

marriage, signed a legal document, and were considered "husband and wife." But they didn't live together yet.

It was a time of building a relationship, of coming to know one another. It was a time of the groom preparing the place where they would live - a time of planning and dreaming and happy expectations. This time of betrothal usually lasted about a year.

Notice that Matthew says, "...before they came together..." There were no sexual relations during this time. Joseph loved Mary so much that he did not take advantage of her.

Now this needs to be said to young people today. If someone is pressuring you, saying, "If you really love me, prove it by giving yourself to me," then you say, "If you really love me, you'll wait, because I'm going to save myself for the one I marry. If you're not willing to wait, then you're not the one."

Some may say that is unrealistic, but I don't agree. Marriages built upon lust are insecure, because if you can lust after one person, you can lust after another. But marriages built upon love exhibit trust and commitment and faithfulness.

The Bible tells us that Mary and Joseph saved themselves for one another until after they were married. At this stage in Joseph's story they were considered husband and wife, but they weren't married yet, they were betrothed.

2) Terrible Disappointment .

Now the second part in Joseph's story is one of terrible disappointment, for vs. 18 goes on to say, "But before they came together, she was found to be with child..." Here is a time of shock and disappointment. The Bible doesn't tell us when Joseph was told, or who told him.

Some speculate maybe Mary told him. If that were true, Joseph wouldn't have been contemplating what to do with her without some kind of explanation. And he wouldn't have been so surprised when the angel appeared to him. Either way, he couldn't have been happy. Who would believe such a story? One thing is for certain, Joseph must have felt that Mary had betrayed him.

Country Western singers have made a fortune off of jilted lovers. It's not a laughing matter. Jilted lovers do experience deep hurt. Perhaps Joseph felt himself to be a jilted lover. He felt that the love of his life had been unfaithful to him. But notice, even in this stage of his disappointment, Joseph still loved Mary. Verse 19 says, "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."

The law said that Joseph could have taken her to the city gate and the people there would have taken rocks and stoned her to death. Then Joseph's name would have been cleansed and his reputation restored. But Joseph decided not to do that. He decided not to disgrace her, but rather to divorce her quietly so that she could start her life over again, perhaps with the father of the child. And he could start his life over again as well. It takes a real love to overlook some faults, to forgive and to forget, and to keep the marriage strong. Joseph demonstrated a great love for Mary by being willing "to divorce her quietly."

3) Joyful Realization .

But as you know, the story doesn't end with the divorce of Joseph and Mary, for following Joseph's terrible disappointment was a time of joyful realization. Listen as I read Matthew 1:20-23, "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 are 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 Immanuel which means, 'God with us.'"

What a relief, what a thrill that must have been to Joseph! An angel of God, a heavenly messenger, suddenly appears in a dream and tells him, "Mary has not been unfaithful to you. In fact, that which has happened in her is the fulfillment of God's promise to save His people from their sins."

For over 1,000 years the Jews had been waiting for the Messiah to come. Over 300 times God had directed the prophets to prophesy concerning Him. And the result was that the O.T. prophets had predicted almost every stage of the life of Jesus hundreds of years before it happened. They predicted that He would be born of a virgin, that He would be born in Bethlehem and come out of Egypt, that He would grow up in Nazareth, that He would be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver, that He would be crucified, that He would be buried in a borrowed tomb, and that He would raise from the dead.

To have more than 300 prophecies fulfilled so literally cannot be mere coincidence. They were fulfilled because they are the prophecies of God, and God's prophecies are always true. So when the angel appeared to Joseph, and said, "Don't be afraid, because all of this is true," his disappointment turned to joy, because he loved Mary very much.

4) Obedience to God .

Finally, the last part of Joseph's story is a story of his obedience to God. Listen to verses 24 and 25, "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."

Now they were husband and wife, living together, sharing the home that Joseph had prepared for them. Joseph's doubts had all been swept away, and he looked forward with anticipation to the birth of Jesus, Mary's son, the long awaited Messiah.

But it wasn't long until he discovered that there are hardships and sacrifices that came about because of their marriage.

The first was their **embarrassment**. Mary and Joseph were living in the little town of Nazareth, with lots of busybodies watching them. Mary is 7 months pregnant, and they've only been married 2 or 3 months. Think of the embarrassment.

Maybe at first Joseph tried to explain, "The baby is of the Holy Spirit. An angel told me." "Sure, Joseph. We know all about those things. We believe every word of what you're telling us."

Maybe after a while Joseph even stops trying to explain. And after they went to Bethlehem, and then Egypt, Joseph probably didn't even want to go back to Nazareth. But God led him back to that town of innuendoes and gossip. "Whose son is this? Who is his father, really?" Gossip and embarrassment were part of the price they paid for their love for each other and for their God.

A second hardship must have been a sense of **frustration** on Joseph's part, for the Bible says that "he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son." Here is this beautiful woman who is his wife, and there is no sexual relationship between them. He loves her, and he waits for the son to be born.

Think also about the **inconveniences**. Every woman who has gone through pregnancy knows that pregnancy is not an easy time. It is a time of discomfort, of testing and trial. It must have been that way for Joseph and Mary, too, as they went through all the experiences of pregnancy together.

