

Introduction:

- Remember, as we study the Nativity (the birth event of Jesus), you are in the story! It is about you... that is why He came. And you can easily relate to and learn from the characters in the story. In fact, you should learn well their lines because you may be called upon to stand in their place of faith.
- Matthew 1:18-25 Luke 1:26-38
- The Christmas miracle: God becomes man in the form of a baby. We love this as believers and we celebrate it every year. But as we look at Joseph and Mary's life today we are going to put ourselves into this story and see how we can relate to them. You see, when God moved in Joseph and Mary's life it changed their lives, drastically.
 - Think about this: Mary said "yes" to God, knowing that God's plan would certainly mess up her plans.
 - Think about this: Joseph had a plan for his life too, but by saying yes to God it certainly changed his plans.
- When Jesus comes into your life expect changes!

I. Here's The Plan

- A. Joseph and Mary have plans.
 1. They are betrothed to each other. We cannot say they are engaged. The concepts are drastically different. They are betrothed together and beginning to plan their lives together.
 2. To be betrothed was as serious a commitment as marriage itself. That is why Joseph was considering divorcing her when he found out she was pregnant. At the betrothal the papers are signed and the groom returns home to add onto father's house a room for he and his new bride. They are 'officially' married at this point but they are separate from each other.
 - a) The bride must live ready in anticipation of the groom coming to get her and take her to his home.
 - b) The groom must work preparing a room in fathers house for her.
 - c) When the groom is ready, he surprises his bride by coming to her house.
 - d) They return to grooms home for the wedding. They consummate the marriage and they party with family for several days. And then live happily ever after! They have plans. They have expectations. They have these wonderfully godly lives to live.
 3. They love the town of Nazareth. It is close to the cedars of Lebanon and oaks of Israel. Great place to open a carpentry business. Wonderful place to raise kids and build a life together.
- B. God also has a plan
 1. His plan is to redeem mankind. His plan is to save mankind. His plan is to have a people and family of His own. So God had a plan to deal with the problem of our sin.
 2. His plan includes sending His son to die for our sin. God would have to become flesh to actually reveal Himself to us. God would have to become flesh if He is to become the Lamb that was slain.

3. In Luke, He will be great. He will have the throne of His ancestor David. He will reign over Israel. His Kingdom will have no end. He will be Savior, Messiah, Lord. In Matthew, He will be King of the Jews, Immanuel or God with us. He will save His people from their sins.
 4. His plan not only has His son as King but also priest. He is able to represent us because He is now one of us.
 5. God had a plan to demonstrate to this lost, rebellious humanity the incredible extent of His love.
 6. His plan required some extra special people in order for it to be carried out.
- C. When God's plan meets our plan
1. From Mary's view. Luke 1:26-ff. Mary has her life planned out... She knows where she is going and what's coming next. Then all of a sudden a curve ball is thrown.
 - a) Let's ask ourselves, what are we thinking if this is us. What would we be feeling?
 - b) People just do not end up randomly pregnant especially virgins.
 - c) We read this as good news, right? Like the best news ever! But in that moment Mary probably isn't thinking that. She's probably scared, fearful, wondering why her, and wondering how in the world am I pregnant? She's trying to make sense of it all...
 - d) I imagine that after the angel leaves and she has time to think about what she just said yes to, that a big spoonful of reality just hit. IE. Have you ever done something like that. Say yes and then go, "What have I just done?"
 - (1) "OH NO. I have to tell my parents... I have to tell Joseph...
 - (2) What are they going to think? I wish the Bible recorded that conversation don't you... "Mom dad.... I'm pregnant... But don't worry, I didn't do anything wrong. You see there was this angel..." Talk about an awkward family dinner.
 2. From Joseph's view. Have you ever wondered why God had Mary tell Joseph she was pregnant before the angel visits him. *"This is how Jesus the Messiah was born. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took place, while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit. Joseph, to whom she was engaged, was a righteous man and did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement quietly."* (Matthew 1:18-19, NLT)
 - a) Mary has already had her visitation. So Joseph show up and she tells him: Guess what!?! I am pregnant. "I know you are thinking how is this possible? Don't worry...it's from God.
 - b) Now put yourself in Joseph's shoes. What is he thinking? He has got plans and this is not part of it. Here is what we know about Joseph: he is a good man a normal guy. But he just can't shake this off. He reacts with anger, he's upset and wants out of the relationship.
 - c) But here is a neat thing about Joseph: **He reacts with anger but he responds with grace.** That is real man there! No wonder God chose him. He does not want to hurt Mary by disgracing her but he risks ruining his own life if he stays.
 - d) Matthew 1:20-23

- (1) Joseph's world is rocked to the core. He thought he was about to get married and start happily forever after. Now his fiancé says she's pregnant... He knows it's not his and she claims it's Gods...
- (2) He quietly tries to back out as you do when you encounter a crazy person, right? And then low and behold an angel comes to him and confirms what she said...
- e) What are you thinking right now if you are Joseph? Its a dream right?... He can't keep his head on straight. His world is spinning.
- D. Both Mary and Joseph just had their world's flipped...
 - 1. You've been there right? Sure the circumstances are different.
 - 2. But you've been in that place where you've thought what am I going to do now?
 - 3. Maybe you've been there as a result of following God and you are thinking... "I thought you were supposed to make my life easier?" Has anybody been there?

