

Special Messages from 2014

My Name Is Joseph And This Is My Story

Unedited Transcript

Patrick Morley

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Good morning, men. Merry Christmas. Who said happy holidays? Wuss.

If you would, turn to Isaiah 9:6 if you're not already there. The title of the message this morning is **My Name is Joseph and This is My Story**. I want us to begin by reading this text from Isaiah and then also from Matthew, part of it. "For to us a child is born. To us, a son is given and the government will be on His shoulders and He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over His Kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness. From that time on and forever the zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this."

Then if you would, turn over to Matthew chapter 1, Matthew chapter 1. There is an old, very much an Old Testament heritage to the Book of Matthew. Matthew is very zealous to bring the prophecies about Jesus into his gospel. He begins his book with the genealogy of Jesus. We'll go over a little bit of it. Verse 1, a record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, so the prophecy that we just read was that He would be from the line of David and here, Matthew is attesting to the fact that He is the son of David. Then a genealogy, which is not a complete one. The son of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, down in verse 5 Boaz, Jesse, and David. Then in verse 7, Solomon and then a lot of the kings of Judah like Asa, Uzziah, Hezekiah, Josiah. Then after the exile, Zerubbabel in verse 12 and then all the way down to verse 16 and Jacob, the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

Then the story of the foretelling of the birth of Jesus begins in verse 18. "This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph." Betrothed is the archaic, I suppose, word for that. In that culture, you would become betrothed, engaged. It would last for about a year, roughly, but if you wanted to call off the engagement, it actually required a certificate of divorce, so it was a very much more comprehensive thing than engagement as we know it today.

"But before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph, her husband, was a righteous man, a good man, and 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 be with child and will give birth to a son and they will call him Emmanuel, which means God with us." That's from Isaiah 7:14. "When Joseph woke up, he did what

the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife, but he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son and he gave Him the name Jesus."

The key verse in this text from my perspective, and I think perhaps most, is verse 21 when it says that, "He will be given the name Jesus because He will save His people from their sins." His people. Another part of the Old Testament understanding the mindset of the culture in which this was written is that everything in this nation was built around family. Everything was built around community. It's pretty obvious, but there were no smartphones. There was no television. There was no radio and so when the lights went out, everything went out and so they organized their lives very differently than we did. In this Book of Matthew, one of the main themes is that we, as Christians, are the family, the family of God. We're a family, so we are His people and He came to save us from our sins. That's the birth of Jesus.

The **big idea today is this. Jesus came to pay a debt He didn't owe, because we owed a debt we couldn't pay.** Jesus came to pay a debt that he did not owe to save the people from their sins because the people, you and I, we owed a debt, these sins that we could not pay. We could not overcome them. Now let's do a little version of events from Joseph's perspective. I'll do this first person. We'll see how it works out.

My name is Joseph and I would like to go over the events with you that led up to the birth of my son, the son for whom I would have gladly given my life, but instead, the son who gladly gave His life for me.

You don't know much about me because the Bible doesn't say much about me and that's because I'm more of a behind-the-scenes kind of person. My father Joseph was a carpenter. He was a tradesman and at a very early age, he began to apprentice me to be a carpenter. I actually became pretty good at the work of being a carpenter. I can take a piece of wood and make almost anything you want for your home out of that wood. When I was a young boy, I used to love to play in the streets. We played hopscotch. We played tug of war. We would go out into the wilderness and we would practice learning how to use a sling like some of the other older men had figured out how to do. I loved playing in the dirty, dusty street in front of our house because that's where all the children in our village congregated. We only had one little ribbon of a road.

My house, the house that I grew up in, was located right across the street from a little girl named Mary. She was a little younger than I was, but Mary loved to play in the streets with all the other kids and we would dance and we would sing. We didn't have any toys. All the toys that you have today, which are wonderful, we had none of those things. For us, a toy was a stick that really attracted our attention, or a bone or maybe a terracotta doll. Mary had a little terracotta doll and she made little clothes that she put on this little terracotta doll. That was her toy, her treasure.

I can never remember a time when I didn't love Mary, first as friends, of course. Our community was a community that lived under crushing circumstances, Roman rule. It was not like the freedom that we have here. It was more like a country like a Cuba or a China, where people don't have the same kinds of rights that we have here. Poverty and disease were rampant all over the place and hope was in short supply. For us, because of the circumstances in which we lived and the little that we had, family was everything for us. Family meant everything to us and so from the earliest of ages, my father Jacob and my mother, they had taught me about the importance of putting family first. I can never remember a time when I didn't want to be a father and a husband and a good one, at that.

