

Sermon followed by Service

December 18, 2022

Matthew 1:18-25

I wonder how long it took him to fall asleep. His mind must have been racing, his gut churning, his heart hurting. Somehow he found out his fiancé was pregnant, and he knew he wasn't the father. Did she tell him and try to explain? Did someone else tell him? We don't know. And Joseph didn't know what to do. Should he divorce Mary and raise a stink: "It wasn't me"? But he didn't want to do that to Mary. Should he divorce Mary and keep it quiet? The thoughts had to be racing through Joseph's mind: "What should I do? What will happen to Mary? What happened? What do I do?" I wonder how long it took for Joseph to fall asleep.

And what about Mary? Was she still singing: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord"? Was she sleeping at night, or was she wondering: "What's he going to do? What will I do? God, what's going to happen?"

Joseph was thinking that sin had ruined his plans - his wedding plans, his family plans. In a way, he was right. Thousands of years of sin were ruining his plans. But Mary hadn't sinned against him. The baby growing in Mary wasn't from sin. That baby growing in Mary was from God. But Joseph either didn't know that or believe that yet.

With all that was going through his mind, I wonder how long it took him to fall asleep. When he finally did fall asleep, it wasn't a quiet sleep. An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream: "**Joseph, son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary home as your wife.**" "Don't worry

about the talk; it won't matter. Don't worry about Mary and what kind of girl she is, what kind of wife she'll be; she's in good with God. Don't worry about Mary and if there's some other guy; there's no one else but God."

"Don't be afraid to take Mary home as your wife because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit."

It wasn't just Joseph with his world turned upside down. God saw his world turned upside down. The peace of the Garden turned to fear and blaming, followed by anger and jealousy and murder. And now, the Peace of Rome, the Pax Romana, the great peace of the Roman Empire, was a peace enforced by fear and violence, a peace enforced by sword, a peace enforced by crucifixion. I think of a Christmas movie that came out about a dozen years ago. Two scenes stuck with me. On the edge of a small village, a dad with his family. Roman soldiers were demanding their money - tax money, protection money, extortion money. The dad didn't have enough. He begged for time; he begged for mercy. But the soldiers didn't have any. They took his young daughter instead. The other scene I remember was Mary on the way to visit Elizabeth passing empty crosses along the side of the road. There was little peace to be seen, little peace to be felt, little peace to be shared. Why? We live in a world that has turned against God. And so we live and die in world under judgment.

Joseph figured he was about to get a taste of that judgment with his world turned upside down. Instead, God was turning judgment upside down. The baby growing in Mary was from God. And not just from God. He was, he is God - Immanuel, God with us! God with Mary, God with Joseph, God with us! God with us on a special mission of peace. God

could have come on a mission of judgment. Instead, the Son of God came on a mission to save us from judgment. He came to be Jesus, our Jesus, as the angel said, **“because he will save his people from their sins.”** That name Jesus is related to the Old Testament name Joshua. Both names, Jesus and Joshua, have the idea “the LORD saves, Jehovah saves, Yahweh saves.”

It’s good for me to remember what the angel said about Jesus - he’s named Jesus **“because he will save his people from their sins.”** I want a Savior to save me from sickness and death. I want a Savior to save me from going broke. I want a Savior to save me from the evil out there, the danger out there. I want a Savior to save me from my stupidity. Jesus is all that, and more, and better - Jesus will save me from my sin. He will save us from our sin. He will save us from our war against God; he will save us from the angry judgment we deserve. How? Not by helping us to be good for goodness’ sake. Not by winking at our guilt - “everybody makes mistakes.” But Jesus saved us by taking the angry judgment we deserve for warring against God. Jesus saved us by living the right life we owe to God. Jesus saved us by taking our place as wrong and giving us his place as right.

What does that get to mean for us? In this world of ruined peace, we get to live at peace with God. We get to know he will save us from our sickness and stupidity. He will save us from the danger and evil of the world. He will save us from death and the devil. But he won’t just save us *from*; he will save us *for*. He will save us for life right with God; he will save us for life in the perfect peace of heaven.

