**God’s Word Saves His People**

Based on [Matthew 1:18-25](http://biblia.com/books/esv/Mt1.18-25)

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The Fourth Sunday in Advent

Pastor Nathan Fuehrer

Today we have the account of how it came to be that Joseph took Mary to be his wife, even though she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. That child is the Word of God made flesh, Jesus Christ, who has come into the world in order to Save his people.

The central message of today’s scripture is that *God’s Word Saves His People.*  (1) God’s Word saves His people because it is knowledge of His Will. **(2) God’s Word saves His people because it is knowledge of Salvation.** And finally, (3) God’s Word saves his people because God’s Word is with His People, in the coming of Jesus Christ.

(1) God’s Word saves His people because it is knowledge of His Will. Joseph was a just man, and as a man of faith that means that Joseph is of a type that when He knows God’s will He *does* it. **But Joseph is in a predicament, because Mary is betrothed to be *his* wife.** God saw fit to make Mary the mother of His, *God’s* own Son. What is a just man to do? God blessed her above all women; set her apart; she’s holy unto the Lord. Does a just man still proceed with marrying the mother of God?

Only priests were allowed inside the holy place of God’s temple, the average person wasn’t clean enough. And the Holy of Holies, where God’s presence was, not even the ordinary priests could go in there or they would be struck dead by the sheer unveiled glory of God. **And now Mary is herself the temple of God, and her womb is the holy of holies.** Joseph is a just man, he would never break God’s command and enter the temple, how much more must he think God would want him not to take the new temple as his wife, and enter into her, a virgin?

Others have argued that at this point Joseph didn’t know that Mary was still a virgin, or that the child was from the Holy Spirit. I respectfully disagree. **But, whether Joseph’s decision to divorce was based on his *uncertainty* about marrying a woman pregnant with God’s Son; or his *uncertainty* of marrying a woman whom he thought committed adultery, Joseph’s problem is the same.** Joseph, a just man, was uncertain what to do. And so he was left to reason for himself what God might want. And he came up with the wrong answer. He resolved to divorce…but God’s will was that he would still take Mary to be his wife.

But God saves his people with knowledge of His will, of what *He* wants. And so when Joseph was left to his own reasoning that led him astray, God sent a messenger with His Word. “**Do not fear to take Mary as your wife because, (on account of the fact that), that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit**.” And once Joseph knew God’s command he, being a just man, “awoke from sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.”

Today, we have God’s full and sufficient revelation—His Word of Holy Scripture. As a just man or woman, there is no hidden or undisclosed you need to know, to be able to do God’s will. All of God’s will for your life is found in the Holy Scriptures. **And, so…anyone who claims ignorance of God’s will, it’s because they don’t know the Scriptures, or because they twist them in their mind to avoid having to obey them.** If that is you, repent and seek knowledge from God’s Word. It is His will for you your life. And just men and women—that is, men and women who trust in the Lord--*want* to know what their Lord wants them to do.

Joseph was a just man, not because he obeys Gods commands, but because he had faith, and faith trusts that God’s will is always best. The Scripture today says that after the angel told him what to do--that it was God’s will for him to take Mary as his wife--that was that. When Joseph knew the will of the Lord, he woke up and obeyed it. That’s what just men do. It’s no wonder that the scriptures tell us to stay awake, to remain vigilant…we have no need for dreams, we have the scriptures, let them instruct us in the knowledge that leads to salvation, that we may obey our God as our faith is eager to do.

(2) God’s Word saves His people because it is knowledge of Salvation. The angel said to Joseph, “**Mary will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins**.” The name “Jesus” means “The Lord Saves.” **The central event and purpose for which God sent his Son into the world, is to offer his own life to make up for our sins. And that central act is what makes just men.**

The book of Revelation teaches that Jesus sacrifice on the cross was effective before the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8). The forgiveness won in his death, covered the sins of all people even before they sinned, even before they were created. **Jesus propitiatory death on the cross pours its benefits upon all sinners, from Adam, to Abraham, to Moses, to David, to you…and to all generations until the end of the age.** But he still had to come and do it…and he did it 2000 years ago, came forth from the flesh of Mary to save His people from their sins. And that sacrifice is what made people like Joseph just men, righteous men…men who are given faith to trust God’s will is always best and actually listen to God’s command. It’s profound that this child--who was virginally conceived in his future wife’s womb by the Holy Spirit—would grow up to be the man who is responsible for his justification before he was even born! “**Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways**” (Romans 11:33).

And finally, (3) God’s Word saves his people because God’s Word is with His People. Jesus is the Word of God made flesh (John 1:14). This is a mystery. How can the speech, the declaration, the commands, the words of God, the promises, the teachings of be itself a person? And not just any person, the very Son of God who takes on flesh and becomes one of us? We don’t know how that can be. We only know that is the way it is, because God has said so. “And the word became flesh, and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). The Word of God--that is the declaration “let there be light”--let my people go, let it be done for you as you have believed,” the authoritative speech of God is a person, and he became flesh. And he is Immanuel, God with us. He has always been with his people, but now he is among all people, all nations, tribes and tongues. Not all believe him, but all have heard him, and some of all have salvation. And he is with them and in their midst, because they are the one catholic and apostolic church wherever two or three are gathered in his Name.

Jesus promises, “Wherever two or three are gathered together in my Name, there I am among them” (Matt 18:20). There I am *with* them. Why is this account of Joseph and the dream so important?...“**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).**” Those who gather in His name are “just” men and women, already righteous by faith. And they come together to ask for forgiveness of their sins, and Christ who is with them forgives them. They come together to learn the will of God and keep his word in their ears, in their hearts, on their lips, and in their deeds.

It all begins and ends with God’s Word. Jesus says, “**The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life**” (John 6:63). He says, “**If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples.” Scripture says, “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome”** (1 John 5:3). Not burdensome indeed…they set us free! Free to do what He wants; free to worship him without fear.

Joseph, a just man, was eager to know what God wanted him to do, and when he heard God’s word he obeyed. That’s what true faith does, it lives on every word that comes from the mouth of God, and that word became flesh and is with us, so we need never be afraid, or confused. If you find yourself not wanting to do God’s Will--to obey his commandments—repent and be forgiven, and remember what you already know, that obeying Him is always works out for the best, because the will of God is always good.

Today we have heard how it came to be that Joseph took Mary to be his wife, even though she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit, and we have heard that ***that*** child is the Word of God made flesh, Jesus Christ, who has come into the world in order to Save his people. The central message of all this is that *God’s Word Saves His People.*  (1) God’s Word saves His people because it is knowledge of His Will. **(2) because it is knowledge of Salvation.** And finally, (3) because God’s Word is with His People, now and until the end of the age in the coming of Jesus Christ. You need never be afraid or estranged, God’s Word is with you.