Then Mary continued to grow and I continued to mature. One day, I saw her in a different way and I realized what a beautiful person she was, how gracious and kind, and I got a lump in my throat. I felt my heart palpitate a little bit. In fact, it felt like for a moment, my heart was going to pound out of my chest and my hands, my palms started to sweat and I realized that I was in love. I was in love with Mary, this little girl that I always loved as a friend that we had grown up together and I had fallen in love with Mary. The idea, the dream, of being able to build a family with Mary and to have children with Mary was so overwhelming to me I was choked up. My eyes were moist. I couldn't believe the feelings that I was having. Of course, Mary didn't know any of this at that point.

As I began to court Mary and talk to my mother and father about getting their permission to do that and talking to Mary's parents about permission to do that, Mary, I discovered, was feeling similar to me and we had fallen in love, everything about her. We began to make plans and we shared our hopes for the future, our dreams, the kind of life that we would build together.

It was hilly around Nazareth and Mary and I would take long walks out among the hills and we would talk about all the different things that we wanted to do with our lives, the size of the family that we wanted to have, how I would be a carpenter following in my father's footsteps and how we would build a home, that I would build us a home. Of course, all of the other men in the village in the ways they could, they would chip in and help, of course, but I would build us a home in which we could live. Then I figured out how to pay the bride price to her parents. I wasn't buying her, of course, it was a show of dignity and honor. The bride price just basically meant that I acknowledge that this was a woman of great worth.

Then Mary went away to visit her relative for a few months, Elizabeth. When she came back, I noticed something odd. The kind of clothing that we wore then is not the kind of clothing that your girls wear now, but every now and then, it just seemed the way that her robe would brush against her abdomen that she was putting on a little weight. Soon, it became obvious. Mary was showing. Mary had become pregnant and we had certainly never been together and I was devastated. I was devastated. It was the worst day of my life. It was absolutely the worst day of my life. She ripped my heart out. She destroyed me that day. I went out again to the wilderness through the hills and I wandered, but this time, it was in despair and tears, tears, tears. My eyes were so red and so puffy and my face was so swollen. I probably was disfigured and unrecognizable. I stayed there for several days.

On my last night, in agony and pain, I fell asleep exhausted and I had a dream. An angel of God appeared to me in a dream and told me that Mary was pregnant by the Holy Spirit with the Son of God. The Son of God, the Messiah, the one that we had all been waiting for for so long to come and save the people from their sins. The one that 700 years ago Isaiah had told us about that would come from my family line because I was from that house of David. When I woke up, I was so baffled because I had a choice to make. I didn't know whether to believe it or to disbelieve it because you've got to remember, I was a carpenter. I was used to working in the physical world, the visible world of what we can see and explain. I was not used to this invisible world of spiritual things and I didn't know what to make of it.

I had a choice to make. Would I choose to believe the reality of the invisible or would I believe the unreality of what was becoming very visible? I knew the stakes. If, for some reason, I chose no, I don't believe, I knew what would happen, that Mary and this baby will grow up as a broken family. This little child and this woman, they would be relegated because of the value of family and the disgrace that would come upon her that she would always live in poverty. They would be broken. They would become another statistic. I didn't want that. I had already decided that I was going to, on those previous couple

of days when I was boo-hooing all over the place, that I didn't want to disgrace her, so I would just go ahead and I would divorce her without any fanfare as best we could.

Of course, there'd be lots of talk because in our community, in our village, in all the villages around Israel, that because there was no television and there was no newspaper ... The evening newspaper occurred after dinner every night. You see, in our culture, what we do is because we don't have electricity, we eat our dinner about 2 hours before sunset. Then, after dinner, all the men of the city gather at some place, usually a city center, village center, and either sit or lay down with the older and the wiser men at the center and then in little concentric circles. Moving out from the center, the other men would take their places. Then the young men like me, we would stand at the outside of the circle and then during the next hour or 2, we would speak the newspaper about a baby that had been born, about a villager that was sick, about some locusts that were threatening to spread a plague or whatever it might be or what the autumn rains looked like.

Then some old sage would be reminded about the hardships of Jacob or the adventures of David and he would tell a story about one of our great ancestors of old. We would be out on the fringe, us young men, and we would be inspired by this. We would hear the stories of the men that we wanted to become. I knew that soon they would be talking about Mary, my Mary. Even though I might divorce her in a quiet way, I knew that she was headed for a life of extreme hardship.

