

Hope in the Change

Matthew 1:18-25

- *If you have your bibles you can turn to Matthew chapter 1. If you were here last week, we walked through the story of Zechariah and Elizabeth and the birth of John the Baptist.*
- And we talked about waiting on the Lord and Hoping in the Lord in the seasons where we feel like we are just waiting around or have had unanswered prayer.
 - And we saw how there really is still Hope in the Waiting, but today I want to talk around the idea of there being Hope in the Changing.
- We all at some point are going to feel like our life got turned upside down and everything just changed on us.
 - So many of us have had a plan, things were going according to plan, you've been doing all of the right things the right way the best

that you can, but then all of the sudden all of your plans fall apart.

- You lost the job unexpectedly, your family is in turmoil seemingly out of the blue, everything you thought you knew about your life was heading in one direction and then all of the sudden it's like your whole life got turned upside down
- And in those seasons, I truly believe that Hope remains.
- To prove that, I want to look at the Christmas story from the perspective of Joseph. The earthly father of Jesus.
 - Even though the Bible doesn't say much about his role throughout Jesus' childhood, teenage years, and so on, we do see his vital role in helping bring Jesus into the world.
 - A day that would change the course of history forever. An event that we set our calendars by and that has become the most prominent global holiday of all time. Joseph

Sunday, December 14, 2025

was right in the middle of it, and nothing about it was easy, or what he expected.

- “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. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.” -Matthew 1:18-19 (ESV)

- READ & PRAY

- Have you ever been in a situation or a season of life where nothing ever seems to go right? No matter what you do or how you do it, you just can't seem to do the right thing, no matter how hard you try

- This was basically my childhood: How many have heard of, or used the term “Dadgummit”??

• *This is a term that you use when you don't want to cuss but still want to express frustration*

- *For the greater part of my childhood I thought this was a part of my God-given name:*

- *I could rarely ever get through a holiday, gathering, church service, or even a family dinner without getting at least one “Dadgummit Kenneth!”*

• Wasn't deliberately rebellious, I just wasn't the brightest kid, I was clumsy and prone to make mistakes

- *Suitcase on Dad's foot*

- Even as I've gotten older, there are still seasons or situations in my life where, no matter what I do, nothing seems to go the right way

• I'll go through times where it's just one thing after another that goes horribly wrong, and I can't seem to catch a break.

Sunday, December 14, 2025

- Even when I seemingly do everything right, the results that I expect never come
 - Have you ever been there?
 - *Worked tail off at work...no promotion*
 - *Done everything you know possible to be a good parent...kids still rebel*
 - *Poured everything into a relationship...ends out of nowhere*
- Nothing more frustrating than when you do all of the right things, and yet nothing seems to go the right way
 - Joseph knew EXACTLY what that was like...
- Joseph had a lot of good things going for him
 - He had a good job, his carpentry business was starting to take off, he was well respected in the community, and to top it all off he was betrothed to the lovely young Mary.
- During this time he would be preparing their house, finances, getting all of the details taken

care of so they could transition smoothly into their new lives together

- He's responsible, smart, doing all of the right things
- One day he goes to see Mary
- *He misses her, she's been gone for the past 3 months visiting her cousin Elizabeth, and he just wants to see her to give updates on all of the things he has been getting together in anticipation of their new lives as man and wife.*
 - *Joseph seems to be floating on air as he picks a flower for Mary on the side of the road.*
 - *Life is great, he's in love, everything is coming together.*
- Mom answers the door
 - "Not a good time"
 - This doesn't seem right, thinks about all the things he may have done wrong