It was also a time of **physical stress** for them. They had to travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem for the census a distance of 80 miles. They didn't travel in an air

conditioned bus back then. They walked. And when they didn't walk Mary may have ridden on a donkey. At least that's how we portray, anyway. That's not comfortable even if you're not pregnant. And Mary was 9 months pregnant, about ready to deliver her child. Finally, they reach Bethlehem. And when they go to the inn, they hear the words, "There is no room in the inn."

I'm convinced that Joseph cared for Mary very deeply. Yet, on that night long ago, there was much that he was unable to give her. So they ended up in a stable. If you've ever spent time in a barn you know a little bit of the circumstances they faced that night when the baby Jesus was born. Cries of labor pains rang out and there was no one there to her but Joseph. He mops her brow and tries to speak words of comfort. He hadn't taken a course on how to coach your wife through pregnancy and delivery. But he tries to help her any way he can.

Finally, the little baby is born. He cuts the umbilical cord, and wraps the baby in swaddling clothes, and lays Him in a manger. He speaks words of love to his wife. He's tired and weary, as is Mary. They have traveled all this long distance. Their muscles are sore. Their minds are tired. At last they can rest, and he leans back on the straw. But there are strange sounds outside. People are coming. He opens the door and sees shepherds. They've come to worship. Angels told them that the Savior is born. The story is true.

Conclusion

Joseph tells us his story this morning that we might know a little bit of what he went through, and the love he had for Mary, and how their love reveals the greatest love story of all, the story of Christmas.

This morning, if you're not a Christian, may you know that into this cold and dark world Jesus came as a baby. He came to touch our lives and to change us forever. He came to save us from our sins and rescue us from the pit of darkness. He came to love us and show us a better way to live. That is what Christmas is all about. It is so much more than just lights and presents and parties. It is divine love visiting our earth, reaching out to each of us, seeking to show us the love of God. If you are here this morning and Jesus Christ is not your Savior, He invites you to come to Him now.

The Greatest Love Story of All!

It's not Christmas without Jesus

Dorothy Rodefeld is known in Madison, Wisconsin, as the "light lady" because of the elaborate Christmas displays she builds each year at her 19th century farmhouse. One year, however, Dorothy's nativity scene was robbed. Among the missing items were a shepherd and a wise man. But it was the loss of baby Jesus and his manger that were particularly painful to the widow Rodefeld. Her grandson had built the manger out of wood salvaged from a granary dating back to the family's original homestead. "They pulled the light right out of Jesus," Rodefeld lamented, explaining how thieves had extricated the Savior from His settings. "That's the thing they took that really meant something to me."

What if Jesus were robbed from your Christmas? Would Christmas be any different for you, if Jesus were not present? Would you even notice His absence?

One pastor tells a story of when he was teaching AWANAs. As the main story teller, he taught all age groups, beginning with a puppet skit and then a flannel graph lesson with felt figures. He taught the Christmas Story to the K-2nd grade and everything went well. Then he moved everything into the auditorium to teach grades 3-6. When it came time to put Jesus into the manger, Jesus was missing. They searched for Jesus and could not find him. His wife finally suggested he look behind the scenery. And there was baby Jesus stuck to the back side of a door. Of course he went with the flow. He said, "This year, baby Jesus crawled away outside but the shepherds found Him and brought Him back." Then he thanked his wife saying that she helped him find Jesus.

Some Christmas seasons it's easy to lose Jesus. We forget what the season is about. We forget how much we owe to the one Who loved us and washed us from our sins. We forget

that the one born over 2,000 years ago was a sacrificial lamb.

Who is He in yonder stall, at whose feet the shepherds fall?

Who is He in deep distress, fasting in the wilderness?

Tis the Lord! O wondrous story! Tis the Lord! The King of glory!

At His feet we humbly fall, Crown Him! Crown Him, Lord of all!

Benjamin Hanby, son of a United Brethren minister, wrote the words of this popular Christmas hymn. You might be familiar with other songs he composed. "Darling Nellie Gray" was a popular song against slavery. We might think that a man of this description would be very serious minded. Yet he also wrote a Christmas song that we might say is not so serious:

Up on the housetop, reindeer pause,

out jumps good old Santa Claus.

Down through the chimney with lots of toys

all for the little ones Christmas joys.

Ho, Ho, Ho! Who wouldn't go? Ho, Ho, Ho! Who wouldn't go?

Up on the housetop, click, click, click.

Down through the chimney with good Saint Nick.

Perhaps Hanby wrote that one the Christmas he left out Jesus.

God Bless You!