II. Famous First Words "Don't be Afraid"

- A. *"Don't be afraid"* How can God expect them to NOT be afraid? Trouble by itself is one thing but to be raising the Son of God! That adds stress. Mary and Joseph thought they had their life together... They thought they knew where they were going... This is the Christmas story. What we celebrate as some of the best news in history was the scariest news in these two lives. Both Joseph and Mary hear the angel say, "Don't be afraid." God's world and yours just collided!
 - 1. What is the first word you think of when you think of Christmas? It is probably not fear. But that is where it starts for Joe and Mary.
 - 2. If you are Mary why would you not be afraid? After all, the legal penalty according to Jewish law for having an affair was death. And your defense, "God made me pregnant!" You can be killed, Joseph is leaving, and mom and dad are incredibly hurt.
 - 3. If you are Joseph, you are thinking how did I miss this. How do I get out of this mess, that I did not create? He could have lost his job when word got out. To refuse to renounce her will be seen as immorality on his part.
 - 4. Ostracized they leave Nazareth, very pregnant. Arrive Bethlehem, late. There are no rooms, no place to stay. So little Miss favored is now having her baby, the Son of God, in an unclean dark smelly barn. This is where the Son of God enters. If you are Joseph what are you saying to God at this point?
 - 5. And it gets worse. Just when things start to settle down, Herod order that all males 2 and under in Bethlehem to be killed. Now Joseph and family must flee to Egypt. IE. This is the original Born Identity! Jason Borne and Jesus Born!
- B. Don't be afraid but do ask questions. I am sure Joseph and Mary were asking God lots of questions at this point.
 - 1. We are doing your will why is this so hard?
 - 2. We said "yes!" and babies are dying, we are on the run, cant live in our own country. What is up with that?
 - 3. When will you rescue us? God did rescue them but it was not how they would have done it.

4. I don't know if I can do this? The Christmas story is not as nice and neat as we tell it every year. It is messy. It is scary. And they have reason to be afraid.
 5. This is how Jesus entered this world...and this is how He enters many of our lives...when it is messy and we are scared. When Jesus enters the picture things change.
- C. Be faithful in spite of the fear!
1. **Sometimes we are called to be faithful despite our fear...** There's this lie that goes around that if you follow God he calms the storms in your life. And sometimes he does. But I've found in my life that most of the time, God doesn't calm the storms, but he always brings me through them. He doesn't always calm the storm but He does calm me. That's the Christian faith. It's believing in advance what will only make sense in reverse. And that's exactly what Mary and Joseph do. They trust that even though things don't make sense, they trust that God is in control. Here's what I think we can learn from this story.
 - a) In your life don't look at your circumstances, look at the one who has power over your circumstances. Mary saw God as the Lord of her life. That is why she is able to say, "Let it be to me according to what you have said." Don't fixate on circumstances. That is where fear enters.
 - b) When you don't know what is going on God does. Trust Him. Fixate on Him. Focus on the Word! It lets us know what to trust Him for. The reason Mary was able to say what she said was because she wasn't focused on what was about to come... She was focused on the God that was over the things that were about to come.
 - c) Do not focus on the fear!
 - (1) Mary stated her fears. *"But when she saw him, she was greatly troubled and disturbed and confused at what he said and kept revolving in her mind what such a greeting might mean."* (Luke 1:29, AMP)
 - (2) Big Question! She is betrothed not wed. What will Joseph think. *"Mary asked the angel, "But how can this happen? I am a virgin.""* (Luke 1:34, NLT)
 - (3) Mary did not ignore her fear. She acknowledged it, expressed but did not focus on it.
 - (4) **How can we be expected to not be afraid?** When cancer comes, threats of war, mass shootings, disease, when death is around every corner. When marriages fail, when kids leave, when your fired, when your lost, when your evicted... When things seem so hard, how can we NOT be afraid? Mary has to be afraid... But in her fear she was still able to say... **Luke 1:38**... I am the Lord's Servant may it be to me as you have said. Wait... How can she say THAT? Mary knows what's coming next... She knows that people in her community will probably never accept her again. She knows her life will never be the same. She knows her life is about to get a lot tougher. But she still says... May it be as you have said...
 2. Application: When that worry starts welling up in you. Stop what you are doing. And start praying. Look to the Word.

- a) When you have a situation arise stop and write down the facts. And then write down God's promises. This puts things back in perspective because typically in our heads we blow everything out of proportion.
- b) Focus on God and not your fears. That is what Joseph and Mary did. That doesn't mean life will be easy... Mary and Joseph's life were blown up. But they found peace in the midst of that because they knew that God was in control. They kept that in perspective.

Conclusion:

- On April 12, 1961, Russian cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin (Ga Gar in) became the first human to travel into space and orbit the earth. The blow to the American psyche at losing this leg of the Space Race was deepened when reports began to circulate that, during his flight, Gagarin had commented: "I don't see any God up here. In response C.S. Lewis wrote a work called the seeing eye... In that it says this. "If there is a God that created us, we could not discover him by going up into the air. God does not relate to us the way a man on the 2nd floor would relate to a man on the first floor. He would relate to us the way Shakespeare relates to Hamlet. Shakespeare is the creator of Hamlet's world and of Hamlet himself. Hamlet can know about Shakespeare only if the author reveals information about himself in the play. So too the only way to know about God is if God has revealed himself. **Here's why the Christmas story is the best news... God has actually revealed himself in the play, in the scriptures but he goes far beyond that he actually writes himself into the story of humanity... Because he was willing to do something that no one else was willing or able to do for you.**
- I don't know what you are going through this holiday season... You probably got some good and you got some bad... Maybe you are afraid of something, unsure of how this thing is going to play out in your life. Maybe your just sad... Here's what you need to be reminded of this Christmas season... Jesus gets it. He's right there with you. He's walked on this earth. He's experienced what you are going through. He gets it.
- I don't know all the reasons why things are happening. But I know God does.