- Sees Mary through the crack of the door and what he sees next brings his entire world crashing down around him
- Mary is pregnant
 - What? How? Who?
 - Flustered and confused
 - No way, he's the father...that simple biology
 - I can only imagine the sickening feeling that Joseph gets in the pit of his stomach
- Now, Joseph doesn't know that Mary has the unborn Messiah in her womb
 - How could she tell him? She figured that Joseph would leave, that he wouldn't understand, she knows how crazy it sounded, and she just waits for his outburst of rage
 - But that's not how Joseph responds
- At this point, all Joseph knows is that Mary is pregnant and he's not the father...Common

sense tells him that she cheated, she was unfaithful

- He Had every right to be completely upset make a public spectacle of her unfaithfulness
 - *At this time in history it would be within his legal rights to have her stoned for this*
 - IN our day and age, nobody woulda blamed him if he blasted her on social media, vented on instagram, and let everyone know how hurt he was and why
- But Joseph, was a "Just" man...can also be translated as a righteous man
 - And how this passage describes Joseph is the reason why he is one of my greatest heroes in the entire biblical narrative
- Look at the way the NLT puts this verse:
"Joseph, to whom she was engaged, was a righteous man and did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement quietly" (Matt 1:19 NLT)

- *The word “righteous” means to be “right with God.”*
 - *It can also be translated as “the way one ought to be,” or “to reflect the heart of God.”*
 - *Which is to say, that even in the midst of his confusion and frustration, Joseph was a man that would reflect the heart of God, no matter what the circumstance.*
- Even though he was hurting, he didn’t want to hurt her back, he didn’t want to slander her.
- In his mind, he had done everything right, yet his relationship still failed and he was still betrayed.
- But Joseph didn’t allow his emotions to dictate his decisions
- Can we take a second to think about what our lives would look like if we could apply that principle to ourselves?
- What would our lives look like if we didn’t allow our emotions to dictate our reactions?
- That’s normally our number one excuse for acting the way we do.
 - *Im mad so, I’m gonna act this way*
 - *Im sad, so I’m gonna act THAT way*
- What if we just acted in a way that reflected the heart of God regardless of how we are feeling?
 - You know what the way Joseph handled himself and how he is described reminds me of?
- ***“For God called you to do good, even if it means suffering, just as Christ suffered for you. He is your example, and you must follow in his steps....He did not retaliate when He was insulted, nor threaten revenge when He suffered. He left His case in the hands of God, who always judges fairly. He personally carried our sins in His body on the cross so that we can be dead to sin and live for what is right.” - 1 Peter 2:21-24 (NLT)***

Sunday, December 14, 2025

- *You see, Jesus didn't burn the bridge, He bridged the gap.*
- *And Peter says that Jesus is our example and we must follow in His steps:*
 - You know, no matter how badly someone hurts or betrays me, my relationship with that person can only be broken, if I retaliate
 - Bridges are only burned, if I start the fire
 - I had to learn early on in life that my relationships with people are going to be mostly dependent upon me
 - If I have a disagreement with someone, the problem will only last as long as I allow it to
 - Im only going to be offended as much as I choose to be offended
 - Paul says, AS MUCH AS IT DEPENDS ON YOU...live peaceably with all.
 - *(To clarify: I am not talking about abusive relationships)*
- *Anyone who is in a relationship that is either verbally, emotionally, or physically abusive needs to get out and burn that bridge.*
- But I think that there are some that need to hear this right around the holidays
 - There are some of us who won't be sharing this special season with former friends or loved ones because of something that (if we can take a step back and can look at from an eternal perspective), we realize is actually petty.
- Our relationships suffer whenever we allow our emotions to dictate our reactions and causes us to lose years upon years worth of relationships that should mean more to us.
 - *But Paul tells us in 2 Cor 5 that we have been given the MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION*
 - *To reconcile means "to reestablish a relationship." Of course, the main goal in this ministry is to help others reestablish a relationship with their Heavenly Father. But how can we help people establish spiritual*

relationships if we cannot reestablish our earthly relationships?