Bro. Allan

Opportunities For Service

Living out Your Spiritual Commitment . . . and Fulfilling Christ's Divine Plan

Sunday, December 20, 2015

Choir Rehearsal.....9:00 am

Sunday School9:15 am

Morning Worship.....10:30 am

Nursery: Volunteers as needed

Ushers: John Lewis, Gary Yarbrough, Joseph Coats, Isaac Waters

Alternate: Larry McKahan

Evening Service.....6:30 pm

Monday, December 21

Food Pantry Day, Patee Park

Wednesday, December 23

Christmas Eve "Eve" Service6:30 pm

Choir PartyAfterward

Thursday, December 24

Christmas Eve.....No Service

Friday, December 25

Christmas Day

Sunday, December 27, 2015

Choir Rehearsal.....9:00 am

Sunday School9:15 am

Morning Worship.....10:30 am

Nursery: Volunteers as needed

Ushers: Larry McKahan, Isaac Waters, Ken Kirkpatrick, Bill Schottel

Alternate: Steven Buckley

Evening Worship.....6:30 pm

Wednesday, December 30

Youth Study.....6:30 pm

Prayer / Bible Study6:30 pm

Adult Choir7:30 pm

Thursday, December 31

New Years Eve.....No Service

Friday, January 1, 2016

Happy New Year!!!

Up-Coming Events.....

December 21 — Food Pantry Day at Patee Park Baptist

December 23 — Christmas Eve “Eve” Service

December 24 — Christmas Eve—Office Closed

December 25 — Christmas—Office Closed

December 31 — New Year’s Eve

January 1, 2016 — Happy New Year!

**January 3, 2016 — Celebrate the Lord’s Supper
in Morning Worship**

GROW Team

Commit to **GROW!** Everyone make a contact! Invite someone to Bible Study and Worship this week. ☺

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Sunday Nights

We will have Sunday Evening Service here tonight. Watch the weekly schedule to know when we will meet during the month of December.

Wednesday Night Prayer and Bible Study

We will be meeting this Wednesday at 6:30 pm Christmas Eve “Eve” Service. Plan to attend!

CHRISTMAS EVE “EVE” SERVICE

Wednesday

December 23 6:30 pm

Help Adopt a Family

The Lydia Ladies invite others to join them in adopting a family for Christmas. It is a family associated with our church. We are researching clothing sizes, needs, etc. You may contact Marcia Hart for more information. Donations of any kind, including money, are acceptable.

The Christmas Card

Mail Box

is in the hallway by the bulletin boards. If you would like to share cards with your church family, you may place them in the box throughout the month of December. We suggest you use the money you save on postage to contribute to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.

CHRISTMAS CHOIR PRESENTATION

TODAY

10:30 AM WORSHIP

Patee Park Food Pantry
Collection Day
Today, December 20

Donated items may be placed in the basket in the hallway. You may donate monetarily as well. Thank you for supporting this ministry of our church.

For the Record-

Attendance: December 13, 2015

Sunday School.....	50
Visitors.....	8
Total.....	58
Contacts Made.....	11
Morning Worship.....	63
Children's Worship	19
Sunday Night	10
Wednesday Night	17

Financial Record:

Weekly Budget.....	\$ 2,040.52
Offering Received...	\$ 2,627.06
Lottie Moon.....	\$ 1,245.00

Offering Received by Mail:

December Counting Team:

Don Beavers and Jordan Lane

December Van Driver:

Mike Green

Remember to call 232-3747
before 8 am if you need a ride.

December Member Birthdays:

03 ... Brent Fortune
08 ... Madeline Swink
09 ... Allison Adkinson
11 ... George Ferbert
15 ... George Burgess
16 .. Addison Leichti
16 ... Doris Richardson
19 ... Jessica Kirkpatrick
20 ... Leona Reynolds
20 ... Brenda Burgess
23 ... Joseph Coats

December Anniversaries

Bill and Alva Lou Schottel
December 22, 1962

George and Maxine Ferbert
December 31, 1955

Prayer Requests ...

Charlie Lamm—regain strength
Sue Higgins—regain strength
Lois Pace—hip surgery recovery
Flo Conard—health issues
Betty Anslinger—upcoming surgery
Buddy Means—Mary Sharp's nephew
Lois Ulmer—Elvera's daughter-in-law
Maxine Stark—friend of Conard's
Kenneth Hoenshell—friend of Conard's
Maxine and George Ferbert
Bill Haskins—recovery
Joyce Izer—Praise the Lord for healing!
Stacy Gray—cancer treatment
Muriel Elder and Family
Linda Rails—Doris' Richardson's sister
Grant Schottel—advanced training
Henrietta Caballero—Brigida's Sister
Austin Chalfant—Abby's nephew
Gary and Marilyn Singleton—health
Bob Barquist—cancer
Louanne Laurence—Joyce's Mother
Lester Buck Kathryn Beavers
LoLeta Middleton Dorothy Post
Allen Jennings Ann Riddle
Jim Winans Jozy Winans
Nellie Reynolds Leona Reynolds
Kevin Duty Kenny Duty
Madeline Swink Bobby Griswold
Susan Patten Debbie Sands
Brenda Burgess Judy Anderson
Carolyn Houts Roscoe Lane
Keon McKahan Dorothy Post
Missionaries Don and Diane Combs
Nickolay Nazaruk, Peski 2 Church
David and Deborah Grace
Jeanette Swackhamer—Beja People
Our Nation and Leaders

Our Nation and Leaders

Our Military Service people

Today's Prayer Requests ...

Our Nation and our Leaders ...

Five More New Families...