

December 14, 2023  
12<sup>th</sup> Day of Advent

**Matthew 1:18-25**  
**The Birth of Jesus the Messiah**

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

These verses are the beginning of Matthew's account of the Birth of the Messiah. It is a familiar story to us; one where Joseph has a plan to deal with the news of Mary's unexpected pregnancy until an angel appears to him in a dream and plans change.

What strikes me about this passage is that Joseph woke up and did exactly as the angel commanded. He didn't have to. His own plan was reasonable and even generous. What the angel said would have sounded preposterous to many - but Joseph believed.

God's plan for saving all of us depended on two humans believing incredible messages and doing as God asked despite the difficulty and likely social censure. Many would bail out if given this responsibility – would we?

How often do we shy away from difficult things that God may be calling us to do? Many times, these requests are a lot easier than Joseph's call. Perhaps we are called to ask someone to church or to share something about our faith to friends or acquaintances. We can rest assured that God will find a way if we are unwilling and he will love us anyway. Nevertheless, let us strive to faithfully listen and obey. Remember the ELCA yearly fall challenge: God's Work, Our Hands. This is our continual call as Christians, not just a once-a-year activity.

Prayer: Dear Lord thank you for loving me and sending Jesus to save me. Give me discernment, courage and strength to hear and follow what you are calling me to do. Amen

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