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THE FORGOTTEN MAN OF THE CHRISTMAS STORY
Matt. 1:18-25

I People that we remember about the Christmas story

1. the baby Jesus
2. The shepherds
3. Mary the mother of Jesus
4. the wise men

Often times the forgotten man is Joseph.

II Why Joseph is likely to be forgotten or overlooked.

1. Because He was not the father of Jesus. LK 3:23
2. Because we know so little about him.
3. Because he probably died before Jesus entered his public ministry & we hear nothing about his later life except when Jesus was 12 yrs. old.
(see John 8:27 and Matt. 12:46)

III.

Just what do we know about Joseph?

A. His background.

1. Of the house & lineage of David - Lk. 2:4
a) v. 20 - "thou son of David."
b) Genealogy traced in Mt. 1:1-16, through David to Abraham.
2. a native of Nazareth in Galilee (according to Lk)

B. His spiritual character

1. He was a "just" man. Mt. 1:19
2. He was a religious, upright man
3. Observed the commandments of the Lord.
4. He was familiar with the word of God.

C. The husband of Mary.

1. v. 16 changes - does not say, if he loved Jesus, but that he was the husband of Mary, of whom (if Mary, her) was born Jesus.
2. He was engaged to Mary but not yet married.
3. He loved Mary & did not want to hurt her by exposing her to public scorn.
4. He was willing to be merciful and put her away privately. v. 19

- a man of deep religious faith, life, & character.

5. He would temper mercy with justice and justice with mercy.

6. Augustine said, "Nothing so clearly reveals a spiritual man as his treatment of an erring brother or sister."

D. The Visits of the Angel.

1. There were 3 appearances of an angel to Joseph - before Jesus was born, afterward, directing them into Egypt, and then calling them back out of Egypt.

2. God graciously met Joseph's sincere perplexity.

3. The angel explained Mary's supernatural conception & directed him to proceed with his intended marriage.

4. Joseph's obedience was speedy, without delay, and cheerful, without dispute.
V. 24 He was glad to learn of Mary's innocence.

IV. Consider how Joseph was greatly honored of God.

A. In the providence of God, Joseph was in the legal ancestry of the Messiah.

B. He was the protector of the helpless baby Jesus.

C. He was the guide and associate of Jesus in His boyhood.

He shared the anxiety of the family in the search for the boy Jesus who became separated from the others in one of the yearly visits to Jerusalem, (Lk. 2: 41-49)

D. A faithful and affectionate father.

15 Dec '85 - Norwood B.C.

28 Dec '80 - Gateway B.C. State

16 Dec. 62 - Cent. Ch. Augsburg.

17 Dec 78 - WAC mem. chapel

INTRODUCTION: Much attention has been given to the shepherds, the wise men, the angels, and Mary in the Christmas story.

But there is one man whom I call "The Forgotten man of the Christmas Story."

His name is Joseph.

Too little attention has been given to Joseph's part in the Gospel story.

Matthew tells us that Joseph was a "just" man. This ~~is~~ one who observes the Jewish law. It implies both religious scrupple and obedience to the will of God. He tried to do the best he knew how ^{to do} what was right.

According to Jewish law two courses of action were permissible in such a situation as Joseph saw confronting him.

Remember he was betrothed to Mary.

A Jewish betrothal could be dissolved only by the man's giving the woman a writ of divorce,

and a betrothed virgin was considered a widow if her fiancé died.

So betrothal then was much more than engagement means in our society now.

Joseph then could have handed Mary a writ of divorce in the presence of two witnesses.

That was one course of action he could have taken.

Or, he might expose Mary by bringing her before the court. But this would have been a shameful thing for Mary to endure.

So Joseph had just about decided to divorce her quietly before two witnesses, and the marriage would have been off, because it never would have been consummated.

THE BIBLE does not say that Joseph was the actual physical father of Jesus.

When Luke gives the genealogy of Jesus he is careful to say that Jesus was "the son (as was supposed) of Joseph, the Son of Heli," etc. And when Matthew gives the genealogy of Jesus

he traces the ancestry down from Abraham, through David to "Joseph the husband of Mary, of WHOM (feminine) was born Jesus." It does not say that Joseph begat Jesus, as it had said in every case of the previous generations.

God the Holy Spirit was the father of Jesus. God miraculously planted the male seed in the womb of Mary. This is the mystery of the miraculous conception of Jesus. Perhaps it would be better if we stopped talking so much about the Virgin Birth of Jesus and started talking more about the miraculous conception of Jesus, and this might clarify what we mean by the Incarnation.

But, ~~regardless of whether or not we can all agree about whether Joseph or the Holy Spirit implanted the seed in the womb of Mary which resulted in the conception of the baby Jesus,~~ it is certain that Joseph stood in the relationship of a father to Jesus as he grew up in Nazareth.

In a Jewish family the relationship between a father and a son was very close. It was the duty of the father to make sure that his son should understand his spiritual inheritance and religious faith. This was the building of a bridge by which a boy passed over from a sensitive and unsure childhood to a manhood that should walk on a sure way.

A boy isn't helped much toward faith in God by mere WORDS his father may repeat, but his whole faith may be begun and undergirded by what his father IS in his character.

When Jesus went out eventually from Nazareth to preach and teach and heal, he had one great word for God. That word was FATHER.

Every reference that he made to fatherhood was as though to something so beautiful that it needed no argument or elaboration.

He would not instinctively have spoken so unless a human father's understanding and love had first interpreted for him the fatherhood of God.

It is true that the word "Father" as an ascription for God had been used in the O.T., BUT THE WORD WAS FAIRLY INFREQUENT, AND IT implied NATIONAL perhaps more than INDIVIDUAL relationship.

But Jesus used it in ways most intimate, and he taught us in the Lord's Prayer so to use it.

That fact is partially, though not ultimately, a tribute to Joseph's care for his household.

Joseph is not mentioned at all in the Gospel of Mark. John's Gospel twice refers to Jesus as the "son of Joseph" (1:45; 6:42).