

Message #1078
Rev. Jack C. Longley

"HOW DO YOU SPELL LOVE?"
{Matthew 1: 18-25 and John 3: 16}
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INTRODUCTION

Joseph's love for Mary is a subject that is often overlooked during the Advent-Christmas Season.

...we concentrate upon the angel, Gabriel's, appearance to Mary
...the immaculate conception
...Mary's subjection to the will of God
...the primary focus is upon her
...so little is said about Joseph
...we know he was a carpenter
...we also know he was a descendant of King David

Joseph was facing an incredible dilemma. Try to imagine his reaction when Mary relayed to him the visitation from Gabriel.

...they were engaged to be married
...her story must've seemed preposterous
...think of it--how many of you would have believed this story?

It is obvious that he cared for her because being unfaithful to one's finance' was taken very seriously and punishable by death.

But, instead of making a public spectacle of her--and embarrassment upon himself--he decided "to break the engagement quietly, so as not to disgrace her publicly!"

MESSAGE TO JOSEPH--"DON'T BE AFRAID..."

While sleeping an angel appears to him and instructs him...

"Do not be afraid to go ahead with your marriage to Mary. For the child within her HAS been conceived by the Holy Spirit. She will have a son, and YOU ARE TO NAME HIM JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins."

...like Mary, Joseph, too, had lived in the anticipation of the birth of a coming Messiah

...the angel quotes from the Prophet Isaiah...

"Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and He will be called Immanuel {God is with us!}"

...Mary responded affirmatively to Gabriel's message

...Now, Joseph responds in a similar manner when he receives this angelic message

"When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord commanded. He brought Mary home to be his wife, but she remained a virgin until her son was born. And Joseph named Him Jesus!"

HOW DO YOU SPELL LOVE?

Maybe you know the story of Isidor and Ida Straus. They were passengers on the ill-fated maiden voyage of the Titanic. Ida refused at least two opportunities to escape the sinking ship, choosing instead to die with her husband of 41 years, a well-known philanthropist who owned Macy's Department Store. As the Titanic went down, Ida resisted the pleas of officers to climb into the lifeboat, insisting that her maid take her place. She was finally cajoled into boarding the second-to-last lifeboat, only to climb out again as Isidor stepped away. Last seen clasped in an embrace, Ida and Isidor were memorialized in a Bronx cemetery with a monument inscribed: "Many

waters cannot quench love,
neither can the floods drown it!"

Now, contrast the story of Isidor and Ida Straus with that of the young man who was very much in love with the pretty girl across town. He was always at her house because he said he wanted to be with her. One night he even got on his knees and waxed eloquent. "Your eyes are so tender and loving, your arms so inviting, your charms so wonderful, that there is nothing in the world that would keep me away from your side. I'd climb the highest mountain, swim the wildest sea, cross the Grand Canyon to be with you." Then as he was getting ready to go home, he looked at the sky and said, "I'll be over to see you again tomorrow night if it doesn't rain!"

The Bible tells us that we love...because God first loved us!

...Joseph was devout in his faith

...He lived in expectation of the promised One

...He obviously felt loved by God--so much that

God would intervene and instruct him concerning his relationship with Mary His love for Mary grew because He felt the assurance of God's love...and it is that love that casts out fear; therefore, he was no longer afraid!

...he was confident of God's love for him

...therefore, he could love Mary because he knew that God loved her too

GOD'S LOVE

God's love is spelled out for us throughout the Scripture; however, two passages that state it well are written by John...

"God showed how much He loved us by sending His only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through Him. This is REAL love. It is NOT that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins." {1 John 4:9-10}

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life. God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world but to save it!" {John 3:16}

The same message given to Joseph--"Name Him Jesus for He will save His people from their sins!"

That's how you spell love!

The only way anyone ever learns to love is by being loved! This is the central message of the Gospel.

...we love in response to God's love

...as we realize we are loved, we are then capable of having a healthy self love...and loving others as we should!

THAT'S WHY GOD SENT HIS ONLY SON, JESUS--TO SHOW US HOW MUCH HE LOVES US!

Jesus was the one person who could show us what God was like! Jesus told His disciples: "Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father!" {John 14:9}

God sent His one and ONLY son!

...God took the initiative

...He became like us to communicate to us!

He who had been with God throughout all eternity...who was without beginning took on human form to show us God's love...

"In the beginning the Word already existed. He was with God, and He WAS God. He was in the beginning with God...so, the Word became human and lived here on earth among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen His glory, the glory of the only Son of the Father." {John 1:1-2a; 14}

...note--God did this to show us love

...to extend mercy

...to offer us grace

...to save us from our sins!

God did this to offer us eternal life!

...that's why Jesus came!

...to give hope to the hopeless

"God, being rich in mercy, BECAUSE OF HIS GREAT LOVE with which HE LOVED US, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ!"

{Ephesians 2:4-5}

Think about this: God didn't send Jesus to us because we loved Him and cared about His Son; He sent His Son because we didn't love Him! You want to spell LOVE--there, you have it! He sent His Son to say: "I love you! I love you! I love you! I love you so much that I'll demonstrate that love for you!"

Look at the babe in the manger...and you'll also see a shadow of a cross! Jesus' death on the cross was God's ultimate expression of love! God says: "I love you! I love you! I forgive ALL your sins--that's what the cross did for you...and, I want you to spend all eternity with Me!"

CONCLUSION

"What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul.

What wondrous love is this, O my soul!"

Have you experienced God's love in your life?

Have you received His forgiveness offered because of His mercy and grace?

You must make your choice whether to receive this or not!

Friend, you are loved....by God!