



[Missing Christmas- Joseph Matt. 1:18-26]

FOMO- Fear of Missing Out. For some of you this is real. **Ill never forget my grandfather missing Old Faithful or Casey missing the only touchdown in the bowlgame.**

Today we are excited to begin a new Advent series entitled: Missing Christmas. For the next four weeks we will look at participants in the Christmas story that missed or almost missed the power of God working. In the same way we are asking, Lord, what causes or might cause us to miss your glory in our lives. My the Holy Spirit cultivate a holy FOMO in us!!

Read [Matt. 1:18-26]

Joseph

What do we know about the earthly father of our Lord Jesus Christ? It is telling to note that most **dictionary** entries about the man begin in this way: Joseph, the husband of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Clearly, even Bible dictionaries see Joseph as a stepping stone to get to Mary

Joseph **does not speak a single word** in the NT and is only mentioned a dozen times in Matthew and Luke. The final mention of Joseph in Scripture is when Jesus was left behind at the Temple for three days. Most likely, Joseph died before the earthly ministry of the Messiah began.

His Home- Bethlehem **Luke 2:4** - Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family line of David,

We are not sure if Joseph lived in Nazareth or commenced the journey there because of Mary or had residence in Galilee (a 3-5 days journey from Jerusalem). In Joseph's day Bethlehem was a village of perhaps 500-1,000 people.

The **Bet Lehem** means house of bread and was home to laborers and shepherders, but it was also home to farmers who grew wheat and barley and likely to millers and bakers. It is no accident that Jesus the Bread of life was born in Bethlehem. The town was also the area where most of the sacrificial sheep for the Temple were raised. The location of the perfect Lamb.

Micah would one day prophesy **5:2 Bethlehem Ephrathah, you are small among the clans of Judah; one will come from you to be ruler over Israel for me. His origin is from antiquity, from ancient times.**

Growing up in Bethlehem, Joseph would have known those words of Micah. As a young boy, Joseph would have pretended to be David (also born in Beth) who grew up and slayed the giant. ***Did Joseph know that one day his son would sit on the throne of David?***

Occupation Where you from? What do you do? We know that Jesus was described as a carpenter (Mt 13:55), a trade that was passed down through the family. The word carpenter (**tekton**) is better understood as woodworker, craftsman, and possibly stonemason. **An arch-tekton was a “master builder.”** When Jesus speaks of the chief cornerstone the builders rejected, he speaks as one who had **architectural authority because of the influence of Joseph the craftsman.**

Engaged In the ancient world, betrothal meant much more than “just being engaged.” Today engaged couples are not married but plan to get married. They are not married *yet*. By contrast, a betrothed man like Joseph in biblical times was **morally and legally married**. The moral and legal obligations of marriage began at “engagement.”

The time (6-12 months) of betrothal would allow the bride and groom time to get to know one another and allow the families time to prepare the wedding. Most importantly, the betrothal was to confirm the **bride’s chastity**. The bride’s purity was view as an indicator of her commitment to the marriage process.

In Jewish practice infidelity during the betrothal period was not viewed as an act that could end a marriage, but rather as an event that demonstrated that there had never been a legitimate marriage in the first place. **Joseph was engaged to Mary who was with a child that was not His.**

Character Righteous How did Joseph respond to the news that Mary was not committed or faithful to the marriage? Matthew points to one great characteristic: So, Joseph was a **righteous** man! Note that Joseph’s righteousness **came not from seeking to obey the law**. It was ***Joseph’s compassion and mercy that led Matthew to call him righteous.***

Jewish laws typically required a man to divorce an adulterous wife (*m. Sota* 5:1), but Joseph proposes to divorce her “quietly.”

If he told others what had happened, that Mary was pregnant with another man’s child, Mary would be stoned to death. Joseph was hurt, but he did not want to see Mary die.

Joseph knew that after he ended the engagement, everyone would soon discover that Mary was pregnant. They would naturally soon discover Mary was with child and assume it was Joseph’s. **The shame would be his, not Mary’s**. Mary’s life would be spared, and she would have the sympathy of her family. He would most likely provide for the child and if Mary’s father insisted, he could be required to take her as his wife (*Journey*, 44). **Joseph was a righteous man**

Missing Christmas Application. Joseph forces us to look inward.

1. Am I living by the faith and strength of the Lord?

Is my faith limited by what I see or know (1:18, 19)?