So what do we do with that? We do what Mary and Joseph did. We take our place with God. We take the place God gives us. We live the life God gives us. For Mary, that meant serving God and his world as the mother of our Savior. For Joseph, that meant serving God and his world by serving Mary and her child as husband and father.

Taking our place with God, taking the place God gives us isn't always easy. For Mary and Joseph in Nazareth, I imagine there was talk and it wasn't all nice. In Bethlehem, if Mary and Joseph were doing God's work, caring for God's Son, why didn't God make it easier? For Mary and Joseph, taking their place with God, living the life God gave them meant shelving their hopes and dreams to find out what God had in store for them. Taking their place in God's plan meant changing their own plans to fit into God's plan.

That's not always easy for us, is it? We get set on our plans. We get set on living our life our way. We get set on thinking: "When our plans and our life fit together, that's peace." But peace isn't fitting in with our self. By our self, we're headed for death, decay, and damnation. By our self, everything we do is headed for death, decay, and damnation. Unless we live in denial, that's not peace. But we're not by our self. With Christmas, we have Jesus! We have God with us! We have God for us! We have life ahead of us! Like Mary and Joseph, we get to live a life worth living - a life with God, a life that's saved, a life of purpose, a life sharing the life and love of Jesus. And that, my friends, is a life of peace. Amen.

December 17 & 18, 2022

THE SERVICE

IN OUR WORLD TODAY ... we have a few things going on that could keep us up at night, don't we?

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ... we meet Joseph on what could have been a sleepless night for him. The answer for Joseph's sleeplessness is an answer that can help us find peace too!

OPENING HYMN

"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"

Hymn 327

O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel
that mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear.

Refrain

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel!

O come, O Root of Jesse, free your own from Satan's tyranny;
from depths of hell your people save, and give them vict'ry o'er the grave.

Refrain

O come, O Dayspring from on high, and cheer us by your drawing nigh;
disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
and death's dark shadows put to flight.

Refrain

O come, O Key of David, come, and open wide our heav'nly home;
make safe the way that leads on high, and close the path to misery.

Refrain

INVOCATION

In the name of the Father and of the T Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Confession and Absolution

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves
and the truth is not in us.

If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just
and will forgive us our sins
and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Let us confess our sins to the Lord.

Holy God, gracious Father,

I am sinful by nature

and have sinned against you in my thoughts, words, and actions.

I have not loved you with my whole heart;

I have not loved others as I should.

I deserve your punishment both now and forever.

But Jesus, my Savior, paid for my sins

with his innocent suffering and death.

Trusting in him, I pray: God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

Silence for meditation and reflection

Our gracious Father in heaven has been merciful to us. He sent his only Son,
Jesus Christ, who gave his life as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the
whole world. Therefore, as a called servant of Christ and by his authority, I
forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the T Son and of
the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Lord, Have Mercy (**Sung**)

In peace let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace from above and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God,
and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For this holy house and for all who offer here their worship and praise, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.

Amen.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Stir up your power, O Lord, and come. Take away the burden of our sins, and make us ready for the celebration of your birth, that we may receive you in joy and serve you always; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

FIRST READING

Isaiah 7:10-14

Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, "Ask the LORD your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights."

But Ahaz said, "I will not ask; I will not put the LORD to the test."

Then Isaiah said, "Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of humans? Will you try the patience of my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM OF THE DAY
89c

Psalm 89C
Love Enauring Evermore



1 Love will be our song for - ev - er, faith - ful love from
2 Heav'n and earth a - like af - firm it: LORD, you are mag -
3 Once, when Is - rael lacked a lead - er, Da - vid was the
4 Now, though, we have felt your an - ger; now we find dis -



a - ges past: love en-shrined with - in a prom - ise made by
nif - i - cent! E - vil pow'rs and hid - den forc - es you have
man you chose; an ex - alt - ed throne you gave him, and re -
as - ter near. Shame is ours in - stead of tri - umph; neigh-bors



you and sure to last; hu - man tongues and an - gel voic - es
ren - dered im - po - tent. At your throne of love and jus - tice
lief from all his foes; e - ven when your reb - el peo - ple
see our plight and sneer. How much long - er till you hear us?



