

Join us for worship next week!

Wednesdays at 6:30-7:00PM

Midweek Worship Service with Communion

There's no better way to get a boost in the middle of the week than our mid week service!

Join us in the Sanctuary.

Sundays

8:25AM- PowerUp Service

Contemporary Music, informal setting

Join us in the Family Life Center

10:35AM—Traditional Worship

The hymns you know and love with choir music.

In the sanctuary

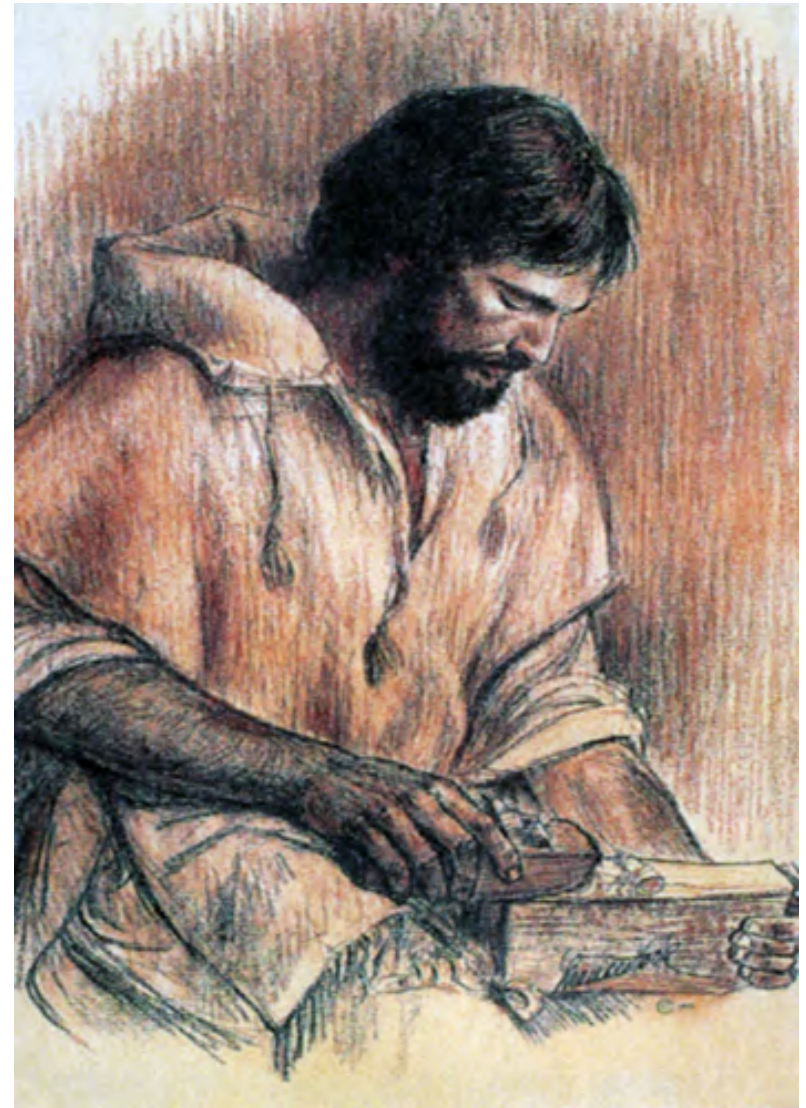
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FAITHFUL

Christmas Through the Eyes of Joseph



Advent Devotional

WEEK 1

A CARPENTER NAMED JOSEPH

Day 1: Who is Joseph?

Joseph, the earthly father of Jesus, is a mysterious man. There's very little written on him and we only know Joseph as he relates to Jesus and Mary. I guess that's why I am so fascinated with him. Joseph was the father who raised the Messiah, nurtured him, and shaped him as a man. Yet there is so little written about Joseph in scripture. Below are the scriptures where Joseph is referenced with contextual notes.

- Matthew 1: 16-24- Joseph is descended from Abraham. Joseph is a good and faithful man who is put in an awkward position when he discovers Mary is pregnant and he is not the father. To save her dignity and possible communal punishment, Joseph decides to break off the engagement gently. But he has a dream where an angel speaks to him and tells him that she AND he are a part of something huge. He is faithful and has been chosen by God to raise Emmanuel, a.k.a "God with us." He does the right thing and stays with her knowing that it's going to get really tough.
- Matthew 2:13- Joseph has another dream and this time it is to tell him to get up and go. Herod heard from the Wise men that there was a child born who would be king. He believed them and wanted them to come back and tell him where



King Ahaz and Isaiah and the people of God. But God can also see across the generations into a bigger plan called redemption of his creation.

