

You Shall Call His Name Jesus * Matthew 1:18-25

Today's text in Matthew is a story of miracles! I mean – the whole thing: Mary, the virgin birth, Joseph, Angels, dream and of course, the biggest miracle of all, Immanuel. God – eternal God - stepping out of heaven and coming to be “with” us. Not just to walk around us – with a long pointy finger, giving everyone the stink eye, hollering, “AHT! Not like that stupid!” He did not come like some Cosmic Referee with a whistle, but He came as “ONE” of us. God took on the likeness of man. And today we read Matthew's account of how all of this took place.

The challenge this morning for many of us in here is that this text is possibly the most read, the most repeated, the most familiar text in the Bible. And the way it's laid out, it's just kind of cut and dried. We'll read the text in a minute together, but it starts out with Matthew saying, “Ok, Jesus birth took place like this... BAM.” It's so familiar that by like Wednesday of this week I was starting to sweat bullets – because I'm thinking to myself, “Ok – last week – Chris Carr preached maybe one the best sermons I've ever heard and he had a list of names that most of us can't even pronounce. And this week I get the text that announces the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and I'm like... “I have no idea what I'm going to say.” Crazy isn't it?

So look, I'm going to try and do my job and be faithful to the text, and I'm going to rest fully on the Holy Spirit that He is going to do His job and meaningfully apply the Words of God to your hearts, and to your lives, so that we can become more like His Son. And let me just say too that my daughter Kaitlyn, as she was growing up, she could never say the name Joseph – she always pronounced it “Jophes” – and for some reason we thought that was cute and started repeating it. So to this day without even thinking about it, about half the time I will call him JOPHES. So if you here me say JOPHES, just act like it's no big deal, you know who I'm talking about ok? So let's pray and dive in.

Father, we are about to open the Words that you have given us – and we come to a paragraph that in pretty short form – gives us the greatest news that has ever been delivered. Ever. That you sent your Son to save us from our sins. I don't know how it happens, but our minds can sometimes just “get used to that” and the text, and the story can become so familiar that we blow by it. So we'll need your help right now. Please send your Spirit to open our minds and soften our hearts. After all, it is still the greatest news ever! In Jesus name, Amen.

Ok! Hopefully you have your Bibles open to The Gospel of Matthew – we are still in Chapter 1. If you were not here last week, I would encourage you to go online and either read, listen or watch last weeks message (Did you know you can do that?) because Chris gave us a very helpful back drop to who, what, where – all of that regarding this Gospel of Matthew.

Let's read this familiar text together:

¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus Christ^[a] took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed^[b] to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. ²⁰ But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: ²³ "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us). ²⁴ When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, ²⁵ but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

So Matthew just kind of matter of factly say's, "Here you go!" Matthew is real guy, and right away he tells us about two real very real people who find themselves in a complicated situation.

These two real people are Mary and Joseph. They really existed; they had friends, and neighbors. We heard last week all about the shady family tree, and uncle Si. Kids, this didn't happen on the Disney channel. This didn't happen in Narnia. This happened to two real people – and right away it gets, let's just say – it gets COMPLICATED, ok? Look, one of the first things we should see in this text is that when you make up your mind to follow God, it gets complicated. It was true 2,000 years ago and it's true today.

Take a look at where Mary and Joseph find themselves. Mary and Joseph were betrothed. They were legally bound to one another (it's more than just an engagement – they can't just break up and go their separate ways) (V18) But we know from this text and other scriptures tell us that they were walking with God and wanted to do things God's way. And the way God designed it is for a man and a woman to keep themselves pure, having no sexual contact, until they are married. Just a side note, this may be a shocker, but God hasn't changed His plan. It's the same thing today. Mary and Joseph were totally on board for God's plan, and verse 18 tells us that they before they had come together – physically – Mary is found to be pregnant. They had abstained from sex. Now this text is one of the only places in scripture where we get to see things from Joseph's perspective. There are actually none of Joseph's words recorded in scripture, but just for a second, think about this for a second from Mary's perspective.

