

Sermon for December 20, 2020, “Joseph's love story”

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 1:18-25

¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. ²⁰ 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. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” ²² All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: ²³ “Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel, “which means, “God is with us.” ²⁴ When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, ²⁵ but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

Introduction: Love Story

Today is the fourth Sunday of Advent and soon Christmas will follow, which celebrates the birth of baby Jesus. Christmas excites not only Christians, but many people. Especially, it makes the hearts of young people in love more exciting. Actually, Christmas is Jesus' birthday, but it is a special day for me for another reason.

For me, Christmas is the day I had a first date with my wife. I heard about my wife through the introduction of my former seminary classmate who likes me. I had long distance relationship with my wife while I was studying for a master's course in church history at the Graduate School of Theology in Yonsei University and also working for a church in Incheon. That city is located in a suburb of Seoul, the capital of South Korea. My wife was working as a high school teacher in Daejeon, a city in the central region of South Korea. For a month my wife and I only communicated by phone; we had not met in person yet! She and I had a good feeling for each other because we were able to comfortably exchange pictures and communicate well with each other.

So I decided to meet my wife in person, and she was happy to agree. My wife and I met in Insadong, a traditional street located in the center of Seoul. We had a lot of conversation, spent time shopping, eating and drinking tea from morning to evening on Christmas Day. By the way, we learned from each other later that both my wife and I were disappointed with our first meeting. Both my wife and I were expecting a lot before the first date; the joy of the first meeting didn't meet these high expectations.

However, after that, my wife and I got to know each other little by little, and we learned about the care and love we had for each other. And it led to marriage. If I think about my love story now, it would have been difficult for us to marry and form a family if it was not for my wife's broad heart and the faith the Lord gave to us. I have learned one thing through my relationship with my wife: It is that love begins with consideration for each other.

I find the protagonist in the Bible more amazing and wonderful than the love story I've experienced. He is Joseph. Joseph in the Bible is a person with a warm, righteous heart who cares for others. Today's text, Matthew 1:18, reveals that Mary was conceived by the Holy Spirit before being engaged to Joseph and living with him. At that time, if it was found that an engaged woman was pregnant, the person who

was to be her husband would write a divorce letter and divorce her. Otherwise, according to the law, if she was accused of adultery, she would be stoned to death.

In fact, it was difficult for Joseph to accept that Mary conceived by the Holy Spirit. If Joseph did not believe that Mary conceived by the Holy Spirit and instead sued her under the law, Mary would have died for adultery. Joseph's care and love for Mary played a crucial role in the birth of Jesus on this earth.

I hope this Christmas season will be a time to think about how love can be put into practice in our lives through the text of the Bible that describes the birth of Jesus, who came with love, especially through Joseph's caring heart for Mary. The love of Jesus that the Bible conveys to us does not end with words, but rather should bear fruit in our lives. First, let's look at today's text.

Body: The birth of Jesus the Messiah

1. God came as a human body for the salvation of the world.

Today's text **Matthew 1:18** says, **“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 of the Holy Spirit.”** God came to this earth as a human body to save the world. And for this, God chose Mary.

In fact, God's choice of Mary is a shame for her. It represents a break with Joseph, and leaves her vulnerable to be stoned for adultery.

But God had to choose someone's body in order for his son to come into the world as a human being, God had to submit his son to human sins in order for our Lord to come into the world as a human being. So God chose Mary to conceive the baby Jesus by the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 1:19 says, **“And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.”**

However, Joseph was the biggest obstacle to God's coming to this earth as a human body. It is not easy for Joseph to understand that Mary conceived the baby Jesus by Holy Spirit. He was a very righteous man, and he tried to divorce Mary. At that time, a messenger from the Lord intervenes.

2. The story of God's love for humans

Today's text **Matthew 1:20** says, **“Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.”** This message from an angel appeared in Joseph's dream. The Lord's messenger said to Joseph that Mary did not commit adultery with another man, but God conceived a child through the Holy Spirit to come into the world as a human body.

And **Matthew 1:21** says, **“She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”** The Lord's messenger says that the child's name is 'Jesus', which means 'the one who will save his people from their sins'. God had no choice but to choose Mary's body to save man from sin. The messenger of the Lord quotes **Isaiah 7:14 from the Old Testament**. **“Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel (which means, God with us)”**

In Isaiah chapter 7, it is recorded that a virgin conceives and gives birth to a son. The messenger of God says that the virgin is Mary. The Book of Isaiah also says that the reason Mary will conceive a child

is because God wants to be with humans. In other words, the event in which Mary conceived a baby is God's love for man, God came in man's body to be with man and to save man from sin.

Now Joseph plays a decisive role in the work of God's fulfillment of salvation for humans.

3. Joseph's love story for Mary

When Joseph heard the message of the angel, he changed his mind. Joseph, who quietly tried to divorce Mary, changes his mind through the words of an angel of God. **Matthew 1:24-25 says, "When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took his wife, but knew her not until she had borne a son; and he called his name Jesus."**

Joseph changed his mind about divorcing Mary and did as the angel ordered. Joseph brought Mary to his home. And he did not sleep with Mary until the birth of the baby Jesus, and he kept and cared for Mary.

Touched by the story of God's love for humans, Joseph begins to write his own love story for Mary. Joseph and Mary comforted, encouraged, and embraced each other who were hurt by the wrongful gaze and words of the people. The reason this was possible is their understanding, consideration, and love for each other.

The fulfillment of God's love was not accomplished without any dedication and sacrifice. The fulfillment of God's love was through Mary, Joseph and many others who were invited to fulfill God's love. It is also the result of God's love for man and of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross.

Conclusion: Merry Christmas

Now, let's summarize today's sermon. The birth of Jesus was accomplished through the dedication of Joseph and Mary in a trusting, caring relationship, and obeying each other. We wish to celebrate Jesus' coming to this earth during the Advent season, and we must rethink the meaning of love through the image of Joseph.

Love brings amazing blessings to us and to the world. However, we must not forget how much devotion and consideration of others were made in order for that love to bear fruit. So, the way we can repay Jesus' love for the cross is through our life to achieve consideration and inclusion of others. May we celebrate Christmas in that way. Dear brothers and sisters, I wish you a happy Christmas.