join in rev - 'rence and de - light, prais - ing your un -
we ex - tol you, faith - ful King: blest are those who
scorned your ways and spurned your law, still your prom - ise
Life is short, so swift our days! Lord, re - new the



ri - valed splen - dor, lov - ing LORD, the God of might.
learn to trust you— they have am - ple cause to sing.
shaped the fu - ture: love en - dur - ing ev - er - more.
love you prom - ised— fill your peo - ple's hearts with praise.

SECOND READING

Romans 1:1-7

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God— the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his Son, who as to his earthly life was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord. Through him we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith for his name's sake. And you also are among those Gentiles who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.

To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be his holy people:

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Matthew 1:23

Alleluia. The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel. Alleluia.

GOSPEL

Matthew 1:18–25

This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

But 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 conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”).

When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise be to you, O Christ!**

HYMN OF THE DAY

“Savior of the Nations, Come”

Hymn 301

Savior of the nations, come; Virgin’s Son, make here your home.
Marvel now, O heav’n and earth, that the Lord chose such a birth.

Not by human flesh and blood, by the Spirit of our God
was the Word of God made flesh, woman’s offspring, pure and fresh.

Wondrous birth! O wondrous Child of the virgin undefiled,
though by all the world disowned, yet to be in heav’n enthroned!

From the Father’s throne he came and ascended to the same,
captive leading death and hell. High the song of triumph swell!

Praise to God the Father sing, praise to God the Son, our King,
praise to God the Spirit be ever and eternally.

SERMON

NICENE CREED

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, **maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.**

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father. Through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became truly human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate. He suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who in unity with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

Lord God, You promised the virgin-born Son to a king who thought he could do better on his own and without Jesus. Open our hearts and strengthen our faith gladly to receive Your Son in the signs where He is present: not in signs of our own choosing, but in the Holy Word and Sacraments.

Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

Lord God, as we consider Mary and Joseph, we remember that it is Your will that we live chaste and decent lives in all that we say and do. Preserve all couples who are engaged to be married in faithfulness and honor, that they may come to their wedding day without fear, shame or disgrace. Since Christ is Immanuel, who saves His people from their sins, clothe all brides and grooms in the forgiveness of Jesus, in which all can stand before You cleansed and confident of Your blessing.

Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

Lord God, You do not bear with the tiresome flattery and unbelief of kings and rulers forever. Have mercy on us, Lord, and spare our nation. Clear away all empty shows of piety and renew genuine faith in the virgin's Son, that His coming at the last may not be a sign against us.

Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

Lord God, look with kindness on the sick and those in any need [especially _____].

Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

Lord God, heavenly Father, we give You thanks for Your Son, Jesus Christ. As we recall with thanksgiving his humble advent in the flesh, we may always confess him and remain watchful for his glorious advent on the Last Day; for you live and reign, ever one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and forever. **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

The Sacrament

(Guests, please see our communion practice on page 2.)

(Gluten-free wafers are available; ask Pastor.)

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give him thanks and praise.

It is truly good and right that we should at all times and in all places give you thanks, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who promised that wherever two or three come together in his name, there he is with them to shepherd his flock until he

comes again in glory. Therefore, with all the saints on earth and hosts of heaven, we praise your holy name and join their glorious song:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY (SUNG)

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power, God of might.

Heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest, hosanna in the highest!

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my T body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is my T blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

Amen.

Jesus, Lamb of God (Sung)

Jesus, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.

Jesus, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.

Jesus, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; grant us your peace.

DISTRIBUTION HYMN

“As Angels Joyed with One Accord” Hymn 320

As angels joyed with one accord upon the advent of our Lord,
so let us gladly praise the name of him who from the Father came.