She does it God's way; she keeps herself pure. She's not sinless (we'll talk about that a little later) but she has honored God and remained a virgin. She walks up to Joseph and she has to tell him... Can you see her? "Now Joseph, listen, it's complicated! I'm pregnant." Can you hear her? "Listen, really, it's from the Holy Spirit!" And Joseph is like, "Lucy...you got some 'splainin' to do!" Mary has been obedient, **and suddenly things aren't going the way she imagined.** She is about to be opened up to complete shame and ridicule. Now, I want to get back to Joseph here, but let me say one thing to the young people in this room, actually it's for everybody, but this instance with Mary (just to be clear here!) is the one – and the only time this has ever – or will ever happen. I promise you that you will

never become pregnant if you are obedient to God's awesome plan and abstain from sex until you are married. Don't want anyone sitting there and saying, "Well, geesh. Mary was a virgin, and look where it got her!"

Seriously, if you are obedient and believe that the God of the universe knows what's best for you – because he loves you and created you – and you keep yourself pure, your life might get a little complicated because your friends poke fun, or think you're a little odd because you're willing to be obedient. But I can promise you this right now: you will not get pregnant, and you will never be sorry that you did it His way.

And listen, everyone please look up here. As soon as I just said that, there are plenty of folks who heard that and suddenly the room just seemed to shrink and you feel like there are a million eyes on you because you are a single parent. Let me tell you something, in this church you are welcome – and you are loved. This place is a place of reconciliation, not judgment. This isn't a place where perfect people come to congratulate one another on how good they are. This is a place where broken, sinful people come to bind one another up, to repent of our sin, to turn and pursue holiness! We don't celebrate sin, and wallow in them. We celebrate our Savior – Jesus Christ – who frees us from the bondage of Sin and if there is an ounce of goodness or holiness in ANYONE IN THIS ROOM, He gets the credit!

Let's look at verse 19 again and look at things from Joseph's eyes: it gets complicated for him pronto.

(V19) ¹⁹ And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. Now Joseph is a "just" man, and what that means is that Joseph is following the law – the law of Moses. He wants to do things God's way – and God's way is spelled out in the law. And so the law is pretty clear about his options. He's betrothed to a woman who apparently has committed adultery... and none of these options are easy. (1) He had the option of dragging her in front of a court and actually having her put to death. (Lev 20:10) "If a man commits adultery with the wife of^[a] his neighbor, both the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death." That wouldn't necessarily make him "just" or righteous, but it was well within his right. (2) He could have taken her to court and publically humiliated her and more or less impounded – or kept her "dowry" – which is pretty much every nickel she was worth, and he could have demanded the "bride price" that was paid to the Mary's parents be returned. Basically, he could have taken every cent she had, and publically branded her as an adulteress - essentially ruining her life, for life. The law allowed for this! He would have been well within his rights to be the angry vindictive guy who yells at the court, "I've been wronged, and I'm going to make her pay!" I think the reason Matthew calls Joseph just in this verse is because a righteous man will also be a compassionate man – and Joseph decides to comply with the Law in the most compassionate way possible which is option #3 – to take two witnesses with him, and quietly present her with a notice of divorce.

Verse 19 tells us that Joseph has made up his mind – and he has resolved to divorce her quietly – then God shows up.

²⁰ But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

Now it's about to get really complicated. And that's what happens sometimes when you're obedient to God. Let's skip down to verse 24 and re-read it. ²⁴ When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, ²⁵ but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

He knows what God wants him to do – and it was going to cost him. In a culture where honor was everything, everyone would assume that Joseph had gotten Mary pregnant before their wedding, and he would be an object of shame. It's complicated. In a day today where many men don't step up and take responsibility when it actually *is* their child, Joseph believed God, was obedient and took responsibility for a child he *knew* wasn't his own.

If you are here today and you think that following God is going to get you a perfect marriage or a fancy house – "Your Best life Now" – or "All your problems are gonna fade away!"... you've heard the wrong gospel.

I think anybody in here will tell you, just life... it's complicated right? But when God starts pressing in on you and you start being obedient, ask anyone who's been around a while: it gets complicated.

Like God starts pressing in on your heart that you should provide a home for 2 kids from China, or from Burlington. And you don't have the money for that, or the space to park them kids. Life get's complicated in a hurry when your obedient...it can get nuts actually.

Or your open your home to college kids and single moms – and suddenly – you have to go hide in the bathroom and lock the door for a minute of privacy. It get's complicated!

If God clearly shows you that you are to quit leaning on drugs or alcohol and START leaning on HIM, and you move in obedience... it get's complicated.

Or listen, if God is moving you to get involved in the lives of hurting people – people who don't look like us, talk like us, think like us, I promise you, it gets complicated in a hurry.