That was the first thing, but there was another problem that we had, another problem that I had. You see, everyone in our nation understood that Israel is the Son of God and now I've been told that Jesus is going to become the Son of God. This Messiah that we've been waiting for, this Son of God, this Anointed One, is, everybody in the nation knows, He's coming from the line of David and I'm the one in the line of David. Mary is not and so I know if I choose not to believe the angel, if I choose not to go ahead and take Mary as my wife, I'm going to throw the heavens into turmoil. I'm going to create chaos in the cosmos and so I have a choice to make. Do I put my faith in God or do I believe my own best thinking?

I know that many of you face that choice today. Many of you face that choice every day. I know that many of you are bombarded, bombarded with information that says you can't trust the invisible God. You should only trust what you can see, what you can feel, what you can touch, what you can explain, what you can rationalize, what you can intellectualize. I get that. In the end, but in the end, faith means faith. Faith means you can't prove it. You take it on faith. You put your trust in the one who's delivering the message that what that person is saying is true, but you can't prove it. I couldn't prove that Mary hadn't been with another man. I couldn't prove that this was, perhaps, the greatest miracle that had ever occurred in the history of the universe. I couldn't prove that.

I had a choice to make, just like you have a choice to make every day. I made a choice for biblical manhood. I made a choice to be a man. I made a choice to put my faith in God and to trust Him for this invisible future. I made a choice to trust Him, to obey Him. I made a choice to not let my human judgement cloud my love for God or cloud my love for Mary. In essence, in a word, I made a decision to be a disciple of my son. I made a decision to take responsibility. I made a decision to be a godly husband, to pray the marriage prayer over her.

Father, I said, til death do us part. I want to mean it. Help me to love You more than her and her more than anyone or anything else. Help me bring her into Your presence today. Make us one like You are 3-in-1. I want to hear her, cherish her, and serve her, so she would love You more and we can bring You

glory. Amen. I made a decision to be the father of Jesus, to be a present father. It was amazing. In a matter of hours, I had gone from the worst day of my life to the best day of my life. Why? You see, God didn't just call Mary to be the mother of Jesus. He also called me, Joseph, to be the father of Jesus.

1 Corinthians 4:2 says, "Now to whomever has been given a trust, he must prove faithful," and so I began to ask the question what does faithful look like? What is the trust that you have been given and what does faithful look like with that trust? With my son Jesus, the son that God had given to me, I knew the truth. I knew that it takes a man to teach a man how to be a man. This young man, Jesus, who had come to pay a debt He didn't owe, because we owed a debt we could never pay and yet, and yet, God chose me, God chose each of us in different ways, to take this Jesus and do whatever we can to take Him to the rest of the world.

What's the story behind the story? The story behind the story is this. God loves each one of us very much. My calling is to take God's message of love to a broken generation. I've told that story before. It's a long story for another day, but that's my calling. From God, I want you to take my message of love to a broken generation. I always understood what the broken generation was. The subtitle for the Man in the Mirror book is Solving the 24 Problems Men Face, the 24 ways that men are broken. I've always understood that, but for over a decade, I kept beseeching God, I kept asking God, "God, what is your message of love?"

Then one day, a dozen years later, however long it was, all of a sudden, it came crashing in on me. It's as though God had put blinders on me so I could not see. Jesus Christ is God's message of love. How did I not see that? I knew it at one level, but I never connected the dots when my calling is to take God's message of love to a broken generation. Jesus Christ is that message. This is how God showed His love among us. He sent His one and only Son into the world so that through Him we might be saved. This is love. Not that we love God, but that He loved us and sent His son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins, but because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, has made us alive in Christ. Jesus came to give us life, to make us alive, to save us from our sins, to seek and to save the loss, to give us eternal life, to give us purpose, to give us meaning in this life. In fact, Jesus came to pay a debt He didn't owe because you and I, we each owed a debt that we could not pay. Thank you so much Jesus. Amen.

Let's pray. Our dearest Father, Lord, we come to you just wanting to connect to the real purpose of Christmas, wanting to have an experience of awe, of reverence, of worship and the sense of Your love for us. I ask, God, that You would take Your holy word and superintend it to each of our hearts so that we might experience that same Holy Spirit at Christmas. In Jesus' name. Amen.