- We need more people that are unwilling to put others to shame, We need more Christians who are unwilling to burn bridges and handle our situations quietly.
 - We need more people who are willing to reflect the heart of God no matter how we are feeling as we see in Joseph
 - He was going to handle the situation quietly
- Some might argue that he wanted to do it quietly because he was worried about his own reputation, what people were going to think about him, he didn't want to be disgraced... but that's not what the passage states
 - **Verse 19: "Unwilling to put HER to shame"**
NLT said he "Didn't want to disgrace HER publicly"
- Even in the midst of his hurt and betrayal, he still put HER above himself

- He knew her life was going to be hard enough as a single mom, he didn't want to add fuel to the fire
- So he's decided, he was going to quietly break off the engagement
- And as he is thinking through the arrangements, his plans get interrupted and everything changes soon for him again
- Matthew 1 goes on to say, ***"As he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. "Joseph, son of David," the angel said, "do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit. And she will have a son, and you are to name Him Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" -Matt 1:20-21 (ESV)***
- Now if I'm Joseph, I'm a little frustrated right now
 - YOU COULDN'T HAVE TOLD ME THIS EARLIER?!

- IVE BEEN GOING THROUGH TORTURE OVER HERE!!
- *“I had all my plans for our normal engagement, that got turned upside down, now I go through all of the plans to end the engagement, and right when I make a plan You change everything again!!!”*
- But thats how God works sometimes,
- **IN THE CHANGE: GOD GIVES US OPPORTUNITIES FOR HOPE**
 - He gives us opportunities to handle ourselves with character in difficult and confusing times. And that’s exactly the way we have to see those types of situations. As opportunities, and it is an opportunity for hope. Why do I say that:
- Paul once stated, ***“we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,”***
-Rom. 5:3-4 (ESV)
- *We said it last week, How you live, will show where your Hope is*
- *People of Character are the greatest testimony to the Hope of Jesus Christ*
- *Why? Because circumstances do not dictate how they act. Tragedy doesn’t break their faith. Even when they are hurt, their values do not change. They always have Hope, that the rest of the world is craving.*
- *Hope in the biblical sense can be translated as CONFIDENCE*
- *Because of the confidence that we have in Jesus, we can handle ourselves with character and endure even in the midst of suffering*
- This is why I think God was JUST as intentional about choosing Joseph to be the earthly father figure in Jesus’ life, as He was with choosing Mary
 - All of this shows that Joseph was a PROVEN man of character

Sunday, December 14, 2025

- When everything seemed to go wrong, Joseph still chose to handle himself with character, and because of that character, the hope for his relationship with Mary could still be intact.
- Let me explain. Imagine Joseph completely lost it whenever he found out she was pregnant. Say he went to social media and vented like a disgruntled teenager... ran around town telling everyone about her unfaithfulness and how unfair it was to him... took up the offer to have her killed!
- There would be no hope for their relationship after he found out the truth.
 - On one hand, she'd be dead. That'd be awkward.
 - On the other, he would have shown himself a completely unreliable person who Mary would have no confidence in during the long hard life that would come with raising the Son of God. No pressure.
- However, due to the character, heart, and compassion that Joseph showed against all reason, Mary was able to, *confidently*, continue her relationship with him, once Joseph got the full picture and accepted his role in the upbringing of the Savior of the world.
- SO IT GETS BETTER RIGHT?!
 - I wish I could tell you that, and then they lived happily ever after.
 - But now, that he had accepted this new life with Mary once again, it was really only the beginning of the hardships.
- Since Joseph decided to continue in his engagement with Mary, he was now going to be a part of the “label.”
 - Everyone was now going to think that they were sexually immoral and got pregnant out of wedlock, or that Mary was unfaithful and Joseph was too weak to do anything about it.