God promises don't expire. What we read in scripture is still being played out today. We are the continuation of the story. We, like Joseph, are a part of the promise and that is something we can firmly plant our feet upon every day. No matter what the world may tell you, you are a vital part of what God is doing today. Knowing that, we can't waste what God gives or squander our lives. Joseph was part of the God's plan for redemption but he could have walked away. He wasn't a puppet because we all have free will. Through his faith, he was able to say yes even though he did not know the full plan. What we see in Joseph, King Ahaz, and Isaiah is faithfulness that is rooted in the gift of the promise. It's a faithfulness that overcomes darkness and fear. Know that you too are a part of the promise of God.

Thought of the Day: What does God need from me today?

Prayer: God, plant our feet firmly in your presence. Speak to us your promise for our lives. May we be assured by your grace that we are your beloved children. Show us your will for our lives. In Jesus name I pray, Amen.

they child was located. They never went back to Herod. Now he is so paranoid of his position as king of the Jews that he has ordered all the children to be killed in and around Bethlehem (the actual boundaries are not truly known. Does it matter when you are a crazed homicidal leader?) Another angel gets him up in the darkness and they flee to save Jesus' life. Guess where they go? Egypt. Of all places, right? But it's probably the last place Herod would think to look for a little faithful Jewish family.

- Matthew 3:19- Herod the Great dies and is succeeded by his son, Herod Archelaus. The manhunt stops with his death. What we know now is that Archelaus was just as brutal if not worse than his father. Herod Archelaus was deposed in 6AD by the Romans because he was such a terrible leader. It's possible that the family stayed in Egypt until Herod Antipas (the 3rd Herod) power expanded beyond the regions of Galilee and Perea. His leadership was much more peaceful. The angel comes back a third time and tells Joseph that the coast is clear and he can come back to Nazareth. He moves his family back to Nazareth from Egypt, around 400 miles.
- Matthew 13:55- Jesus teaches with authority and inspiration to his hometown folk of Nazareth. They are simple, country folk who live quietly and without much fuss or education. Here comes Jesus and they are shocked by what he has become. They ask, "Is not this the carpenter's son?" Nathanael asks the same thing in the Gospel of John (John 1:46) to Philip: "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" They aren't known for producing celebrities, supreme court judges, or Olympic athletes. It seems Nazareth was pretty "Podunk."

- Luke 1:37- This is the other version of the Annunciation of Jesus. Instead of focusing on Joseph, the angel comes to Mary and speaks to her about the birth of Jesus.
- Luke 2- Jesus is born as they are travelling to Bethlehem to be counted in the national census and to pay their taxes.
- John 1:45- Jesus is mentioned as the “son of Joseph from Nazareth.” This is the scripture where Nathanael gets the dig in about Nazareth being a place of nobodies or (according to a good bit of research, it’s the home of rebels who were against the Romans and Jewish authority. This was a good place to train the rebels because of the cavernous topography, i.e. lots of places to hide).

During the season of Advent we are going to experience the Christmas story through the eyes of Joseph. Lets explore what God may be revealing to us about God’s self through Joseph. What may we learn about ourselves through Joseph and how does Joseph help us to relate as Christians living in the 21st century?

Everyday there is a devotional that relates to our study on Joseph. My hope is that your Advent journey will be strengthened and deepened through this time of celebration. We are all connected to this faithful father of the faith. May his example shape us into faithful disciples of Jesus.

Day 6: Joseph– Part of the Promise

Isaiah 7: 10-14

“Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, saying, ¹¹ Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven. ¹² But Ahaz said, I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test. ¹³ Then Isaiah said: “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also? ¹⁴ Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel.”

Yesterday, we thought about King Ahaz and the threats he faced. The word from God was to stand firm in the faith. Ahaz stands firm but is still, rightfully so, fearful of the threats that surround him. God knows that Ahaz is terrified and so he speaks to him and instructs him to ask for a sign that is as deep as Sheol (the gathering place of the dead, but not hell) and as high as heaven. It’s almost as if God is saying, “ask me and make it big. Watch what I can do!” Ahaz is terrified and refuses to ask for a sign for fear that he would be tempting God. So God just gives him a sign. The sign is the scripture for today. Immanuel—God with us. There is nothing more comforting and reassuring than these words. God says I will send a son called “ God with you.”

