

**Series:** Advent: Experiencing peace THROUGH hard times.

**Sermon Text:** Matthew 1:18-25

(App to get lesson/slides, ask

questions. Color Pg)

Our theme for Advent this year is “**Experiencing peace through hard times.**” Advent is a perfect time to re-focus on obtaining and retaining the peace which is so easy to lose when we take our eyes off Jesus. We all want the perfect Christmas (however that looks to you), but reality can and often does clash with expectations. In fact, our desire for the perfect situation sometimes only serves to highlight how imperfect our situation might be. I think we can agree that the first Christmas was far from perfect for Mary, Joseph and Jesus.

Our scripture for today’s message, the birth of Christ, will be Matthew 1:18-25. Before we get started, I would first like to say that I’m standing here today because God is faithful. I never could have imagined this...here...in front of you, sharing with you what I’m learning in the Word of God. I want to share all that I’m studying with you because you have been a part of my story all along. When I reflect back on this journey. I think of it in seasons, see if you can relate with me. In seasons 1 & 2, God reveals himself to us through the preaching of His word and through the communion with His body. In season 3, while exposing us to his truth we begin to see who we really are and see are need for him in a greater light. In seasons 4 & 5, His spirit begins to build us up in His truth, while also finding our place here in the family of God. He also places fellow believers into our lives through serving together; in small groups, that will walk with us and speak truth to us. So here we are, in season 6, and fear and doubt begin to creep in..... and I’m reminded of these seasons and God’s faithfulness through it all, and this thought comes to mind... It’s been my plan all along, trust in me! Oh ya and as a side note, season 7 would be completion, so I plan on being in season 6 as long as He allows me too (laughing).

OUR BIG IDEA TODAY IS THAT **GOD IS FAITHFUL.**

When I was studying about the **advent** (a.k.a. the coming of Christ, the birth of Christ or the incarnation of Christ), I found myself all the way back in Genesis 3. I know that sounds strange, but that chapter speaks of the fall of Adam and Eve which is the reason for Advent. Like a good Father, God found Adam and Eve hiding after

they sinned and explained how their disobedience had caused many consequences and curses upon creation. Their choice to do things their way, instead of God's way, made everything harder. The consequence with direct bearing on the birth of Christ, is what God said in Genesis 3:14-15, *“The LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”* This reveals that a future offspring of Eve will have a male child who is destined to bruise his heel by delivering a more serious bruise to the serpent’s head. In other words, this is the very first prophecy about Jesus destroying the power of Satan through His life, death, and resurrection.

Throughout the Old Testament, prophet after prophet spoke of God's promised Redeemer by saying things like...

- There is the one who is to come who will be like Moses, who will mediate a brand-new covenant for people.
- There is one like David who will come but have an everlasting kingdom.
- Then there was a very well-known prophecy in Isaiah 9:6 which said, *“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.”*

All of this is the Bible’s lead up to our text in Matthew 1:18-25 where the writer described the birth of Christ through the perspective of His human dad, Joseph and explained how that birth proves **God has been faithful**.

Let’s read our text in **Matthew 1:18-25**: *“Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary was **betrothed** to Joseph before they came together. She was found to be with a child of 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:”* Then **verse 23** reminds us of what was spoken by the prophet in Isaiah 7:14, “*Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel (which means God with us).*” Also look at verses 24 & 25: “*When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel commanded him. He took his wife but knew her not until she had given birth to a son and he called his name Jesus.*”

That’s what the Bible says, now let me explain. We’re told this moment took place after Mary and Joseph were **betrothed** but before they were officially married. Did I hear someone say, “What is a **betrothal**?” Well, I’m glad you asked! Today, we call the period before marriage “*engagement*” but it was called “**betrothal**” in Jewish culture. Among the Jews, a betrothal was far more serious than our concept of engagement. It basically was a pledge that was not to be broken and was done one year before the wedding. In Israel a **betrothal** was very close to the idea of marriage, so close that they required a divorce to end it. Now during the time of **betrothal**, the bride would still live with her parents. She would not move in with her husband until the marriage was official. This was serious business in Israel, and when a woman was betrothed (not married), and her fiancé discovered her to be pregnant, the implications were enormous! Our text says that BEFORE Mary came together with Joseph she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. That was a tough idea to explain and for people to believe!

Our text also refers to Joseph as a just man who was unwilling to put Mary to shame or make her a public example. He thought it over deeply and carefully, then decided to divorce her in a private manner to save her from total public humiliation. But we are told that while he thought about these things, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. This angel called Joseph a son of David, and because the New Testament makes so much out of Jesus being the son of David, it stood out to me that Joseph was given that same title. This is very important for the lineage of

Jesus because if He's going to be a son of David, then legally, His earthly father must also be a son of David.