He came, not clothed in majesty nor pow’r that suits his deity.
In lowly state he walked till he in dying set us captives free.

This done, he soared to God’s right hand,
yet orphaned not his chosen band,
for he, not bound in grace and pow’r, attends his own each day and hour.

In ev’ry age—let praise abound— he comes; we hear his voice resound.
His glorious gospel does not cease to bring us comfort, joy, and peace.

He comes in water to the child and cleanses it, from birth defiled.
This washing seals his pard’ning grace and shows the Father’s kindly face.

He comes to us in bread and wine to give himself and gifts divine.
O praise him for this sacrament, redeeming love’s great testament!

Lift up your heads! All grief and pain shall vanish when he comes again.
Where we shall see him face to face, there joy alone shall have a place.

CLOSING PRAYER

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his mercy endures forever.

Whenever we eat this bread and drink this cup,
we proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

We give you thanks, O Lord, for the foretaste of the heavenly banquet you have given us in this Sacrament. Through this gift you have fed our faith, nourished our hope, and strengthened our love.

By your Spirit, help us to live as your holy people until that day when you will receive us as your guests at the wedding supper of the Lamb, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

BLESSING

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace. **Amen.**

CLOSING HYMN

“Peace Came to Earth”

Hymn 330

Peace came to earth at last that chosen night
when angels clove the sky with song and light
and God embodied love and sheathed his might—
Who could but gasp: Immanuel! Who could but sing: Immanuel!

And who could be the same for having held
the infant in their arms and later felt
the wounded hands and side, all doubts dispelled—
Who could but sigh: Immanuel! Who could but shout: Immanuel!

You show the Father none has ever seen,
in flesh and blood you bore our griefs and pain,
in bread and wine you visit us again—
Who could but see: Immanuel! Who could but thrill: Immanuel!

How else could I have known you, O my God!
How else could I have loved you, O my God!
How else could I embrace you, O my God!
Who could but pray: Immanuel! Who could but praise: Immanuel!

OFFERING

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Join Us for Worship this Christmas Season!

Children's Christmas Service

<i>Sunday, December 18</i>	3 p.m.
<i>Thursday, December 22</i>	11 a.m.
Christmas Eve	4 p.m. & 7 p.m.
Christmas Day	9 a.m.
New Year's Eve	5 p.m.
New Year's Day	9 a.m.

Flowers for the Lord

When we give flowers to family or friends we're saying: "I love you; I thank you; I appreciate you; you're special; I want to cheer you"

So what are we saying when we donate flowers for the altar?

"Look at the beauty in creation that God has given us! All good things come from God! We love you! We thank you! We want people to see you and your house as special!"

Our sign-up list for altar flowers is in the northeast entry of the church. The cost for the two flower arrangements is now \$20 a week.

Many weekends, people share the privilege of providing the flowers.

After the service, flowers may be donated to share with the home-bound or taken home. Cash or checks written to Flowerama may be given to Kim L'Esperance or put in her mailbox in the office.

If you have questions, please contact Kim at 847-271-2847.

And if you would like to be on our flower delivery team, please let Kim know.

Thank you in advance for your thoughtfulness!

Alpha and Omega

He is the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. That sounds neat, doesn't it? What does it mean? In a sense, it's all about Christ!

So what do we do? As we close out the year, we do some Alpha and Omega figuring with our offerings. In our house, Lisa makes sure that every year and

every month, Christ and his work get the first checks. I get to make sure that Christ and his work get the last checks.

For the first checks, we do our budget, looking at how it seems God will bless us in the new year. After we project our income, we figure our base offerings - xx% times income. With God's promise and our plan we're set to think of our offerings as blessings instead of squeezings.

For our last checks, we look over the past year, at God's giving and our giving. We see: God's been good! We see: we get to do some extra thanks-giving! (And maybe a little bit of catch-up.) We look at Christ's ministry and our ministry - "wouldn't it be great to support _____?!"

Alpha and Omega! First checks and last checks - it's all about Christ!

If a current offering statement would help you, please ask!