obey what I command. So you put those two verses together and you see that there's a connection. God works all things together for the good of those who love him. How do you know that they love him? Because they do what he says.

They obey his command. You see, this isn't a get out of jail free card. This isn't just this kind of invitation to flesh out and then say, yeah, but God's going to take care of it. Because I got a promise that whenever I flesh out, God's going to work it together for good. No, that's not what that verse says.

God worked this situation out for all of the good of those who were involved because Joseph made a determination in his heart to be obedient when the angel came to him and said, listen, there's an option you haven't considered yet, son. And that is take this woman and marry her, but have no union with her until after this child is born. Because this child, Joe is special. He is the son of God. This child has been conceived through the power of the Holy spirit.

And I chose you to be that surrogate dad. Now walk in obedience. And I know there's a stigma that's going to be attached to this whole thing. And people are going to look at you like you're the guy who couldn't wait the year, but you just be obedient to me, Joseph. And I will work this whole thing together for good.

And I will bring such good out of this thing. That'll just boggle your mind. Verse 22 goes on and says that all this took place to fulfill what the Lord 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. And that is a quote by the way, from Isaiah chapter seven. And I've heard someone say, and I don't want to belabor this, but I heard someone say one time that obviously this prophecy in Isaiah wasn't fulfilled since the baby that was born wasn't named Emmanuel.

He was named Jesus. And so I actually heard somebody say that there's nowhere in the Bible where he is named Emmanuel. He was named Jesus. So you see that's wrong. Well, it's interesting.

Did you ever notice in the next couple of verses, Matthew actually goes ahead and tells us what Joseph named him in accordance with what the angel told him to. It says in the last couple of verses, when Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded, took Mary home as his wife. That basically means that they went through the whole marriage thing. And then it says, but he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son and he gave him the name Jesus. Here's the question you have to ask.

Do you really think Matthew would have quoted Isaiah chapter seven and then two verses later said, and they named him Jesus if he thought it was a contradiction? Obviously not. I mean, that's like saying the sky is blue. The sky is not blue. I just contradicted myself.

Matthew is not contradicting himself because the fulfillment of this prophecy is not bound up in Emmanuel being a proper name. It is bound up in Emmanuel being a declaration or a statement of the deity of Jesus Christ. And every single time you and I say, Jesus Christ, son of God, born of a virgin, God come as a man, we are declaring him Emmanuel. We are saying in very real way, God with us. And that's what the prophecy ultimately is about.

I think that there was a fulfillment related to this prophecy when it was given shortly after the time, but we don't have time to get into that. But Isaiah gave this prophecy during the time of the Kings. And there was a, there was a short term fulfillment to this as well. A virgin didn't have a child, a maiden had a child, but there was a larger and more miraculous fulfillment of Isaiah chapter seven. And Matthew points it out and he says, this is to ultimately fulfill what was spoken here through the prophet.

The virgin will be with child and they will basically say of him, here is God with us. And it really is a beautiful sort of a declaration. But so this is the thing that I guess I really just kind of want to focus our attention on this morning. And it's the whole issue of, you know, have we, have we really waited on the Lord? Have we really taken the issues that we're going through?

And have we given them to God? Have we, after considering all of the options that are available to us, have we come to the Lord and have we said to him, Lord, open my heart to something else that, that you want to talk to me about?