

Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.” (Matt. 1:24) We also know he went to Bethlehem, and then to Egypt and also back again to Nazareth.

That reminds me of Peter when he saw Jesus transfigured on the Mountain. His response was to seek to build three booths to capture the moment. Thank God he didn't otherwise he would have been trapped in that moment, and he would have missed all the amazing things Jesus went on to do. Do I ever seek to hold onto the past at the expense of the future?

What changes is Jesus calling us to make, as individuals and as a community?

Who are the new people Jesus is placing on your heart that you might introduce him to them? What new and exciting ways will Jesus use to get you into contact with new people, that you might introduce them to him.

Joseph didn't stay put, he got up and moved, he changed as he heard from God, not letting his fears master him, but moved, changed, and went to different places, some he'd never been to before.

What is holding onto you so tightly that it won't let you change, grow and develop to be all that Jesus was born to birth in you?

Let us pray. Jesus we want to hear you, open our ears our eyes, our understanding that we hear you.

Especially let us hear of your love for us, your perfect love so that all our fears are overcome, especially those which inhibit us from introducing you to others. Jesus empower us by the Holy Spirit that we not only hear, but that we get up and go, that we embrace the changes you bring, so we might be growing into the people you were born to birth in us. Set us free from finding our security in the familiar, may we always find our security in you. Jesus help us at all times to remain totally focused on you, on getting to know you better, being open and honest with you, and with introducing you to all the people we know, so they too can hear you speaking into their lives and get to know you personally. Amen.

Christ Church Lutheran

Worship Times - 9.00am & 10.45am
Pastor: Tim 0427326553



Reaching Out with the Love of Jesus that All my Know, Worship & Grow in Christ

19 December 2010

Now is the time to Harvest—GO

Advent 4—Matthew 1:18-25



Christmas always strikes me as a time of introduction; God introducing himself. 'Hi, call me Jesus'. Once someone has introduced themselves you have the wonderful opportunity to get to know them. And Christmas tells me that God is passionate, even excited about us getting to know him, the real God behind all the hype.

So what can we learn from Joseph today when it comes to introducing God to other people? Joseph did three actions.

The first, one which I find easy to skip over, was to hear from God. Did you notice with Joseph that his action after hearing from God was the opposite to what he had decided to do?

As I read the bible it's amazing how often God turns the world upside down. He does the opposite of what I would have thought. If you want to be first, you need to be last. Jesus asked his disciples; who's the greatest the one who sits at table or the one who serves. The implied thought being the one who sits at the table. And then Jesus says; but I'm one who serves.

So here God's plan is different to the direction our logic and reason would seem to suggest is the way to go. Joseph was going to divorce Mary, all be it as gently as he could. If Joseph hadn't heard from God. If Joseph wasn't open to hearing from God how different things would have

been. But Joseph heard, and took Mary as his wife, and refrained from sex till the baby was born. Now that really goes against what our natural logic would suggest!

Which leads me to ask myself the question; am I open to hearing from God? I want to be. So that's a good start. I regularly read the bible, not as an educational tool, but to be open to hear from God. I know that here God has spoken clearly, and is making himself available. I want to hear from God. I also keep challenging, testing my assumptions so that I don't become deaf to God.

That's the tragic figure of the Pharisees. Their assumptions wouldn't let them hear from God, even when he was

standing there face to face with them. He, God, didn't fit their assumptions, so he was wrong!

Warning signs for me. I need to admit that at times I get it wrong. Not only wrong, but sometimes I've got the truth, but not the whole story. There's more.

I need to be open to hearing from God, with the desire to hear, also actively seeking him, reading his word, and with a humble attitude.

What are some of the things Jesus has said? He has ALL power and authority – that's a lot – therefore 'GO'. Go and make disciples, baptising and teaching them. Jesus also said; "As the Father has sent me, I'm sending you." (Jn 20:21). And then he filled them/us with the Holy Spirit.

What is Jesus saying to you?

The second action that Joseph took was to overcome his fears. Actually the angel helped Joseph overcome his fears. I love hearing the angel say; 'Don't be afraid'. Don't be afraid, take courage, God is with you. In Jesus, that is God's message to you.

I'm called to introduce Jesus, not explain him.

Don't be afraid, take courage, I'm with you.

What fears did Joseph face? The fear of the unknown. He certainly didn't know what was going on. His world was thrown into total confusion. The girl he was pledged to be married to was pregnant! Joseph has the fear of an uncertain future. He has the fear of social shame, maybe even rejection. After all who is going to believe

him when he says, God did it? Nobody.

How do you seek to overcome your fears?

This always reminds me of 1 John; "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear." (1 Jn 4:18) I seek to overcome fear by trusting Jesus' love for

me. I know when I was baptised, in Jesus, the Father said; 'You are my son, whom I love, with you I am well pleased'. I'm not

loved because I'm perfect, but because God the Father is perfect, and he never goes back on his word. I seek to overcome my fears by keeping my focus on Jesus and not seeking to be perfect, but to live in a close loving relationship.

What fears are there when it comes to introducing Jesus to others? The fear of inadequacy. I need to know more, or others know much, much

more than I do. Have you noticed that when you introduce a person all you need to know at the start is their name? Then the conversation takes off and they are able to reveal themselves. That's an interesting thought; I'm to introduce Jesus, not explain him.

Like Joseph we also have the fear of the unknown. What will people say, thing, do. Like Joseph we also have our social fears, as well as the fear of insecurity we're all born with. What if my friends reject me, laugh at me, all these thoughts play on my sense of insecurity and work on stopping me from acting.

If Joseph has given in to his fears he wouldn't have lived life. Thank God we have Jesus to give us the strength to overcome our fears growing into mature people who can live life in all Jesus' fullness.

What fears are restricting you, or preventing you from enjoying the fullness of Jesus' love for you? Jesus said; "Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." (Matt. 18:18)

What is holding onto you so tightly it won't let you change?

Did you hear that?

What powerful words. Don't wrestle with your fears, in Jesus' name bind them up, and then in Jesus' name let loose his character qualities. In Jesus' name step forward confidently, focused on Jesus, doing his will, which is the best way to go. Do you notice that when you wrestle with your fears, that's what you're focused on. So you're only feeding them. Bind them up in Jesus'

name, and invite him to let loose his loving character in your life. When you're focused on Jesus that's where you'll move to, that's what you'll become. The third action that Joseph did was that he changed. He allowed what he heard from God through the angel to change him, to

change his situation, to change the whole direction of his life.

If Joseph sought to do things as he always had done before what would have happened? Maybe this is another fear we need to bind up, the fear of change, the fear of going and doing things differently. 'We've never done it that way before'. If Joseph didn't move and change as he heard from God his life would have been totally different.

But we read those inspiring words; "When Joseph woke up he did what the angel of the