

# “Joseph, the Earthly Father”

December 19, 2021, 20191222  
York United Ministries  
Worship Service at King City United Church  
Rev. Andrew K. Lee

## Prayer for Illumination

O Mighty One, who scatters the proud and fills the hungry, by your Holy Spirit let your word leap in us and bring to our yearning the joy that comes with new beginnings and renewed lives. **Amen.**

## Scripture Readings

Matthew 1: 18-25

<sup>18</sup> Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup> *Her husband Joseph*, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. <sup>20</sup> But just when he had resolved to do 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 as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup> She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” <sup>22</sup> All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

<sup>23</sup> “Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,  
and they shall name him Emmanuel,”

which means, “God is with us.” <sup>24</sup> When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, <sup>25</sup> but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

This is the living Word of God.

**Thanks be to God.**

Good morning! Now we are entering the Fourth Sunday, the last Sunday of Advent. We have lots of news of struggles and worries. I hope we all are blessed, inspired, and boosted both in body and in spirit throughout the Word of God. I hope God may opens your ears to listen, learn, be encouraged, and activate your hearts and mind.

Today's Bible passage is from Matthew. The scene of Jesus' birth is in the three Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and has different versions in each: The book of Mark doesn't have the story of Jesus' birth. The book of Luke has the Magnificat, a.k.a the Song of Mary. The book of Matthew, which is today's Bible passage, contains Joseph's story without the Magnificat. In other words, only the book of Matthew has the story of Joseph, the husband of the mother Mary. Because in the Bible there are many Josephs, we call this Joseph "Joseph the Carpenter" from his job.

There are many stories and debates about Joseph the Carpenter, but one thing that we can confirm based on the Bible is that he was a pious and wise person. Let's look into Joseph more today. According to Eusebius, one of the most famous historians in Christian History, Joseph was an ex-priest, a carpenter and a very aged person. And he had two fathers, named Heli and Jacob. In Luke 3:23, his father's name is Heli, while the Gospel Matthew 1:15-16 indicates that the man who begot Joseph the Carpenter was Jacob. To reconcile this seemingly contradictory relationship, we need to understand the nature of marriage in this time period. At that time, when a man died childless, it was the duty of the man's brother to marry the widow in order to beget children for his deceased brother and the widow's survival. When Heli died, he was childless; and therefore, Jacob, Heli's brother, married Heli's widow and begot a son, Joseph the Carpenter. So, it is natural that Joseph the Carpenter had two fathers: that is, his biological father Jacob, and, his legal father Heli.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Matthew was addressing his Gospel to the Jews. For that reason, it was important the he would prove to them that our Lord Jesus and His father St. Joseph were in fact descendants of Abraham. By tracing Jesus' ancestry starting from Abraham, St. Matthew was able to prove that the Messiah came from a sinful generation in order to carry the sins of the world. St. Luke, on the other hand, mentions the ancestry of our Lord Jesus starting with St. Joseph and tracing it back to Adam. By doing this, he

We have two well-known stories about Joseph the Carpenter's early life and marriage: Some sources indicate that he was a virgin, while other says that he was married in his 30s or 52 years and the marriage with the Mother Mary was the second marriage. However, the Bible does not value whether the marriage was the first one or not, but does value that Joseph the Carpenter was pious and religious and became the earthly father of Jesus.

To be the earthly father to God's Son is a great honour. Then, what characteristics did Joseph have that made him worthy to become the father of our baby Jesus? First, the Bible tells us that Joseph was a righteous man (Matthew 1:19) and a man of great faith. He was also a man who took his responsibilities seriously and was trust-worthy and noble. He was chosen to take care of the Virgin Mary and her Son, Jesus Christ. God knew that Joseph would be able to carry on this important task. God chose Joseph for Mary because God could trust him and because Mary was in need of a guardian.

As Joseph the old Carpenter and ex-priest and young Mary got engaged, Joseph noticed her pregnancy after a while, and he became confused and doubted her virginity. This caused a serious problem because it was against the Jewish law to keep an adulterer in the house. Joseph knew that if he turned Mary away, she would be stoned to death because people could judge her misbehavior. Being a kind and compassionate man, Joseph was not prepared to make a public example of Mary, so he planned to put her away quietly to ensure her safety.

While Joseph was in deep thought regarding Mary's life, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus; for He will save His people from

---

reveals to us the gift of God that raises us to our original status which is "...the son of Adam, son of God" (Luke 3:3 8).

their sins.”<sup>2</sup> After receiving this message, Joseph did not argue or complain. He silently accepted his task from the Lord and was determined to follow it. This part is very hard to understand. Imagine that you’ve just been engaged with love and joy, but soon you find that your fiancé was pregnant and you definitely know that nothing had happened between you and her. How would you understand this situation? Can you sense how Joseph the Carpenter was tolerant, patient, and wise. Scientifically speaking, we could call a virgin’s pregnancy Parthenogenesis, but whatever it is, Joseph believed that nothing is impossible to God.

Joseph discerned the angel’s message and decided to believe that Mary would deliver Jesus, the Son of God. We may question, why the young Mother Mary married with an old widowed carpenter. Now you know Joseph’s faith, piety, and wisdom at his age. That’s why God chose Joseph as the earthly father of the baby Jesus.

From the life story of Jesus’ earthly father, Joseph, we know that his faithfulness prepares God’s son. His life, faith, struggles, and decisions that he made, all had formed and made the reasons why God chose him as the earthly father of baby Jesus. We easily think that God equally loves all the children of God, but all the works of God aren’t given to them equally. God chose Joseph the Carpenter over everyone else. Joseph was prepared and was ready to do the work. And he received the divine blessing.

Therefore, we also can get a good lesson from this story. The blessing and grace from God is not a cheap one that everyone can irresponsibly receive. And to the people who are ready to receive divine grace, the blessing will be poured like Joseph. Let’s reflect on the legacy of the Joseph who has been remembered as the earthly father of Jesus Christ. Let us pray.

---

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 1:20-21.