



MESSAGE GUIDE

DECEMBER 15, 2024

FEAR NOT-3: JOSEPH



MATTHEW 1:18-24

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LEAD PASTOR**

We are in the third week of our Christmas series that we're calling, "Fear Not." It is interesting that the Christmas story recorded in the Gospels is filled with fear. That which is the greatest story ever told of offering peace, hope, and joy to the world crossed into the orbit of everyday people, just like you and me, who are filled with fear.

There are real fears that many people have, even if they have no rational base. Such as:

- Acrophobia—Fear of heights
- Aerophobia—Fear of flying
- Arachnophobia—Fear of spiders
- Ophidiophobia—Fear of snakes
- Cynophobia—Fear of dogs

1. WHAT IS SOMETHING THAT YOU FEAR THAT MAY NOT SEEM RATIONAL TO OTHERS?

Without taking away any of the pain and trauma associated with some of these phobias, there are also some deep, dark, sinister fears we all face that might not lead to an immediate release of cortisol and adrenaline, but they are very real and very traumatic, nonetheless. Such as:

- Fear of shame
- Fear of rejection
- Fear of failure
- Fear of meaninglessness
- Fear of death



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2. WHEN HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED ONE OR MORE OF THESE PHOBIAS?

So, what does this have to do with Christmas? Well, what we've been discovering in this Christmas series is that the main characters of the Christmas story dealt quite directly with this second type of fear category. And this is perhaps no more evident than in the person we're studying this morning, Joseph, betrothed to Mary, who is told by an angel that his fiancé is pregnant, and he knows he is not the father.

Read Matthew 1:18-24.

Do you ever feel like sometimes you read through the Bible, or you've heard the story so many times, that you just gloss over it and don't stop to think about how significant the personal, social, and psychological impact must have been? Think about the Jewish context of what was going on with Joseph and Mary.

- Small town: Nazareth, 400 people.
- Betrothal: Arranged marriage? Possibly. Betrothal was a legal status of being pledged in marriage, requiring a legal divorce to terminate it.
- Pregnancy: *"And the angel answered [Mary], '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'" (Luke 1:35, ESV).*

When we add those parts of the story line together—small town, betrothal, pregnancy—who's going to believe that the "Most High" got Mary pregnant? A small-town teenage girl, legally betrothed gets pregnant by the "Holy Spirit." *"Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 1:18, ESV).*

Notice that the phrase, "from the Holy Spirit" was information Matthew provides to the reader, but Joseph wasn't privy to that knowledge yet, which is why the angel had to tell him through a dream! What the text indicates is that Joseph learned she was pregnant, and he knows he's not the father. So, what does Joseph do?

Do you remember the story of the woman caught in the act of adultery who is brought to Jesus? And her accusers remind Jesus that: *"Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women" (John 8:5, ESV).* Joseph could have adhered to the Mosaic Law, but just like his "adopted son," Jesus, he has compassion on Mary, and is "unwilling to put her to shame," and so he "resolved to divorce her quietly."



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Back to Matthew 1 (verse 20), we read, “*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”*” **(Matthew 1:20, ESV)**.

Two weeks ago, we learned that Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, who became the forerunner to Jesus, was told by the angel, “Do not be afraid” **(Luke 1:13, ESV)**. In last week’s message about Mary, the angel tells her, “Do not be afraid” **(Luke 1:30, ESV)**. And now here again in **Matthew 1:20**, we see an angel telling Joseph, “Do not fear!” We too would be a little afraid if an angel visited us, but the fear we read about in the Christmas story was not just from the angelic visit, but from the circumstances, the plight, and the life-changing message that each one received.

When you are faced with a potentially life-changing decision, you’ve got a bucket of fear to go along with it. You know it’s time to step up and follow God and do the right thing, but there is the claw of fear holding on to you so tightly that sometimes you feel like you can’t even breathe.

3. WHAT LIFE-CHANGING DECISION HAVE YOU BEEN FACED WITH THAT CAUSED YOU TO HAVE SOME FEAR?

Now, Joseph had a whole lot more to overcome but he put his faith in God and trusted that God’s plan was greater than his plan, and “sink or swim, he went diving in.” Or at least we could say that’s a pretty good way to summarize v. 24: “*When Joseph woke up, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded and took Mary as his wife”* **(Matthew 1:24, NLT)**.

What we discover in our text is that God doesn’t abandon us in our fears. He walks with us through them, so that we can move beyond them. When Joseph faced his fears, he knew the Lord was with him and didn’t abandon him. And sure enough, God walked with him through his fears, and Joseph moved beyond them.



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4. WHAT STEP ARE YOU GOING TO TAKE TO TRUST GOD AND MOVE BEYOND YOUR FEARS?

NEXT STEPS:

- If you would like to talk with someone about moving beyond your fears, text **“MOVE”** to 317-707-6462.
- If you would like to talk with someone about what it means to pursue a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, text **“FOLLOW”** to the same number, and we’ll reach out to you. Or, if you’re ready to talk with someone right now or have someone to pray with, we encourage you to stop by the Next Steps Room, where people will gladly talk and pray with you.