Faith is man's response to God's grace. Is your response to the grace of the Lord in your life limited or even controlled by what you discover and decide? Joseph, was making a righteous decision based on the **best information** he had. Often, too in our lives we make decisions based on our mortal earthly perspective. We will never know what would happen if Joseph followed through on "**his discovery**." Are you prepared to make a decision today with your wisdom? **Don't limit what Christ is doing in your life because of short-sighted faith.**

Faith sees the invisible, believes the unbelievable, and receives the impossible. – Corrie Ten Boom

Good is not always Godly (1:19) Joseph makes an incredibly difficult good choice. He has every right to divorce Mary and let her incur the shame of the pregnancy. Joseph loved Mary and did not want to disgrace her publically. Joseph made a choice that most of us would have been unwilling to make. He did not blast her on FB, Instagram, or shame her on twitter. He chose to do the good thing. But, what happens when the **good** thing is not the **godly** decision? We live in a world that **honors and makes heroes out of "good people."**

Discernment is not a matter of simply telling the difference between right and wrong; rather it is telling the difference between right and almost right. CH Spurgeon **Don't miss out on what God is doing in your life because you settle for the "almost right" choice.**

Are you open to the power and presence of Yahweh in your life (1:20)? After he had considered... and angel appeared. At least three times the Lord via an angelic intermediary spoke to Joseph: take Mary as your wife, leave your house and go to a foreign nation (btw a nation that was a perpetual enemy of God's people), and go back to Israel. **We don't see Joseph question once. He never said: is it you Lord? Are you sure? When did you start speaking in dreams? If the Lord spoke to you today would you recognize His power and presence?** This only happens with daily communion through prayer and His Word. Maybe the question is deeper, like Joseph you know the Word but you need to hear **Do not be afraid!** Are you open to the power and presence of Adonai in your life? **Don't miss what the Lord desires to do in your life!**

2. Does my obedience limit God?

Simple obedience > than complex disobedience The Lord's instructions to Joseph were clear: Don't be afraid, take Mary as your wife, name this child Jesus. **Ready for the conclusion?** V. 24 when Joseph woke up he did as the Lord's angel commanded. Simple obedience. How often do we ignore the will of the Lord in our life as we wait for the "**complex plan.**"

In what is termed as the “other drug problem.” The FDA found that millions of people don’t take their medicine correctly or quit altogether. Those with “symptom free” diseases like high blood pressure are most at risk.

The plan for better health is clear. The prescription for well-being was written. And yet millions refuse to obey the doctors request. Spiritually, **is your disobedience causing you to miss or limit God’s work in your life?** The Lord has graciously given us everything we need for a godly life. **Never underestimate the power of simple-obedience.** It takes just as much faith to obey the Lord as it does to claim the promises of God.

God calls you to obey even when it is difficult (20-24) Obedience to Christ is essential. According to the law, **Joseph was required** by cultural norms to divorce his adulterous wife and expose her to shame. By marrying his wife as commanded, **Joseph demonstrated that he did not believe she was unfaithful.** Joseph **chose** the sufficiency and provision of the **Lord** over the **culture** of his day. **How often in our lives do we follow Christ until the trail gets tough?**

This letter was written by Southern Baptist Missionary to Iraq, Karen Watson, prior to leaving for the Middle East. The letter was dated March 7, 2003. Karen was killed, along with four other missionaries, on March 15, 2004.

Dear Pastor Phil and Pastor Roger:
You should only be opening this letter in the event of my death...

*The Missionary Heart:
Care more than some think is wise.
Risk more than some think is safe.
Dream more than some think is practical.
Expect more than some think is possible.*

I was called not to comfort or success but to obedience....There is no joy outside of knowing Jesus and serving him. I love you two and my church family.
In his care,
Salaam,
Karen

Conclusion

Praise God for Joseph. A man who never speaks in the Bible. A simple man who chose to simply obey. May the Lord raise up Josephs today in our midst: **men and women with a holy FOMO.** Who are not called to comfort, or success but to obedience. Joseph a man who chose faith over fear. A man who chose simple obedience to the call of the Lord.

Do you know the voice of the Lord? What does God say about? You are in his image and loved. You have turned away and he sent Jesus to rescue you and bring you back.

Notes

Mary's story is told in the Gospel of Luke, Joseph's in Matthew.

Luke begins in Nazareth and Joseph's story is set in Bethlehem (Journey, 38). If you read Matthew by itself, you find that Nazareth is not mentioned until 2:23, by which time Jesus was likely at least two years old.

