

Matthew 1:18-25 (NLT)

18 This is how Jesus the Messiah was born. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took place, while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit. 19 Joseph, to whom she was engaged, was a righteous man and did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement quietly.

20 As he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. "Joseph, son of David," the angel said, "do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit. 21 And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

22 All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord's message through his prophet:

23 "Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, which means 'God is with us.'"

24 When Joseph woke up, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded and took Mary as his wife. 25 But he did not have sexual relations with her until her son was born. And Joseph named him Jesus.

The Word of God for the People of God.

THANKS BE TO GOD!

Dream
12.18.16 Advent 4

Opening story

Sometimes, my dreams are a way my mind wrestles with issues in my subconscious.

But sometimes, our dreams might lead us to do something different, to make a change, or to go in a different direction.

Today is the 4th Sunday of Advent, the season of Preparation, Expectation and Anticipation. It is about preparing ourselves for a new direction. It is about expecting the unexpected. It is about anticipating some good thing.

During the past few weeks we have been challenged to:

- > Watch for the coming of Christ- not to sit around doing nothing. Active Waiting and Holy Living.
- > Change our lives by TURNING from our sins and TURNING to God.
- > Open our Eyes and See what God is doing in our midst.

This morning's text challenges us to Open Our minds to what God is saying to us; whether through others, through circumstances; through silence. or through our DREAMS.

Scripture - Matthew 1.18-25

V.18 - "Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took place, while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit." (Matthew 1.18)

V. 19 - "Joseph, to whom she was engaged, was a righteous man and did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement quietly." (Matthew 1.19)

Myron Augsburger describes the birth of Jesus this way:

"... Mary was betrothed to Joseph, and they had not consummated their marriage... Joseph (was) her husband, yet in the angel's message Joseph is addressed as Son of David and urged not to hesitate to go through with the marriage to Mary, who is referred to as his wife." (Communicator's Commentary, Myron Augsburger; © 1982, Word, Inc; Matthew, volume 1 NT, ch. 1 "The Person of the King" pp. 21 -58)

Augsburger: "(at) that (time) in Jewish marriage there were three steps: 1) engagement - a contract arranged by family members who determined compatibility; 2) betrothal- public ratification of the engagement, lasting a year, it was a time for the couple to learn to belong to each other, but not have the same legal rights of living together as husband and wife; during this time a betrothal could only be terminated by a divorce. (this is the stage where Mary and Joseph were according to the text.) and 3) marriage proper - period following the year of betrothal." (Communicator's Commentary, Myron Augsburger; © 1982, Word, Inc; Matthew, volume 1 NT, ch. 1 "The Person of the King" pp. 21 -58)

J. Stephen Lang paints this picture: Joseph found himself in a difficult situation: the woman he was engaged to was pregnant - an awkward dilemma if he had been the father, but even more awkward since he was not. The natural assumption would be that she had been with another man. We don't know what thoughts ran through Joseph's mind, but Matthew tells us Joseph was "a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace." - a more compassionate reaction than most men were capable of. "He had in mind to divorce her quietly" - in those days an engagement was binding and had to be legally dissolved. This was the loving option - as opposed to allowing her to be stoned as an adulteress. But there was a third option: Go ahead and marry her. (J. Stephen Lang, *Know the Bible in 30 Days: Discovering Historical Facts, Biblical Insights and the Inspiring Power of God's Word*; © 2008 J Stephen Lang. Guideposts, New York, New York; Day 19 "Immanuel, God With Us" pp.283-299)

But now, what is he to do?

He could divorce her quietly and let her go, and both of them could lead "normal" lives.

Or, he could have her punished, even killed, for this horrendous act of betrayal.

But wait! He chooses neither of those two viable options. No, he instead chooses to follow a third option.

Marry the girl. Endure the shame, humiliation and questions.

Joseph choose to honor Mary by taking her as his wife, even when the media would've questioned him profusely.

But what made him do that?

