

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRISTMAS

Matthew 1:18-25

The Christmas story is so *familiar* to us that *year after year* we often rush right through it without *looking deeper* at *truths* from which we can *learn* and *grow*. Look at a *major character quality* in the Christmas story that we *often overlook*...one of **RIGHTEOUSNESS**. A quality usually *used* and *understood* to describe the *character* of Christ...the *character* that allowed Jesus to *raise from the dead*...the *character* that has been *imputed* to believers. Jesus...

*“While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his (Pilate) wife sent him a message, saying, ‘Have nothing to do with that **righteous** Man; for last night I suffered greatly in a dream because of Him’.”*

~Matthew 27:19

But it’s also explicitly used to *describe* other *individuals* in Scripture:

Zacharias and Elizabeth...the parents of **John the Baptist**.

*“They were **both righteous** in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord.”*

~Luke 1:6

John the Baptist...

*“For Herod was afraid of John, knowing that he was a **righteous** and holy man, and he kept him safe. And when he heard him, he was very perplexed; but he used to enjoy listening to him.”*

~Mark 6:20

Joseph...the earthly father of **Jesus**.

*“And Joseph her husband, being a **righteous** man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly.”*

~Matthew 1:19

Simeon...

*“And there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was **righteous** and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him.”*

~Luke 2:25

Joseph of Arimathea...

*“And a man named Joseph, who was a member of the Council, a good and **righteous** man...”*

~Luke 23:50

Righteousness...is the doctrine (truth...understanding) that *God always acts in accordance with what is right...and that He is Himself the final standard of what is right.*

So, when Scripture speaks of someone being *righteous*, it’s speaking of a person that *does what is right in the eyes of God*.

Specifically, look at **Joseph**...the *earthly father* of Jesus. This is a man that played a *pivotal role in history*. His role is, *short but significant*...and often *overlooked*. But the *faith* of this man was *enormous* and should serve to teach us some valued lessons.

Three qualities that express righteousness: Using the life of **Joseph** as an example.

I. HEAR GOD:

Joseph was placed in an *incredibly awkward situation* when he discovered that his fiancée was *pregnant*. Here’s a man that is probably in his *late teens* or *early 20’s*... finding out that his future wife is *pregnant*...and clearly not from anything he had to do with it. **Matthew 1:19** tells us that **Joseph** “...*being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly*”. Basically, he was going to *divorce her*.

It's no surprise that God would pick a *righteous man* to be the *earthly father* of His Son. Even though He had His choice of *any man in history*...He chose **Joseph**.

Faced with an *incredibly moral* and *personal crisis*... **Joseph had a plan** that would *honor the one he loved*... and at the same time, *fulfill his responsibility* as a *God-fearing, righteous man*.

But *his plan* wasn't *God's plan*. What *he saw* was through the *eyes of man*. What God *had purpose* was *designed for eternity*. God *spoke* and **Joseph heard!** A true *righteous man* is always in a position to *hear God*...regardless of his *situation* or *circumstances*.

"...Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly. But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins'."

~Matthew 1:19-21

Always remember...When God speaks...what you do next shows what you truly (actually) believe about God.

II. TRUST GOD...Faith:

A true *righteous man* will live by *faith* and *not by sight*. They will *trust* God! They will take God at His word!

"Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him."

~Hebrews 11:6

"In God, whose word I praise, in God I have put my trust; I shall not be afraid..."

~Psalm 56:4

Hebrews 11 is filled with people that *didn't understand* what was happening in their lives...but they all *trusted* God...just like **Joseph** did. They all *heard* God...and *trusted* God. They were all *people of faith*.

Noah	Abraham	Sarah	Isaac	David
Jacob	Joseph	Moses	Rahab	Samuel
Barak	Samson	Jephthah	Gideon	The Prophets

"Who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight...And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect."

~Hebrews 11:33-34, 39-40

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight."

~Proverbs 3:5-6

III. OBEY GOD:

After the angel appeared to **Joseph** in a *dream* telling him to take **Mary** as his wife, he didn't pause to *question* God ...he didn't *blame* God for the *situation* that he found himself in...with a fiancée *pregnant out of wedlock*. He didn't *contemplate* or *fabricate* some incredible story trying to *justify* himself.

He *didn't hesitate*. He *heard* God...he *trusted* God...he *obeyed* God. The Scriptures says...

“And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took Mary as his wife, but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus.”

~Matthew 1:24-25

What *obedience*! No wonder the Bible says he was a *righteous* man!

What's interesting...with **Joseph** being a *righteous* man...we only see him *three* more times in Scripture.

- The first was when *he was told in a dream to take his family to Egypt* to protect them from **King Herod** (**Matthew 2:13-14**). He immediately did what he was told.
- In yet another dream, *an angel told him that it was safe to return and to take the Child back to Israel* (**Matthew 2:19-23**). Again, he *didn't question* God about whether it really was *safe to return*, he simply *did as he was told*... immediately.
- The only other time **Joseph** is mentioned is when Jesus was *12 years old* and they went to *Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover* (**Luke 2:41-49**). *When they left for home, Jesus stayed behind in the temple*. And when they discovered that Jesus *wasn't with them*, he and **Mary** rushed back to find Jesus...just as any parent would do.

We don't see **Joseph** again in Scripture. He is clearly gone by the time Jesus' ministry begins. And yet in these brief glimpses we see a man who was called *righteous* by the Lord. We see a man who put his *faith* into action, responding *immediately* and *obediently* when the Lord *spoke*

through the angels. And we see a *loving* and *caring* earthly father of the Lord Jesus that *trusted* God.

LESSONS WE CAN LEARN:

- The Christmas story is a story of **FAITH**, **REDEMPTION**, and **LOVE**. It's about the *purposed plan* of the One who would send His only Son to earth...not as a king...not born in the comfort of a home...not as a conquering hero...but as a little baby born in a stable.
- Remember one of the major character qualities in the Christmas story that is often overlooked...**RIGHTEOUS-NESS**. The quality used to describe the character of Christ...the quality that He imputed to believers...the quality that allowed Him to be resurrected...the quality that brought victory over sin and death. May we too be found to be *faithful, obedient, loving*, and *righteous* by our God...the One who loves us beyond measure this Christmas.
- **POSITIONALLY**, as a believer you are righteous. Put that righteousness into **PRACTICE** and become light in the midst of a world filled with darkness.

Let us not just remember but seek to emulate this man who is so often forgotten in the Christmas story...**Joseph...a righteous man!**