

## ***“When God Interrupts Your Life”***

St. Matthew 1:18-25

For all we know life was going along just fine for Joseph before God interrupted. Joseph and Mary were betrothed – looking forward to their life together as husband and wife – and then, Mary was “found to be with child.” That certainly throws a wrench into everything. But remember, it’s the Lord who is at work – the Lord who interrupts Joseph’s life in such a dramatic way.

The one thing that Joseph is sure about – more than anything else in the world – is that this child is not his. It’s obvious to him that Mary has been unfaithful – and Joseph knows what the Lord says about adultery.

We’re told that Joseph was a “just man” – a “righteous” man. He desires to be faithful to God – and yet, he loves Mary. He doesn’t want to see her harmed. He doesn’t want her to be put to shame. So, he resolves to fix this problem – he resolves to divorce her quietly.

So it is when God interrupts our lives – when he throws a wrench into our plans. God may indeed be at work – but we don’t see it that way. We think, this isn’t right – this isn’t fair – that’s not the way things should be! And then we set about to “fix” things – reasonably, and piously.

The Lord interrupts our lives in many ways. For instance, there are times when He allows us to suffer the devastating effects that sin has brought into His good creation. He says that we shouldn’t be surprised when we suffer – and yet, we are. The Bible says that we must go through many tribulations, and we do – sometimes physical suffering, or financial, or in our relationships – suffering comes in many forms.

And we can shout all we want that “this isn’t right” and it’s not “fair” (or just) – but the Lord says that He works all things (including suffering) for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose. But we’re like Joseph, and we are resolved to “fix” whatever it is that has interrupted our life.

No one like to suffer. “Pain hurts” – and so it’s reasonable that we try to bring it to an end. We flee to the bottle, or the pills. We convince ourselves that our loved ones shouldn’t have to suffer – and so we do what we think is necessary to end it. And in the most dramatic attempt to escape suffering – one might even take their own life.

How about another example of the Lord throwing a wrench into our well-ordered life? What about when the person who has sinned against you comes to you and asks you to forgive them?

The temptation is to reject them – after all – they’ve hurt you by their sin, and they don’t deserve to be forgiven. That seems like the reasonable response to you – after all – they’ll just do it again – they’ll take advantage of your grace – and part of you doesn’t want them to get away with it (you want them to suffer for what they’ve done).

I don’t know if you’ve noticed this, or not – but God doesn’t reject us – He doesn’t abandon us to wallow in our sin and death. He keeps coming to us – coming into our time and space – interrupting our lives – so that His will might be done.

But we’re like Joseph – just and righteous – and many of our attempts to “fix” things as we see best – end up being contrary to the Lord’s will and what He is working in our lives. And so, God must intervene, once again. He has to stop Joseph from carrying out his plans. So, He comes barging into his life, into his dreams – by means of His angelic messenger.

The first thing the angel of the Lord does is call Joseph “son of David” – reminding him right off the bat of WHO he is. Joseph, remember that you are a descendant of David. Remember that the Lord has promised to send the Messiah through your family. Therefore, “do not fear.”

Do not fear?!?! My whole life has been turned upside down! I’m afraid of what people are going to say about me. I’m afraid of what they might do to Mary. Do not fear? Give me one good reason!

“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.”

What the angel of the Lord has announced to Joseph doesn't make sense. That's NOT how things work. That's NOT how babies are conceived and born.

Why would Joseph believe such an unreasonable message – and why would he listen to this angel in the first place? Who's to say that this angel isn't one of the devil's messengers – masquerading as an angel of light – coming to him with lies, like the serpent in the Garden of Eden?

Why? Because he speaks a Word of the Lord for Joseph to hang onto. The Lord had promised – “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel.” And the One who promised is faithful – He does what His Word says.

It is only by the working of the Holy Spirit – through this Word and promise – that Joseph believes the message spoken to him. Only by the working of the Holy Spirit does his fear cease – and in faith, takes Mary as his wife – and names her child Jesus. Indeed, this is “God with us” – God bursting into creation to save His people from their sins.

And so it is with you – that you have a Word of the Lord to hang onto – a Word by which the Holy Spirit creates and sustains a faith in what the Lord has promised.

Even in your sufferings the Lord is at work for your good. His Word says: “We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our heart through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. (Romans 5:3-5)

And when those who have sinned against you repent – the Lord is at work, repenting them – and working through you to forgive them. You can forgive them without fear – because you have a Word of the Lord to hold onto. The Lord says: “Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.” (Ephesians 4:32)

This is why the Lord breaks into your world – interrupts your life – so that you may live by faith in Him who is Immanuel – living with the trust that God is with you, whatever you endure, even unto the end of the age.

Jesus comes crashing into your world tonight with His Word – to save His people from their sins – to be with you, and to save you. To Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.