Sunday, December 14, 2025

- Especially in that day, this would have been excruciatingly shameful. Now they have to live with the looks, the snide remarks, the stare downs of disapproving older women.
 - Who knows if even their families would understand their situation!
 - Nevertheless, Joseph allows himself to be someone that Mary can lean on and share the trouble with.
- Joseph is a provider and a protector. He's the type of guy that gets things done. He's going to take care of Mary no matter what.
 - He's shown that during the beginning of their engagement by being responsible and he's shown it in the way he handled her surprise pregnancy. But that was just the beginning.
- In the start of Luke chapter 2, Joseph needs to travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem (his hometown) to register himself and his soon-to-be wife and child.
 - Joseph's people, the Jews, have been under foreign occupation for a while now and the Romans want to keep a close eye on all of their subjects. So they tell everyone to go back to their hometowns to be registered and pay taxes.
- This is going to be about a 70 mile journey for Joseph and his pregnant fiancé.
 - Keep in mind, they have no cars, no trains, no planes, no segways, nothing. They most likely had just one donkey. Now, this would be about a 4 or 5 day journey, normally, but Joseph has a woman with him who is 9-months pregnant and could pop at any moment!
 - If you have spent any significant time around pregnant women in stressful situations, you can imagine what this trip would have been like.
- But Joseph, being the provider that he is, he's on a mission.

Sunday, December 14, 2025

- They're going to get there, Mary is going to be as comfortable as possible, and they're gonna make good time!
- Every man on a road trip is all about making good time. But, Joseph doesn't make good time. His insides cringe a little every time they stop for a pee break, but he keeps his composure.
- Now when they finally get to Bethlehem, the journey is now over and they can finally get a room and relax. They get there a little late, but luckily there's one inn that has the lights still on and they go inside. Joseph flops his arms up on the counter,
- "1 room please"
 - Now Joseph has to go straight into problem solving mode.
 - There's no room for them to stay in, so he begins to look around. Now his next move has been debated by many scholars...
- Joseph ended up going to one of two places: it was either a cave where animals would take shelter, or it was more of a stable on the first floor connected to the inn.
- In either case, he found shelter in a community gathering place for animals. Not the ideal location, but they were exhausted and there was some soft hay in there that could be somewhat comfortable.
 - So they get settled in, Joseph makes sure Mary is plenty warm and comfortable, and then gets settled himself.
 - Just as he is closing his eyes to get some much needed rest, he hears a grunt from Mary.
 - He looks over at her, she seems to be ok, but then she grunts again louder and this time she is cringing and holding her stomach.
- Yep, of course, at this moment, AS INCONVENIENT as it could be, Mary goes into labor.

Sunday, December 14, 2025

- Back to problem solving mode
 - He's a carpenter, not a doctor. So he's trying his best to manage the situation the best he can.
 - *"Ok, babe, just breathe...in and out...in and out. Uhhhhh, here squeeze my hand.... AH! That was a BAD Idea!....Here we go, just push babe, you're doing great!"*
- Of course there were no epidurals at this point in time, so everything he said probably just made Mary want to punch him in the face. But, Joseph is doing his best.
- And before they knew it, the baby Jesus was delivered and now Joseph is holding the God-Child in his hands.
 - We can romanticize this scene all we want, but Joseph has to be freaking out!
 - He has no idea what to do with the baby, so he hands Jesus to Mary. Then he watches Mary, (who is such a trooper after all of that traveling and delivering a baby) pull a small

blanket out of her bag, wraps little baby Jesus up, and then laid Him in the manger.

- Now most of us can hear the collective "Aweeeeeee" from those hearing this story, but this is NOT what is going through Joseph's head.
- The word manger sounds nice and all, but do you know what a manger is? It's a feeding trough!
 - If you Google the word *manger*, the definition will come up, *"a long open box or trough for horses or cattle to eat from."*
- So now Joseph is stepping back looking at this entire scene.
 - There was the surprise pregnancy,
 - the labels,
 - the long journey,
 - there was no room,
 - the inconvenient labor,