What if God shows you without a doubt, from His Word that you, or your kids, or you AND your kids are supposed to sell everything, and go to some place where pretty much every dude has a beard and an AK-47, and your supposed to go there and tell them about Jesus. Listen, that's complicated!

Nothing has changed for 2,000 years. I can promise you this though: when you are obedient – in 2,000 years from now, you will not be sorry, and for 2,000 years after that, when the King of Kings puts his hands on your shoulders and says, "Good job. Well done.

You were proud of me... and I'm so proud of you." You'll never be sorry! Things are complicated for Mary and Joseph.

Now – let's look at 22 & 23 a minute.²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:²³ "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us).

Now Matthew is making it clear to whoever reads this – especially his Jewish friends – that the birth we are talking about today is the fulfillment of prophecy. (Specifically Isaiah 7:14) And that Jesus is the long awaited Messiah This is not just any baby. This baby is IMMANUEL – He is God with us. Now a lot of times we read this and we're like, Isaiah thought his name was going to be Immanuel. And were might like alright, which is it? Is it Jesus or is it Immanuel? But read it again. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name (not – his name shall be, or they shall name him) – but they shall call his name Immanuel. When the virgin bears a son, His name, whatever that name is, it will be said of that child – that named child – this is God with us.

And in your Bible, you'll see that there are parenthesis, and in the middle of those parenthesis, it says God With us. Now those words "God with us" were not added by some guy in the editing room where they print Bibles. Those are the inspired Words of God – recorded by Matthew. Matthew put that in there. You see, Matthew under the direction of the Holy Spirit, translated that name – Immanuel – and made sure it was recorded because God knew that this Gospel would eventually also go out to non-Jewish people (Jewish people didn't need a translation... they knew what it meant) This Gospel would also go to the Gentiles – people like you and me. This Gospel is for everyone – written specifically for the Jews of Matthews day – but preserved because "God with us" is for everyone!

So maybe you've studied it to death or maybe you've never even given it a second thought, but let's study this virgin birth. Why does it even matter? And lets try and get at least a basic grasp of how this baby can be fully God (God with us) and yet fully man - and why does that matter? I read about a survey this week that said 77% of Americans believe the virgin birth – which kind of surprised me – but only 9% of those people said they had a clue why it matters.

First of all, it matters because God does what he says He's going to do. Look at verse 22.²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: This virgin birth took place to fulfill what ... who is it? Who said it? The LORD said it – this is something the LORD said. There are tons of other Messianic prophecies... but we aren't going there today. We want to know why it matters there was a virgin birth.

We won't cover every possible reason. I want to give you 3 reasons the virgin birth matters to us:

1. The Virgin birth shows that salvation ultimately MUST come from the Lord. God made a promise in Gen. 3:15, I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring^[a] and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." Just as God promised that the seed of the woman would

ultimately destroy Satan, so God brought it about by his own power, not through mere human effort. The virgin birth of Jesus is an unmistakable reminder that salvation can never come through human effort – **but must be a work of God**. This was evident in what Paul laid out in Galatians 4:4-5, “God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the Law – to redeem those who were under the law – so that we might receive adoption as sons.” It’s simply a fact that the human race couldn’t produce its own redeemer because sin and guilt are in every one of us and our savior must come from outside. (Mary and Joseph couldn’t do anything on their own to bring about the birth of this Savior. It is all a work of God.)

