

A Sideways Move

Matthew 1:18-25

Introduction

- » In Luke – Mary is the main character
- » In Matthew – Joseph is the main character
- » Mary is a contemplative
- » Joseph is a person of action

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly.

Matthew 1:18-19

Story Context

- » Establishes the birth (genesis) of Jesus
- » Mary betrothed to Joseph; a 2-step process
- » Joseph learns of Mary's pregnancy (v18)

Story Context

- » Joseph is a righteous man – decides to divorce her quietly (v19)
- » Righteous = a person devoted to the Torah
- » This devotion creates an ethical crisis for Joseph – What to do about Mary ?

But just when he had resolved to do 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 as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.'

All this took place to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

'Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel', which means, 'God is with us.'

Matthew 1:20-23

A Holy Disruption

- A. **A Sideways Move** (v20)
 God speaks through an angel to Joseph— after Joseph came up with his own plan (v19b)

A Holy Disruption

- B. **Do Not Be Afraid** (v21)
- » The fear has to do with breaking the law
 - » The challenge is to believe in God's new work transcending the Old Testament laws
 - » The child is through the Holy Spirit

A Holy Disruption

- C. **The angel reveals the mission of the child** (v21, 23)

Jesus' Mission

1. **She will have a son to be named Jesus** (v21)
 - » He will save his people from their sins (a play on his name) – Jesus = Joshua (God saves)
2. **The mission is reinforced through citing Isaiah 7:14** (v23)
 - » They shall name him Emmanuel meaning "God is with us"

Jesus' Mission

3. **The two names, Jesus & Emmanuel reveal how God will work**
 - » He will work through his son to save his people
 - » God is present in the Son; he is in solidarity with us

Names tell stories, most of all the name which is above all other names, the name of Jesus. In his name I am called to live. His name has to become my house, my dwelling place, my refuge, my ark. His name has to start telling the story of being born, growing up, growing old, and dying – revealing a God who loved us so much that he sent his only child to us.

Henri J. M. Nouwen

A Holy Disruption

D. Joseph is called to a greater righteousness

- » God is doing a new work in the world
- » God is transcending the old way (law)
- » Joseph is invited to put his trust in God's new direction with humanity
- » A way of grace not a way of works

When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

Matthew 1:24-25

An Astounding Obedience

- » Joseph is completely receptive to the angel's message (v24)
- » He expresses an attitude and action that transcends the old way and adopts the new
- » Joseph becomes a model for obedience and trust in God's new work

Application

1. "Christianity is not good advice about morals. It is good news about God and what he has done for us." (Michael Green)
 - » The focus is on the Good news of what God is doing in Jesus
 - » Jesus becomes the bridge to God and the answer for our sin

Application

2. The passage reveals the subtle weaving of our Trinitarian God
 - » Focus on how the Father, Son and Holy Spirit work together for us (Holy Spirit v18,20)

Application

3. The story of Joseph is a call for action
 - » To make our faith active
 - » To be obedient in action
 - » To say our 'yes' and live it out