



Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace,

planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: “Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,” which means, “God is with us.” When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

- Matthew 1.18-25

I am usually touched to the heart by the beauty and grandeur of the nativity story as Luke tells it. There we have the search for a place to stay, a humble birth, angels announcing the good news to shepherds, and those same shepherds coming to worship. It's a big, beautiful, familiar story to all of us, and in my mind it makes everything just “feel like” Christmas. But this year, with all the adaptations and sudden changes we've all had to make again and again and again, my spirit yearns for something else: a gentler, quieter, simpler story.

I find that simpler story in Matthew's nativity. In contrast with the bold story of Luke, Matthew has no bold, direct visitation of an angel in the light of day, but rather an appearance of the Lord in a dream to Joseph. I suspect we have all had those dreams at night that seemed so very real in the moment that upon awakening, at least for a few brief seconds, we could not tell the difference between a night vision and reality. Maybe it was the same for Joseph. Maybe in all the strange and

difficult changes and adaptations to the life he thought he was going to have were no less for him 2000 years ago than for us this year.

This story touches me in a way this year like never before. As I already said, I am drawn to its gentler, quieter, simpler narration. And I notice now, even more perhaps than ever before, the humble obedience and resolve with which Joseph responds to his dream encounter with the Lord; the faithfulness embodied in the simple phrase: “and he named him Jesus.”

I pray that in this strangely disrupted year you may rediscover the same humble obedience and resolve, the same faithfulness embodied in your embrace of the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus. May you discover anew: light in your darkness, comfort in your pain, and hope in your sorrow as we celebrate in our homes and our hearts the Light, Love, and Word embodied in the birth of a child named Jesus.

By His Grace,

Pastor Jom

Please be aware that our 1 and only Christmas Eve Service is now an online only service on Facebook Live at 7:00 PM. You can join us at 7:00 PM on the Church’s Facebook page for the live broadcast, or, as always, you may access the recording of the service immediately after it ends through our Church’s website or through our Church’s Facebook page.

Also, on New Year’s Eve at 7:00 PM, we will broadcast on Facebook Live a Watchnight Service. This will be an opportunity for us to name all that we want to say goodbye to with respect to 2020 and to name our hopes and trust in God for the New Year 2021. This too will be available as a recording on both the Church’s website and through our Church’s Facebook page immediately after the service ends. This will not be a long service, but approximately 30 minutes. Please join us!

And one final reminder: If you are planning to participate in our Christmas Eve service online, we have candles and communion elements prepared for you and which may be picked up at the church at your convenience, or if you need them to be delivered, just call (814-653-8593) or email (pastor@fumcreynoldsville.org) the church and we will bring them to you!