2. The virgin birth makes possible the uniting of “full deity” and “full humanity” in one person. Now I am sure that it would have been possible for God (because all things are possible for him) to accomplish this in another way – but I believe he chose this way so that we mere humans – weak minded guys like me – would have the best chance at grasping and treasuring how incredibly powerful and loving He is. Let’s think about it for a second. It would have been possible for God to create a human body for Jesus in heaven **without the benefit of any human parent**, and have him descend from heaven to earth, fully grown up and ready to go, but it would be difficult for us to see how Jesus could be fully human as we are, and it would be tough to see any way he could be part of the human race. **It takes a man to die in our place and pay the penalty that is due us!** On the other hand, it would have been possible for God to have Jesus come into the world with two human parents, both a mother and a father, and then later miraculously united his human nature with his divine nature, but then it would have been difficult for us to understand how Jesus could be fully God – since his origin was like ours in every way, with two sinful parents. Wayne Grudem puts it this way: “God, in his wisdom, ordained a combination of human and divine influence in the birth of Christ, so that his full humanity would be evident to us from the fact of his ordinary human birth from a human mother, and his full deity would be evident from the fact that his conception in Mary’s womb was by the powerful work of the Holy Spirit.” It’s a miracle, but God wants us to grasp his full humanity. 1 Tim 2:5,⁵ For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man^a Christ Jesus, – and God wants us to grasp his full his full deity Col 2:9,⁹ For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.
3. Lastly, the virgin birth also makes possible Christ’s true humanity – without inherited sin. Every human since Adam – which means every one of us – have an inherited legal guilt and a corrupted moral nature. Scripture says that by our very nature we are children of wrath. But the fact that Jesus did not have an earthly Father means that the line of descent from Adam is partially interrupted. Jesus did not descend from Adam in exactly the same way every other human has. This Virgin birth helps us understand why the guilt and corruption that belongs to all human beings, did not belong to Christ. – Look at this same account in Luke, Luke 1:35, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. – Look – it’s because the Spirit brought about the conception of Jesus in the womb of Mary – that the child was to be called Holy. The Holy Spirit obviously kept the stain

of sin from Joseph because Jesus had no earthly father, but also in a miraculous way, the transmission of sin from Mary – who nowhere in scripture is she called sinless, to the child inside her – is also prevented “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, THEREFORE (or because of this) – the child to be born will be called HOLY.

Look, maybe your sitting there and your saying “Hess, please stop, you’re giving me a migraine man! Trust me, I’m with you. It’s important – actually – it’s critical that we know what we believe in here (head.) But we will miss the boat if all of that doesn’t cause something to happen in here (heart.)

This entire passage has 1 main point. It was recorded to announce 1 thing. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.

All of this matters because I need a savior that is fully God and fully man. And so do you. I need GOD to rescue me – because I can’t do it. You are all wonderfully nice people, but I’m messed up, and you can’t save me! Listen, I need God.

But sometimes it’s hard for me feel like I can take my issues to God the Father because He’s God and I’m not. **I don’t know about you – but there’s a pretty big gap between God and me!** And how could he possibly understand. **I need someone to stand in the gap for me!** I know He created me, but it’s hard for me to see how God the Father ever walked where we walk. The problem isn’t with Him; the problem is with me. And all of this matters because the longing of all of our hearts is for an infinitely powerful God who understands me and gets me and is for me! That’s why Jesus is the hero of every story – there is no one – and no thing like Him.

I don’t know if you think it’s simple, or if you find it complex. But He’s beautiful and he is exactly who we need. He is 1 person with 2 complete natures. He is not some God, and some Man or mostly God and some man. He is fully God – completely. And fully man – completely. He is not divided, He is not confused, He is not separated. He is one – He is Jesus! And He came to rescue us from our sins.

The author of Hebrews sums it up perfectly in one verse: Hebrews 1:3, ³ He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

This virgin born baby changes everything for you – for us.

Listen, it’s wild out there and we are right in the thick of this American Christmas thing. It’s going on... as Uncle Si would say, “It’s on – like Donkey Kong – Jack!” And so this Christmas as you jockey for position in the line at Wal-Mart, and people shove and push you to get at the last 16GB iPad, earPad, or iWhatever. As you interact with family, and relatives, and split homes and the troubles that brings, or maybe you are struggling with your own failures, and guilt, and anxiety and trying to hold it all together, and you just want PEACE. You want peace with yourself. Peace at home, with your wife, with your kids.

Peace at work. This baby changed everything – because you will never accomplish any meaningful peace in here (heart) – or out there – until you have peace here (up and down) with God. And that’s why He came. You need to know that the way to Him is open, and it’s clear...and that He isn’t angry. That’s what it means to be saved from your sins! We need to know and remember that all of His dealings with us always – always for our good – even when he disciplines us, He is never against us!

If not for this baby born of a virgin, we would not have this verse: Romans chapter 5, verse 1 says, Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we^a have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

If your faith is in Him, you have peace, He’s for you. If you haven’t placed your faith in Him, He’s just offered it to you – now it’s your move.

Close in Prayer.

Scripture quotations are taken from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers.

© 2012 by Jeremy Hess. You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material in any format provided that: (1) you credit the author, (2) any modifications are clearly marked, (3) you do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction, (4) you include Harmony Bible Church’s website address (www.harmonybiblechurch.org) on the copied resource.