The angel also told Joseph not to fear marrying Mary because her baby was conceived by the Holy Spirit. Once again, we see that the conception of Christ in the womb of Mary is attributed to the work of God, the Holy Spirit. In Luke's version of this announcement to Mary, the angel Gabrielle explained how she would conceive in her womb and bear a son. Stunned in disbelief, she asked, "*How can this be, since I have not been with a man like that?*" Gabrielle explained that the Holy Spirit would overshadow her, so that the child would be conceived supernaturally.

God really put the Holy Spirit on my mind, and as I pondered everything I had heard about Him over the years, I again found myself in Genesis, only this time I looked at the first 2 verses of the Bible where it says, "*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.*" Notice the Holy Spirit was hovering over the face of the waters which means that He participated in the ORIGINAL creation. In Matthew 1, the powerful Spirit who made everything and brought life out of darkness is the one who overshadowed Mary to produce Jesus and begin the NEW creation! Isn't that cool?

Let's read verses 22-25 again, "*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.*" What the angel told Joseph gave him the courage to get through one of the most difficult moments in his life! That's what Advent or Christmas is all about...when God sent Jesus into Mary through the Holy Spirit, it proved that He still loves creation and is willing to help us through anything if we will just give our hearts back to Him!

Let me ask, "Do you believe that? Do you believe God still loves creation after everything people have done to wreck it?" That was hard for the Jewish people to believe, but the virgin birth proves that He does! Do you also believe God is willing to help us through anything? Most of us probably make a Christmas list every year.

Hey kiddos...Have you made your Christmas lists this year? I remember doing it every year. It was so exciting to look through whatever catalog came in the mail, whether it was Sears, Johnny's Toys, Toys "R" Us, Gold Circle, or Kmart. Man, I would have a list of 20 things that I wanted. And I remember when it came to grandma and grandpa, they got a different list. OH YA, that's right! There were only a few things because it didn't take long for us to figure out that we were getting something that was on that list. Am I right kids? Now parents...come on now, it's a pretty good feeling knowing that you got your child something that they wanted from their list. Then to see their reaction when they opened IT...come on...am I right? How much more does our heavenly father love to give us great gifts?

Let me ask this: "Is there anything on your Christmas list that only God can provide?" Now, I'm not talking about a new Harley Davidson motorcycle or a trip to some exotic destination. I mean, "Is there something in your life or someone else's life that only He can do? Is there a tension going on that only He can resolve?" Our Big Idea is that GOD IS FAITHFUL, and I'm asking whether you believe that or not! As I said earlier, He's a good Father who wants the best for His children. So, don't be afraid to swing big and ask for the impossible this Christmas. Just remember, God wants us to ask in faith, which means it also needs to be aligned with His will. He wants us to trust Him whether or not we get everything we want, but either way, His powerful Spirit who caused the virgin birth of Jesus Christ is willing to help you get THROUGH all your difficult times. And don't forget...wherever you are on your journey of trusting Christ, you need not work through anything alone. Reach out and let us help!

Let's pray...

### **Sunday to Monday Connection:**

- **Question:** See questions in the lesson above and the takeaways below.
- **Next Step:** Discuss questions in the lesson above and the takeaways below.
- **Note:** If you are not a Christ follower and would like to investigate further what all this might mean for you, please come talk with any of our leaders, or the person who brought you.

**Takeaways to discuss with your people** (in addition to the underlined questions above!):

1. What does Advent mean or represent, and how does it connect to God's promise in Genesis 3?
2. How do the Old Testament prophets help us realize that God has been faithful?
3. How does a betrothal differ from an engagement, and what did this have to do with Joseph's character in relation to Mary?
4. How was the Holy Spirit involved in Mary's pregnancy, and what links does this suggest between the old and new creation?
5. What sorts of things does God's faithfulness to send Jesus into Mary prove?

**Quotes related to this passage:**

**Considerations for discussion leaders:**

1. Keep circling back to the big idea and main points of the passage to stay on track.
2. Keep the group small for deeper sharing. Single underlined sentences are for discussion, while key points are double underlined.
3. Keep the discussion around 30 mins. Once you hit the "sweet spot", spend your time there.
4. Keep these simple questions in your back pocket: What is God teaching you? What are you going to do about it? How will it help you love & serve others?

**Other Articles/Songs/Videos:** Please ask us for help obtaining other resources.

**Bibliography** (Note: Our use of these materials does not imply full agreement with them)

- The Holy Bible: English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016)