Bethlehem

In Joseph's day Bethlehem was a village of perhaps 500-1,000 people. It was a two-hour walk – six miles- from Jerusalem. The name means house of bread and was home to laborers and shepherders, but it was also home to farmers who grew wheat and barley and likely to millers and bakers (house of bread).

Though not large, it was known as the place where Rachel had died giving birth to Benjamin. Jacob built a monument to her that stood for hundreds of years (Journey, 39).

Bethlehem was also the setting of the Book of Ruth. Ruth's great-grandson was a shepherd boy named David.

Micah would one day prophesy 5:2 Bethlehem Ephrathah, you are small among the clans of Judah; one will come from you to be ruler over Israel for me. His origin is from antiquity, from ancient times.

Growing up in Bethlehem, Joseph would have known those words of Micah. As a young boy, Joseph would have pretended to be David who grew up near Bethlehem and slayed the giant.

Joseph

It is the humility that stands out when considering Joseph and his story. Joseph does not speak a single word in the New Testament and is only mentioned a handful of times in the Bible (Journey, 40).

The final time we hear of Joseph, Jesus is twelve years old. Most likely, Joseph died before the official ministry of Jesus begins.

Craftsman

The Greek word used to describe Joseph in Mark 6:3 is tekton, which can mean woodworker, craftsman, and possibly stonemason.

An arch-tekton was a “master builder.”

In Israel very few homes were built of wood. Most were constructed of stone walls with thatch roofs.

Matt. 1:18 The birth of Jesus Christ came about this way: After his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, it was discovered before they came together that she was pregnant from the Holy Spirit.

Birth → *ge+nesið* → can mean birth, offspring, beginning, origin, or descent.

Mary-

Likely between the ages of 12-14 (IVP)

Betrothed/engaged

The families of the bride and groom met, with some others to serve as witnesses. The young man would give the young woman either a gold ring, or some article of value, or simply a document in which he promised to marry her.

Then he would say: "See by this ring [or this token] thou art set apart for me, according to the law of Moses and of Israel/" The betrothal was not the same as the wedding. At least a whole year elapsed between the betrothal and the actual wedding. These two events must not be confused. (David Jones, *betrothal view of divorce and remarriage*, 73)

Heimbach further explains this distinction. "In Semitic practice, the moral and legal obligations of marriage began at betrothal, something that took place before the wedding and before a couple started having a sexual relationship. But betrothal meant a lot more than getting *engaged*.

Engaged couples are not married. They *plan* to get married but definitely are *not* married yet. By contrast, a betrothed couple in Bible times was ***morally and legally married***. They already were husband and wife in legal and moral terms., (Jones, 74)

Reasons for the practice of betrothal include allowing the bride and groom time to **get better acquainted**—a necessity in a culture of arranged marriages—and to give the participating families time to prepare for the ensuing wedding ceremony. However, one of the major reasons for the betrothal period, if not the main reason, was to **confirm the bride's chastity**. This was an important component of the betrothal process, for a bride's **chastity was viewed as an indicator of her commitment** to the marriage that was in the process of being realized.

In Jewish practice infidelity in the betrothal period was cause for dissolution of the relationship. It is important to note, however, that while a betrothed couple was considered married for moral and legal purposes, the termination of such a relationship on account of unfaithfulness was not regarded as a divorce as such, but rather as an annulment of the marriage itself. **In other words infidelity during the betrothal period was not viewed as an act that could end a marriage, but rather as an event that demonstrated that there had never been a legitimate marriage in the first place.**

That the engagement should last an entire year was an old, established law; but it was equally recognised that twelve months should not be exceeded. To prevent this, wholesome precautions were taken. "If the time (for marriage) has come without (the brides') having been taken (by wedding to the homes of their bridegrooms) they (are entitled) to eat from their (the

bridegrooms') property," that is, henceforth the bridegrooms had to support their brides. Such a means must have infallibly procured its effect. (Gaechter, 349)

Betrothal wedding feast → (Gaechter)

Would take place in a small village far away in the countryside Palestine, the wedding feasts were for the entire village and centered around the life of the villages and farmers. During harvest rarely anyone would marry. Leading up to the marriage feasts daily visits were paid to the newly married couple with daily feasts and jubilant shouts of the young men could be heard if the bride was a virgin. In general winter months were shunned as banquets were held out in the open. Typical wedding season in Palestine was summer after harvest leading into autumn, which was preferred. (October most probable)

Timing of the census?