Sunday, December 14, 2025

- and now the Holy Son of God is laying in a box that animals eat from!
- This is not the way that things were supposed to go, this is not how Joseph planned it out, no matter how hard he worked, things just seemed to get harder and harder.
- IS THIS IT? Have you ever asked yourself that? Have you ever fallen victim to your expectations?
- Dreaming of the way you think something is going to turn out but when you get there, you realize it's nothing like you thought it was going to be.
- You spent so much time in excitement and anticipation that the idea of something going wrong was just so foreign.
- You weren't prepared for this. "Is this it, God!?"
 - You might find yourself crying this out. And that's ok. God is not threatened by our frustration, He understands it.
- He feels what you're feeling, He knows what you're going through, and He loves it when you talk to Him about it.
- No matter what your current situation looks like He is still there.
- Here's what we have to remember. **IN THE CHANGE: IF GOD CHANGES IT, HE ARRANGES IT**
- If and when you get to that season where God changes everything up on you, you can have the Hope that He is the one that is going to arrange everything just how it needs to be.
 - Joseph did nothing to put himself in the situation that he was in. It wasn't his plan to be the step-dad of the God-man
 - It wasn't his plan for his wife to be pregnant
 - This was all God's plan! And it's really hard not to question His plan, especially if you find yourself as confused as Joseph does!
- Right now, things may seem pretty hopeless.

- Right now, everything seems to be a mess.
 - You may be thinking about your faithfulness, how you feel like you've obeyed God every step of the way but yet everything still seems out of place.
- *"This isn't what I've been expecting. I'm not supposed to be sick, my parents aren't supposed to be getting a divorce, we weren't supposed to lose that loved one, I'm not supposed to be struggling this much."*
- But you see, God never promised an easy life.
 - In fact, He told us that in this life we would have trouble (John 16:33).
 - He said that people would hate us (Matt. 10:22, Mark 13:13, John 15:18).
 - We're told to not be surprised when things get hard (1 Peter 4:12).
 - He never promised us a smooth road, but what He DID promise was to never leave us or forsake us (Heb. 13:5).
- He promised to be with us, even to the end of the age (Matt. 28:20).
- He promised to abide with us forever and not leave us as orphans (John 14:16, 18).
- He gave us the Hope of this world NOT being our Home
- So He won't keep us from hard times and difficult seasons, but what He will do is hold our hand through it all.
 - He will walk side by side with us through anything, and be there for us to lean on Him for comfort, for strength, and for support.
 - Not only will He help you endure, but He will work something good out of it.
- It's one of the greatest promises of Scripture: ***"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." -Romans 8:28 (NKJV)***

Sunday, December 14, 2025

- I looked up “all things” in the original language, and you know what it means? ALL THINGS!
- It’s the good things, the bad things, the confusing things, the scary things
- So you love God, you are called by God, and you have a purpose from God....therefore even if everything has changed on you, He in His sovereignty and His goodness will work out His will through anything and arrange everything for good
- When things seem to go array, I don’t need to jump into problem solving mode and fix everything myself, I just need to have the Hope and the Confidence to turn to the Author and Perfecter of my faith...Who is arranging everything exactly they way it needs to be.
- This is much easier said than done, I know, but even when we try to take matters into our own hands, God won’t leave us to our own devices.
 - He’ll still find ways to let you know that you’re not alone and you’re doing better than what you think you are, and He’s a lot closer than you think He is
- Can you imagine being Joseph at this moment?
 - He has a woman and a brand new little baby boy to take care of and he has no where for them to go.
 - I can’t imagine him NOT feeling at least some sense of failure.
 - I mean, most people would feel like they let God down in some way.
 - He couldn’t get them a room, and this Child who is the King of the Jews is now resting in a feeding box.
- I don’t know, maybe Joseph has rock-solid faith and didn’t waiver the entire time.
- OR maybe he was a normal human being and allowed doubt to creep in just a bit.
 - Maybe he began to think this whole Son of God thing is too much of stretch.

Sunday, December 14, 2025

- Maybe he caught himself examining the baby Jesus' face to see if he looked like anyone he knew.
- Maybe the stress of the situation caused him to doubt if God was looking out for them at all.
- We are human. We doubt. We question our faith at times.
 - That doesn't make you a bad Christian.
 - I've heard it said before that we need more people who care enough about their faith to question it.
- We don't just take whatever is said in a pulpit or book, but we actually embark on this journey of faith for ourselves.
 - A step of faith will never make sense until you take it.
 - Once you take that step of faith, God won't leave you hanging.