WHAT changed his mind? A dream. He Had a Dream. He dreamed a Dream. He Followed his dream. He lived the Dream.

20 As he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. "Joseph, son of David," the angel said, "do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit. 21 And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." (Matthew 1.20-21)

Lang continues: An angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him the amazing news: Mary was pregnant by the Holy Spirit, not by any man. Joseph should take her as his wife, and the son she would bear would save people from their sins (Matthew 1.18-21). He was a righteous man - and he obeyed the message God sent him. (J. Stephen Lang, *Know the Bible in 30 Days: Discovering Historical Facts, Biblical Insights and the Inspiring Power of God's Word*; © 2008 J Stephen Lang. Guideposts, New York, New York; Day 19 "Immanuel, God With Us" pp.283-299)

V.24 - "When Joseph woke up, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded and took Mary as his wife."

After Joseph's Amazing Technicolor Dream... in which "the angel of the Lord appeared to him with a message from God," Joseph who is described "as a man of justice... discretion... piety... obedience...and self-discipline" "accepted the direction which God gave him in a dream, and claimed Mary as his wife." (Communicator's Commentary, Myron Augsburger; © 1982, Word, Inc; Matthew, volume 1 NT, ch. 1 "The Person of the King" pp. 21 -58)

When Joseph woke up, he realized that the dream was God's way of telling him it was going to be okay. It was the right thing to do. He was chosen to be Jesus' earthly father. And so it was that Joseph took Mary as his wife. And he raised the baby boy as his own. And As the angel instructed in the dream, Joseph named the baby Jesus (Joshua, which means "Yahweh saves"), because He would save His people from their sin.

A righteous man faced with a difficult decision, Joseph chose wisely. He made an honorable choice. In so doing, he became the father of the Messiah - God's Son. But have you ever thought "WHAT IF Joseph did not follow his dream? What if He ignored the Angel in his dream? What if he didn't listen to God's Voice? What then?"

Sometimes God speaks to us in our Dreams and we choose to NOT LISTEN to God's Voice. Or follow God's command.

Sometimes God speaks to us in ways we don't recognize as God's voice. Have you ever had a sleepless night, but woke up with an answer to a question or a solution to a problem, or a new innovative thought or idea? Dawn Chesser: this passage is NOT just about a story of Jesus' birth. Or his lineage, or who is his father.

"Rather, it is a narrative about Joseph's awakening to new possibilities. It is about opening his eyes and ours to the fact that there are possibilities ...that are God-sent." (Dawn Chesser, Discipleship Ministries)

Have you ever had a dream that caused you to do something different, make a change, or go in a different direction?

More Dream Stories:

Have you ever had a dream that changed your perspective, gave you a new insight, or resolved something for you?

Martin Luther King, Jr. *had a dream. And lived his dream.*

The Director of Worship for a large gathering of clergy and lay leaders this past summer.

What is God trying to say to you?

What is God's dream for you?

Maybe God has grand plans for your life. Maybe God is preparing you for greatness. Maybe God has something in mind that you have never ever considered or thought possible. Maybe God is wanting you to serve in a way and in a place beyond your imagination. Maybe God has planted seeds within you to be someone, to do something, to go somewhere.

What is God's dream for you?

What is God's dream for us?

Maybe now is the time that we are to move in a new direction. Maybe God has placed the right people in the right places to lead this congregation to an unreached segment of the community. Maybe God dreams of using us with our gifts and resources to bless someone in need. Maybe God desires us to use our facility, with all its beauty and splendor to impact hearts and lives of those who do not yet know God's amazing love and grace. Maybe now is the time that God will birth a ministry that will become our trademark for years to come.

Maybe God is trying to speak to us, and we simply aren't paying attention.

As we prepare ourselves of the coming of Christ, let us WAIT and WATCH for Christ breaking into our world, let us TURN from our sins and TURN to God, let us open our eyes and SEE what God is doing in our midst, and let us DREAM God's Dream for us. Amen.