For this reason it seems most likely that in Palestine too the census was mainly carried out after the wheat harvest (June-August as a first period) and during the time preceding the first rain and the sowing late in November (October and first half of November as a second period). (Gaechter)

Timeline? (Baechter, 1941)

Betrothal of Mary (October) (9bce)

Annunciation (June-July 8 BC)

Return to Nazareth, Marriage Feast, Journey to Bethlehem (Oct-November in quick succession)

Nativity of our Lord (March-April in 7BC)

Discovered

Joseph probably learned from Mary that she was pregnant while she was staying at the home of Zechariah and Elizabeth. Bethlehem was only a few miles away.

19 So her husband Joseph, being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her publicly, decided to divorce her secretly.

Jewish laws typically required a man to divorce an adulterous wife (*m. Sota* 5:1), but Joseph proposes to divorce her “quietly,” which is perhaps better translated “privately” (Goodspeed), in the sense of a settlement out of court.

Secretly

If he told others what had happened, that Mary was pregnant with another man’s child, Mary would be stoned to death. Joseph was hurt, but he did not want to see Mary Die (Journey, 44).

Joseph knew that after he ended the engagement, everyone would soon discover that Mary was pregnant. They would naturally soon discover Mary was with child and assume Joseph had slept with Mary while she was living in Ein Karem. The shame would be his, not Mary’s. Mary’s life would be spared, and she would have the sympathy of her family. He would most likely provide for the child and if Mary’s father insisted, he could be required to take her as his wife (Journey, 44).

Righteous

Note that Joseph's righteousness came not from seeking to obey the law. It was Joseph's compassion and mercy that led Matthew to call him righteous.

Matt. 1:20 But after he had considered these things, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because what has been conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

The angel explains to Joseph that Mary has not been unfaithful and that her child has been supernaturally conceived. He reminds Joseph of his messianic lineage by calling him "son of David." He commands Joseph not only not to divorce Mary but to go ahead and marry her. The child will therefore legally be Joseph's son and thus legally son of David.

Do not be afraid

This confirmation of the child's divine source shattered Joseph's understanding of the situation: the child was not the shameful result of immorality (Kostenberger 51).

21 She will give birth to a son, and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

Such a child will also obviously be very special. Part of this special role is now specified. He is to be named Jesus (Heb. *Yeshua*), which means *Yahweh is salvation* or "the Lord saves" (NIV marg.).

Name Him

Thus committing the office of a father to Joseph. The naming of the unborn Messiah would accord with popular notions. The Rabbis had a saying concerning the six whose names were given before their birth: "Isaac, Ishmael, Moses, Solomon, Josiah, and the name of the Messiah, whom may the Holy One, blessed be His name, bring quickly in our days."

Culturally, Joseph's naming of the child confirmed his acceptance of Jesus as his own (Kostenberger)

Jesus

The Greek form of a Hebrew name, which had been borne by two illustrious individuals in former periods of the Jewish history—Joshua, the successor of Moses, and Jeshua, the high-priest, who with Zerubbabel took so active a part in the re-establishment of the civil and religious polity of the Jews on their return from Babylon.

Matt. 1:22 Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

Matt. 1:23 See, the virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they will name him Immanuel,

The term virgin *birth* is a misnomer. Neither Matthew nor Luke describes Jesus' birth at all but only his conception. The apocryphal *Protevangelium of James* 19:3, an important source for the traditional Catholic doctrine of Mary's perpetual virginity, is in fact the main source for the unscriptural notion that Mary's hymen was not broken at the time of delivery. (NAC)

The Christian notion of a virginal conception was no more plausible in first-century Judaism than it is in the twentieth-century Western world, yet it has formed an integral part of Christian belief for two thousand years.

which is translated "God is with us."

Matt. 1:24 When Joseph woke up, he did as the Lord's angel had commanded him. He married her **25** but did not have sexual relations with her until she gave birth to a son. And he named him Jesus.

- Too to him his wife → explains the marriage.

Joseph was required to divorce his adulterous wife and expose her to shame.

It was possible to get a divorce with only 2 witnesses thus limiting the public nature or her shame.

By marrying his wife as commanded, Joseph demonstrated that he did not believe she was unfaithful.

Application

The presence of Jesus Christ does not prevent His own from suffering. Even more, His presence prepares us