



December 14 - We Can Choose a Better Way

When things don't go as you think they should – what do you do? How do you react? Throughout time, people have been faced with situations where there are multiple ways to respond. In the Christmas story, Joseph finds out his fiancé is pregnant with a baby, not his own. He had the power to publicly humiliate and disgrace Mary – even have her killed. But Joseph, with God's help chooses a better way. Join us this weekend as we let Joseph help us see a better way.

Scripture:

Isaiah 35:1-10

Even the wilderness and desert will be glad in those days. The wasteland will rejoice and blossom with spring crocuses. ²Yes, there will be an abundance of flowers and singing and joy! The deserts will become as green as the mountains of Lebanon, as lovely as Mount Carmel or the plain of Sharon. There the Lord will display his glory, the splendor of our God. ³With this news, strengthen those who have tired hands, and encourage those who have weak knees. ⁴Say to those with fearful hearts, "Be strong, and do not fear, for your God is coming to destroy your enemies. He is coming to save you." ⁵And when he comes, he will open the eyes of the blind and unplug the ears of the deaf. ⁶The lame will leap like a deer, and those who cannot speak will sing for joy! Springs will gush forth in the wilderness, and streams will water the wasteland. ⁷The parched ground will become a pool, and springs of water will satisfy the thirsty land. Marsh grass and reeds and rushes will flourish where desert jackals once lived. ⁸And a great road will go through that once deserted land. It will be named the Highway of Holiness. Evil-minded people will never travel on it. It will be only for those who walk in God's ways; fools will never walk there. ⁹Lions will not lurk along its course, nor any other ferocious beasts. There will be no other dangers. Only the redeemed will walk on it. ¹⁰Those who have been ransomed by the Lord will return. They will enter Jerusalem singing, crowned with everlasting joy. Sorrow and mourning will disappear, and they will be filled with joy and gladness.

Matthew 1:18-25

¹⁸This 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. ¹⁹Joseph, 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. ²⁰As 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. ²¹And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, ²²for he will save his people from their sins." ²³All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord's message through his prophet: ²⁴"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.'" ²⁵When Joseph woke up, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded and took Mary as his wife. ²⁶But he did not have sexual relations with her until her son was born. And Joseph named him Jesus.

Questions:

- Think about this: What choices – made by former generations – have you inherited? When have our ancestors chosen a better way and when not?
- Have you ever risked your privilege to do the right thing? If so, what happened? How did you feel?
- Today, Pastor Jane talked about how the prophet Isaiah envisions a Holy Way where everything is more alert, more joyful, more vibrant. What choices can you make each day to bring God's Way to life more and more?

Reading for the Week:

Monday: Matthew 6:33

Tuesday: James 1:5

Wednesday: Romans 12:2

Thursday: Joshua 24:15

Friday: Proverbs 18:15