- Because whenever doubt creeps in, He finds ways to affirm you and let you know He's there.
- But you have to be willing to receive the message
- **IN THE CHANGE: GOD FINDS CREATIVE WAYS TO RESTORE OUR HOPE**
- Just when Joseph's mind starts to wander into doubt, he hears someone approaching. He thinks to himself, "*Oh, crap. We're gonna get kicked out...*"
 - Just a group of shepherds, they're not gonna tell on them
 - But they probably want a bit of shelter too
 - Joseph meets them at the door...
- The shepherds went on to explain that as they were in their fields watching over their sheep, all of the sudden this huge angel appeared out of nowhere.

- They started freaking out, but the angel told them ***“Don’t be afraid!...I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! ...You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger” -Luke 2:10-12 (NLT)***
- Then they go on to tell them about how hundreds of other angels showed up and started singing praises to God and about their journey to come see the baby.
- If I’m Joseph...BOOM...ALL DOUBT SMASHED
 - ALL HOPE IS RESTORED
 - At least for that moment, there was no questioning that they were within the will of God and This Baby is exactly who God says He is.
- Joseph had to have had a rollercoaster of emotions, BUT AT THAT MOMENT... Doubt was not one of them anymore.
 - Would he ever doubt again? Probably.
 - But for now, he had all of the confirmation that he needed.
- God didn’t leave him wondering and guessing.
 - It had been a really long hard few days, even months, but God was going to show that He was in control and that He had Joseph and Mary in His Hands even when they weren’t feeling it.
- Troubling times are coming, hard times are inevitable.
 - But whenever we walk with God and follow Him, He will always find ways to smash our doubt and remind us of who He is and restore our Hope.
 - There’s no telling what avenue He might use for you.

- I doubt it'll be a group of random shepherds, but whatever it may be, allow yourself to receive the confirmation.
- You can't afford to be a victim to your expectations and get caught up in waiting for what you want to hear.
 - Don't let your pride get in the way of God using a child to speak truth to you.
 - Allow yourself to be comforted by the faith of your spouse
 - Don't become callus to receiving a Word from the Lord in a church service.
 - Don't overlook the random encouraging text from a friend or family member.
- We have to remember to focus more on Him than ourselves and our feelings.
- And when we do, we'll realize that He'll never leave us alone. He'll always have a room for us. He'll always provide even when nothing is what we expected it to be.
- He's never going to be far away.
 - In fact, He will always be right there at our side and we just have to intentionally recognize and remind ourselves that He's there.
 - As in Joseph's case, if he was really looking for the presence of God in his situation, he needed only to look down in that trough.
- THIS IS THE MESSAGE AND MEANING OF CHRISTMAS
 - This is what separates Christianity and the message of Jesus from every other religion on the planet.
- ***"All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call His name Immanuel" (which means, God with us)." -Matthew 1:22-23 (ESV)***

Sunday, December 14, 2025

- Any other religion is all about following some sort of rules, traditions, or customs in order to try and get closer to God.
 - However, the reality is, there was nothing we could ever do in order to get to God.
 - He is too Holy, too Perfect, too Righteous.
 - There is nothing that we could ever do to get to Him, so He came to us!
 - Like the old song says, “I once was lost, and now I’m found!”
- My sin had separated me from Him, but He chose to come in the form of a child destined for a cross that would bridge the gap that sin had created between God and man forever!
 - Because He was born physically, I can be born spiritually.
 - Because He rose physically, I can rise eternally!
- That Baby Boy came and grew and lived a perfect, sinless life, and humbled Himself even

to the point of death on a cross (Phil. 2:8) so that you and I could have "*life and have it abundantly*" (John 10:10) right now and for the rest of eternity.

- All we have to do, is just receive it like a gift on Christmas morning.
 - *All of the Hope, the Character, the Peace, the Joy, the Perspective I could ever want is wrapped up perfectly in the Person of Jesus Christ.*
- As you look back to the manger this holiday season, you can remember that because of that day, you can confidently know that *Hope is here, He is with you, and He is for you. He's closer than you think, and He is so much better than you could ever imagine.*