

Joseph - Remembering God's Promise

Short Meditation on Matthew 1:18-25

The circumstances of Joseph's future marriage were significantly less than ideal. The year they got engaged, Joseph discovered that Mary was pregnant.

How?

By whom?

Who could possibly believe Mary's absurd claim that the "Holy Spirit" had made her pregnant?

How dumb did she think he was?

How devastated Joseph must have been as he wrestled with his hurt and anger over what he assumed was her unfaithfulness, and the betrayal of all his hopes and dreams for marriage. And yet, he attempted to do "the honourable thing."

He planned to end the engagement quietly, so as not to draw negative attention to her, but certainly also not to his own embarrassment.

But things came differently...

...in the very moment of Joseph's despair, God sends him a dream.

Not just any dream.

Not just a dream of explanation.

God surrounds and embraces Joseph with God's own hopes for a glorious future, God's own great dream for humanity.

God's dream of a future when humanity is reconciled with a God who desperately loves God's own creation.

Through Jesus, God will transform the world itself.

Through Jesus, God will save his people from their sins.

God needs Jesus – no doubt.

And to save Jesus, God needs Joseph.

And the message, the promise, the dream that God gives Joseph then and each one of us now is: Jesus is Emmanuel. God is with us.

In his book, *God Has a Dream: A Vision of Hope for Our Time*, Archbishop Desmond Tutu writes that "we all experience sadness, we all come at times to despair, and we all lose hope that the suffering in our lives and in the world will ever end" but, he continues,

"...there is no such thing as a totally hopeless case. Our God is an expert at dealing with chaos, with brokenness, with all the worst that we can imagine. God created order out of disorder, cosmos out of chaos, and God can do so always, can do so now — in our personal lives and in our lives as nations, globally... Indeed, God is transforming the world now — through us — because God loves us."

Joseph's life certainly didn't work out the way he had expected it would.

Joseph's life was totally and completely transformed; he'd given his consent to play a key role as father to God's own Son.

Joseph and Mary were given the monumental task of raising Jesus into the man he would become.

In order to live in God's dream, in order to play his role in God's story, Joseph had to be willing to give up some of his own dreams. Small as they were in comparison to God's. That surely was a painful process, full of uncertainty and full of the unknown.

But in the midst of the uncertainty, Joseph clung to the memory of the message God had given him, the promise of the glorious future which Joseph would help come into being.

God doesn't come to save our dreams; God gives us new dreams and by doing so he saves us.

When facing life's heart-breaking moments of loss and grief, what can save us is to remember.

...to remember God's promise that God is with us.

Remembering God's promise is not a passive acceptance of whatever happens to us. Remembering God's promise is an active choice to trust that God will never abandon us, even in the moment of our greatest need.

Remembering allows us to let go of the illusion of control we have over our lives, and it gives us the strength to let go of our dreams and expectations in favour of God's great dream.

Remembering God's presence with us allows us to move forward without fear—even into an unknown future. It helps us to believe in dreams, to listen to God's voice, to save lives, and to enable new beginnings.

Joseph's dreams must be dreamed so that the saviour of humankind can be born and remain safe. As easy as that...

Like Joseph

like Joseph

doing the job

building a house

like Joseph

choosing a wife

and expecting the child

like Joseph

listening to the angel

and being open to dreams

like Joseph

finding meaning even in the dark sides of life
like Joseph
not losing faith in all the contradictions
like Joseph
caring for Mary and the child
caring for the hope of the world
seeing the dangers
and facing what comes
leaving the friends and fleeing
like Joseph
staying in the foreign land and waiting
like Joseph
listening to God's call
and doing each day simply
what needs to be done