

Kirkwall Presbyterian Church
'Joseph of Nazareth
Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 2:1-7
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By Keith Marcy

If you had a very important job to do – like a **really** important job, what would you look for in a person to do that job?

Well, if you had human resources training, you might ask for a person with the skills for the job.

But what if the job required a whole gamut of skills?

Oh, well then, I would look for someone who was a quick learner.

But some of the skills for this particular job cannot be learned. The person we are looking for must have the intuition to conduct themselves properly, in a whole variety of situations. They have to be able to change plans on a moment's notice, accept heartache and disappointment, trust in God to provide...

Sorry, we have no one like that. Better seek another placement agency.

Why did God choose Joseph? A man from Nazareth? According to Nathaniel, *"Nothing good comes from Nazareth."*

Joseph was a carpenter of the peasant class. He probably does not own a suit.

But Joseph was a righteous person, a kind person and He believed in God.

Today we find him working diligently on an addition to his bachelor's apartment adjacent to his shop because soon – very soon – his fiancé would join him for a life-long relationship. Their betrothal ceremony had taken place several months ago. Now, just as soon as his fiancé's father approved of the addition, and as soon as his fiancé returned from a trip to visit her older cousin in the hills of Judea, they would have the joyful wedding ceremony and be declared husband and wife.

Knock. Knock. Strange. It is after dark. Who could be out at this hour? Joseph opened the door.

"Mary! is it you, Mary? When did you get back? Come see our flat. I'm just sanding these boards for our table. Do you like it?"

Mary said, *"Oh Joseph, it's beautiful. My father will approve. But Joseph, there is something I must tell you. Before I left to see Elizabeth, the Angel Gabriel appeared to me. He said God had chosen me to be the mother of His beloved Son, Immanuel. And Joseph, I, I... am 3 months pregnant."*

Joseph slowly sank to the floor.

Johnny Cash wrote a song about a *'big man crying like a little whipped pup because of love.'* Perhaps that describes Joseph at this point. He wanted to believe the woman he loved, but he thought she had been unfaithful to him. Finally, Joseph spoke. *"Mary, I need some time. Go home Mary. We will talk soon."*

In the Jewish culture, to break an engagement required a legal procedure. Joseph had two options:

1. To expose Mary as an unfaithful woman and subject her to public disgrace; or
2. To send her away quietly to a house for unwed mothers where she would have her baby and he would never see her again.

Being a kind man, Joseph planned on the latter – until an angel of the Lord appeared to him. Matthew 1: 20b-21 – *'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.'*

Verse 24: *'When Joseph woke he did what the angel commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But they had no union until after she gave birth to a Son, and he gave Him the name, 'Jesus.'*

What did his obedience cost Joseph?

1. His reputation. 30 years later, when Jesus began His ministry and read the scroll in the synagogue in Nazareth, the people exclaimed, *'Where did this man get His wisdom? Isn't this the carpenter's son.'* For 30 years they quietly accused Joseph of fornication.
2. He mothballed his business and closed his new flat for several years. There was the grueling trip to Bethlehem at the edict from Caesar, for God had prophesied the Baby would be born in Bethlehem. (How would a young peasant girl from Galilee have a baby in Bethlehem of Judea? God moved the Emperor of the Roman Empire to call for a census at precisely the right time!!)
3. When Joseph's money was gone, the wise men brought gifts. **Jehovah Jireh** – *God the provider* came through.
4. Warned to flee King Herod's edict to kill the child, Joseph obeyed yet another dream and took Mary and the Babe to Egypt – leaving in the middle of the night.
5. After several months, or perhaps years, another dream – *Herod is dead. It is safe to go back.*

But – on the way – another dream – *Herod's wicked son is on the throne. Do not go back to Judea.* So, they went up the coast to Nazareth.

Here, Jesus grew up. This was all part of the plan of God. *'He will be called a Nazarene.'*

Joseph taught Him the trade of carpentry.

Last week we focused on Mary's words after Gabriel gave her the news that she would be the mother of the Son of God. She replied, *"I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said."*

Joseph did not speak those same words. However, by his actions he said the same thing.

His own plans were put on hold that he might do the job God gave to him. Why did God choose Joseph for this noble task?

Because of his obedient heart.

What does He require of us?

An obedient heart!

Is it easy to serve God? Ask any prophet.

Moses—called to lead a whining, ungrateful nation out of slavery

Jeremiah—Thrown into a dry cistern where he sank in mud up to his neck just because the Hebrews didn't like what he said.

Amos—sent by God to warn the Northern tribes that they were living in sin. "Go back home you seer!"

God never said being His servant would be easy. It wasn't for Mary. Neither for Joseph. Yet they were privileged to be asked.

Are you a believer. Then you've been called to action. You will have no peace until you roll up your sleeves asking, "What would you have me to do...for you??"