King Ahaz is Joseph’s great x15 grandfather. 17 generations later, after this promise, Jesus is born to a woman and he is called Emmanuel. When God spoke to King Ahaz, he put in motion a promise that took 17 generations to come to fruition. God was with

Day 5: Facing Fear

Isaiah 7:9b

*“If you do not stand firm in faith,
you shall not stand at all. “*

King Ahaz needs a sign. The walls of his world were crashing in. There was very real fear that the country would be invaded and they did not stand a chance of winning. Isaiah, the prophet (a.k.a. mouthpiece) of God, in leadership with King Ahaz, reassured him with a word from God. God spoke through Isaiah a message for King Ahaz: “Take heed, be quiet, do not fear, and do not let your heart be faint because of these two smoldering stumps of firebrands” (Isaiah 7:4).

God’s Word to us over and over again is to stand firm. But how can we do that when our world comes crashing down around us? The story of Ahaz and Isaiah speaks to the presence and comfort of God in the face of very scary circumstances. We only see through a glass dimly, we can’t know what the future holds. But God does. God is alive and at work in situations that are far beyond our understanding. When we are fearful, God reminds us that no matter what we go through, we are God’s children. As God’s children we have an advocate who is the Emmanuel “God with us” to help us to see clearly in situations that are terrifying. God gives us strength to draw upon when we feel weak. God gifts us with faith when we need it the very most.

Thought of the Day: stand firm in faith that God gives.

Prayer: God give us a faith that can withstand fear.

Help us to trust you with our lives. Amen.

Day 2: Joseph the dad

Matthew 1:16

*“Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of
whom Jesus was born, who is called the
Messiah”*

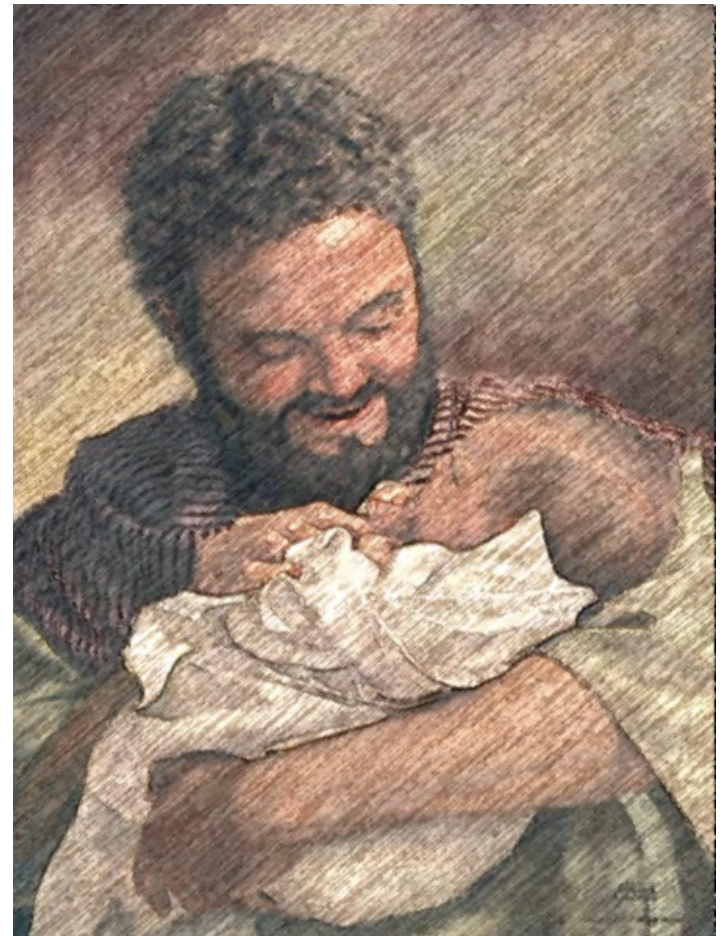
My dad is an amazing dad. I realize that I got lucky to be born into a family of strong influential men. Not everyone is so fortunate. He is level headed, loves people, hard working, intelligent, and a leader in his community. He taught me how to relate to people and work with others. He grew up in his father’s and grandfather’s hardware store and worked his way up, eventually owning the family business. He sold his portion of the business to his cousin about 10 years ago and in the last six years has served as the treasurer (elected official) and court recorder for the city of Lenoir City, TN. I learned so much from my father. I watched him as he managed his business and employees, many of who weren’t always stellar employees. I remember how he handled a scandal in his business when two of his employees were caught embezzling funds from the business, even while my grandfather (one of the owners) laid on his deathbed. He was rightly hurt, angry, and sought justice but he was also compassionate to the offenders in a way that surprised us all. Fathers teach us so much and train us in the ways of the world. Fathers have a big impact on shaping their children into adults. Unfortunately, not everyone has a father whom they know. And sadly, there are many people who have a difficult relationship with their fathers.

