

DON'T MISS OUT ON CHRISTMAS
FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

MATT 1:18-25
DEC 18, 2016

¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. ²⁰ But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: ²³ "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us). ²⁴ When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, ²⁵ but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

It used to be that when baby was born, husband was expected to be waiting in next room, sort of left out.

Here is husband who is left out even of baby's conception. As result, he was almost left out of even more.

He almost wasn't there at all when this baby was born.

He almost missed out on that first Christmas.

There are people today who end up missing out on Christmas.

Maybe they have kind of job that has to work every day.

Maybe they are in the hospital or in prison.

Maybe they are too far away to get home for holiday.

or maybe they just aren't getting along with rest of family.

Maybe they are too poor to afford any decorations or gifts.

But actually, none of these things necessarily mean

one is left out of what Christmas is really all about

worse yet are those who get together with whole family

to enjoy lots of festivities and gifts

but skip Christmas worship and don't even notice

they have totally missed out on Christmas

because they are missing Christ.

Text encourages us, as angel encourages Joseph,

DON'T MISS OUT ON A PLACE IN THE HOLY FAMILY
DON'T MISS OUT ON THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT
DON'T MISS OUT ON GOD'S GIFT OF GRACE

DON'T MISS OUT ON A PLACE IN THE HOLY FAMILY

¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.

The coming of the Messiah, the savior, was something Jewish families had been looking forward to for centuries, each one likely hoping it would be their family into which he was born.

But just as it finally happens, there is a problem.

Luther comments it is this way with Christian life.

As soon as Christ comes to us, the cross comes too.

Suffering is always part of the recipe.

When you picture holy family, it is usually Mary holding Jesus and Joseph standing next to her looking on.

But sometimes Joseph left out of picture, just Mary & Jesus.

He could have been left out of picture all together, leaving because of disappointment & sadness.

He dreamed of getting married but it turned to nightmare.

It seemed he was not needed as father or husband, because someone else had taken his place.

He could have been ashamed. Nazareth was small town where everyone knew everything.

Did Mary tell him right away or was it a busybody who noticed the baby bump first.

It could look like he had been scorned, or on other hand he himself had not waited until the right time.

He could have been angry. He had right to call for her to be stoned for committing adultery.

These problems come to families today.

disappointment & sadness, shame & anger, hurt & fear.

Sometimes is another's fault, sometimes ours, usually both.

Either way, there is brokenness.

Even when we want to do right thing, we need God's help.

God helps Joseph. He sends him an angelic message.

There is still a place for him in this family as a husband and also as a father, He will provide for & protect both the mother and her child.

He also will be one who carries Jesus along.

We too have a place in God's holy family
Jesus says who is my mother & brother & sisters?
It is those who do my Father's will.
God's holy family is the church where we are to be one family.
Although, if he wanted to, God could bring Christ
to whole world without any help from us,
He graciously gives us a role and responsibility.
We also are to hold Christ & carry him to others.
God calls us to be together & work together.
But same things that tear apart families tear apart church,
anger, shame, disappointment separate people
and cause them loudly or quietly go away.
But doesn't want us to miss out on being in his holy family.
How does this happen? By the work of the Holy Spirit.

DON'T MISS OUT ON THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT

²⁰ But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

It was Holy Spirit working in Mary that gave her Christ child,
causing the Word of God to become flesh
and making her part of his holy family.
It was same Holy Spirit who works with God's word
in Joseph's heart too, calling him to be part of the family.
His nightmare of shattered dreams is being turned into
something beyond his wildest dreams.
which he will miss out on if he doesn't believe this message.
Holy Spirit also calls us to part of God's family
by sending us Gods' word through his messengers
- that is what the word angel means -
which is no less believable than if spoken by heavenly angel.
Jesus says those who don't believe Moses & prophets
wouldn't believe even if someone rose from dead.
The Holy Spirit opens the eyes of sleepy people.
Surely Mary's eyes were opened wide in surprise.
God continues doing what is surprising & unexpected.
Now Joseph's eyes are opened to the truth,
including fact he was about to do something wrong.
Mary had seemed unfaithful but it was he who needed faith.

Holy Spirit also opens our eyes to the fact
that we need a savior from our sins.
Traditionally it was father who gave the child his name.
God gives Joseph this role, he says you will name him.
You will call him Jesus, which means "God saves us."
By calling Jesus "savior", Joseph calls him his savior too
and this is how he is part of God's family.
God invites us to call Jesus savior, our savior.
Holy Spirit is at work in our hearts, like Mary,
to gives new birth to a new man in us.
Spirit at work in our hearts also calls us to call to God
in prayer, "Abba, Father."
All of this work of the Holy Spirit is to bring us to faith
because it is only through faith in Jesus
that we receive the benefit of all his work.

DON'T MISS OUT ON GOD'S GIFT OF GRACE

²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: ²³ "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us). ²⁴ When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, ²⁵ but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

Unlike unlike Ahaz to whom this prophecy was first given,
& unlike Zechariah, who didn't believe at first when angel
told him he would be father of John the Baptist,
Joseph believes, and so he receives comfort & hope
and, I would think, great joy,
and also wisdom and courage to do what is right.
He finalizes marriage, thereby protecting Mary's reputation
by sacrificing his reputation as a righteous man,
saying by his action, I am the father of this child.
This is what it takes to bind up families today
that are broken by hurt, disappointment, shame
It is treating others as if they have not done wrong
by forgiving them, which means being willing
to pay price ourselves for what they have done.
What makes this possible is that this is what Jesus does for us.
He is Immanuel, God who has come to be with us,
not turn away from us who have been unfaithful.

He becomes part of our human family in spite of all
the shameful, hurtful, disappointing, disgusting
things we have done and continue to do to each other.
This is the cause of the pain and hurt in our lives
And as soon as we come to faith our eyes are opened
to how bad it is and it can hurt all the more
like waking up with a hangover.
But it is still better to be awake with faith to see
that the coming of Jesus' cross into our lives is good.
Jesus comes to save us from our dilemmas and difficulties,
not by taking them all away at once
but by being with us in them, taking them on himself,
and then taking them to the cross, where he pays for them
so that we can be fully forgiven.
Like a husband joined to a wife, his suffering pains us,
but it ends in joy, like the birth of a child
because it ends in his resurrection and so new life for us.
The difficulties were not over for Joseph and Mary
they had even more pains because they were Jesus' family
but they had comfort of God himself being with them,
loving, guiding and protecting them.
We have the same in our lives until we fall asleep
but wake up with faith, like Joseph,
to see all God's promises fulfilled.
and see that we have missed out on nothing.

DON'T MISS OUT ON A PLACE IN THE HOLY FAMILY
God has a role for us in calling Jesus our savior when we
DON'T MISS OUT ON THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT
who's word opens our eyes and gives us faith so we
DON'T MISS OUT ON GOD'S GIFT OF GRACE
which Jesus has come to give us by being
Immanuel, God with us now and always.