Studies show that our relationship with our father has a large impact on the way we relate to God. I remember talking with a young woman who had a terrible relationship with her father and had a difficult time praying to God “the Father.” Her trust was so broken with her father that she struggled to trust in a God called “Father.” Regardless of what kind of relationship you may have with your father, our creator is God who is our eternal Father. We live in a broken world and sometimes our relationships with those closest to us are broken. Jesus came to this world as “Emmanuel” God with us to show us a different way, the way of hope. He was raised by Joseph his earthly father who was a great dad. This Advent, let’s look to Joseph as our example of faithfulness and fatherhood.

Thought of the Day:

Fathers, Grandfathers, husbands, and men who exemplify faithfulness.

Prayer: God thank you for the men in our life who have showed us the way of faith. We thank you for Joseph and the ways he raised and shaped Jesus. Help us to be a model of faithfulness for those around us that all may see and hear and experience your love.



Thought of the Day: How do we see others around us? Do we see the presence of Christ in those around us?

Prayer: God, we pray that you will help us to see as you see in those we encounter today. May we have the vision like an artist to see you and to reflect that to the world. Amen.



Guido Reni "St. Joseph and the Christ child"



St. Benadino of Siena "St. Joseph's Dream"

Day 3: Joseph the Carpenter

Matthew 13: 54-56

"He came to his hometown and began to teach the people in their synagogue, so that they were astounded and said, "Where did this man get this wisdom and these deeds of power? Is not this the carpenter's son?"

My dad was the third generation owner of a family hardware store in downtown Lenoir City. The hardware store is in a large building with a store front on the main street of my hometown. It was three stories high with lots of secret passageways (at least that's what I thought). My siblings and I had so much fun playing in the hardware store. My favorite part of the store was the third floor. It had old wood floors that creaked when you walked (and always gave my location away when I played hide and seek), and there were floor to ceiling shelves covering most of the floor. I will never forget the smell of the wood floors. I loved the way they looked and sounded when you stepped and most of all the smell. Every time I walk into a building that has old wood floors, it takes me back to all the fun times I had in the hardware store.

The sense of smell and memory have an important connection. The minute we smell something it triggers a part of our brain that processes memory and emotions. That's why we connect the smell of baking cookies with mom or grandma (or whoever baked them for you). Or the smell of a fragrance with a former lover. Joseph was a carpenter who worked with wood. I imagine that the smell of wood first cut brought back powerful memories to him

too. He probably learned the trade from his own father, grandfather as trades were passed down through the generations. Joseph was a carpenter who probably fashioned farm implements like handles for tools and yoke for oxen. He probably made the lintels and doors for homes because most homes were built of mud bricks and grasses. Carpenters are some of the most patient, steady people. Fashioning an organic object into something useful and hardy takes patience. It also takes creativity. Many of the woodworkers I know have an incredible appreciation and love for the wood that they work. They know the properties, the smells, the grain and how it will respond to forces to create something out of, what appears to be, nothing. I think about Joseph as carpenter and how he probably taught Jesus those same skills of patience and steadiness with something that seems so unwieldy. I think about the unwieldy Pharisees who just couldn't accept Jesus as Messiah. Yet Jesus continued to persevere. I think about Peter and how stubborn he could be at times, like a knot in the middle of a beautiful piece of wood, yet Jesus molded Peter until he became the rock upon which the church stands! We are thankful for Joseph the carpenter who molded and shaped his son, Jesus who in turn molds and shapes each one of us.

Thought of the Day: Steadiness and patience of a carpenter.

Prayer: God, you sent Jesus to the home of a carpenter and we know that was not on accident.

Shape and mold us like the steady strong hands of a wood worker that we will be the people you desire us to be. Amen.

Day 4: Joseph in Art

Matthew 1:23

“Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means, “God is with us.””

Joseph has been depicted in all sorts of ways through the ages. Today, look at the images and imagine what the artist is trying to teach us about each piece.



“Joseph and Jesus” by Joseph Foster