Sermon Xmas Day 2020

Title: “Jesus- Son of Joseph”

Text: Mt. 1:16

Prayer

Salutation

1.) **Bridge An odd Xmas topic- Death**

**On one of my trips back to my birthplace of Minnesota, about 8 years ago, I went to the cemetery where my great grandparents are buried. It was no small task to find their graves. I had to know their date of death, full names, etc., in order to obtain the plot location where they were interred. Of course, I had all the info because I researched the cemetery rules before I went, but can you imagine if you had no idea about any of the facts you needed to know beforehand? You would have to ask the guy that mows if he ever saw the headstone! Or you’d have to check every single grave--- yourself.**

**I found the graves fairly quickly. The marker is quite large. But the footstones are small. In fact, the footstones were almost completely covered and buried by the grass. I asked my family if they knew when the last time anyone had been there. No one knew. After I found that out I surmised it had been almost 50 years since anyone had visited their graves, so, I uncovered Karl and Antonia’s footstones for them. If I asked my grandkids if they would like to visit their graves, they would more than likely say, “Who?” They have almost been forgotten.**

**Every family tree has members who have been forgotten over time. Their existence seems to be confined to census data or official records. Like Karl and Antonia’s wedding certificate filed in Duluth, MN in 1880. However, there are no statues or memorials commemorating their accomplishments. She was a housewife and he, a tailor. In most families, after three or four generations their memory is gone. It’s only when someone begins the process of reconstructing the family tree that their names and places in that family tree history are recalled. Unfortunately, their lives are remembered by little more than the dash between two dates. For those who do research their family genealogies, their computer files are mostly pages of names and descendants, not unlike what Matthew has constructed for us in introducing Jesus as the Son of David and the Son of Abraham. Now we call Him, Son of Joseph.**

**2) If you think about it, Joseph is just another “Average Joe”**

**In the context of this message, it is odd that my grandfather was named Joe. So was my dad. They were both average. Neither of them will go down in history as being important, just like Karl. One of the last names in the family tree of Jesus is, Joseph. HE is the ultimate “Average Joe.” Mary is the key figure of Jesus life and ministry and poor old Joseph is so average that Mark doesn’t even mention him. That’s average.**

**The last time we find him in scripture is when he and Mary took Jesus to the temple at Passover when Jesus was twelve. Then, Joseph just disappears.**

**Jesus was called the Son of David fifteen times throughout scripture. Blind men called out to Him, “Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David.” The Roman centurion who saw how Jesus died, he said, “Surely, this is the Son of God!” And then Messianic title the Son of Man, which Jesus preferred for Himself, is used nearly 80 times in the Word. But as for being called Joseph’s son or the son of the carpenter, that is done but 4 times in the Gospels. Lukes’ genealogy calls Jesus the “supposed” son of Joseph. Interesting.**

**Joseph is like one in so many of other family trees, the relative who is not exactly a relative and little more than a footnote scribbled off to the side in someone’s family Bible. Joseph is that extra figure in the nativity set who is not a shepherd, but not a Wise Man. He simply balances out the scene with Mary on one side and he on the other. There’s lots of Madonna and child paintings out there. How many Joseph and child paintings have you seen? I feel for the guy! And many people think Joseph is quite forgettable.**

**3) But Joseph was faithful.**

**If we look at Matthew’s version of the that birth scene, we find something completely different. It contains no shepherds and only one angel. There is no innkeeper, no stable, no manger. There is no difficult journey to Bethlehem. Matthew focuses on the events leading to the birth of Jesus from Joseph’s perspective. During Jospeh and Mary’s day, the period of betrothal was usually about a year. This was a formal engagement period that could only be broken by divorce or death. During this period there could be no physical intimacy. That would wait until the actual wedding night.**

**When Joseph Learns that Mary is pregnant, and knowing that he is not the father, he is only left to think that Mary has committed adultery. According to OT law, Joseph had the right to have Mary put to death for this supposed sin. But Matthew tells us that Joseph is a righteous nan, so while he didn’t want to shame himself publicly, he did not wish such punishment on Mary either. Instead, he decided to have the marriage dissolved and quietly go his own way.**

**Joseph’s plan shows us why God in His infinite wisdom chose Joseph to be to raise His son, Jesus: Joseph is a compassionate man who seeks to do the Lord’s will. Rather than lashing out at Mary in anger and vengeance, Joseph sought to show her mercy and compassion, while still being faithful to God and turning away from sin.**

**4) Matthew wants us to know Joseph’s Son is also Joseph’s Savior.**

**And then, God intervened. He sent an angel to Joseph to tell him that this child in Mary was not the result of sin, but of God’s grace. I can imagine that Joseph was not only relieved but amazed! Then the angel told Joseph that he was to name the child Jesus because He would save the people from their sins.**

**This was no ordinary conception. And He was to be no ordinary child. He would be given the name Jesus not as some testimony about the character of God as was the case with so many Hebrew names, but actually as God’s action, His fulfillment of His promise to send the Messiah. This name was not to symbolize the idea that Yahweh saves his people like at the Red Sea or in bringing them back from exile from Babylon. Rather, this child would be the ultimate embodiment of God’s plan of salvation, saving them from more than oppression and suffering. He had come- *to be the Savior from sin.* He was the Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed One. He was the one who would save, rescue, redeem God’s people from eternal death. This was no ordinary Child. He was no “average Joe”. And unlike any child ever born, He came to save His people, even Joseph and Mary.**

**When Joseph heard this from the angel, he didn’t respond. He just did what he was told. He took Mary home as his wife and cared for her. And when she gave birth to a son he named him Jesus. What the angel told him he didn’t expect. But God had a plan. And the angel revealed it to him, and he believed.**

**Matthew didn’t tell us what Joseph thought or felt about any of this. Nor did he say how he tried to figure it all out. Mathew just said Joseph did as he was directed. Simple. And he believed that Jesus came to save his people.**

**5) Why? Because none of God’s people are forgettable.**

**Joseph would encounter the angel two more times. First, an angel appeared to tell him to take his family to Egypt to protect his adopted son from murderous King Herod. Then, after Herod’s death, Joseph was told to return to Israel, and he once again settled in Nazareth. No objections. No debate. No recorded records at all. Joseph simply did what he was told to do. All these things, however, we DO remember about Joseph.**

**I know that many of you have felt like him. You’ve felt forgotten by people, or that you didn’t get the recognition that you deserved. Tell me about it! You just want to be remembered. You don’t want to be just an “average Joe”! You want to be someone who leaves a mark on society. Somehow. Unfortunately, the marks we may ultimately leave on those around us are the stains of sin. The only hope that we have is not that we will be remembered by the people around us, but that God has remembered us in His infinite mercy... so that He does not remember our sins. We find solace in knowing that God put His name on us in the waters of Holy Baptism and sealed us with the Holy Spirit as the deposit and guarantee of God’s promise to remember us in His kingdom.**

**Jesus’ earthly father, Good old Average Joe, held something in common with all the other names in the family tree, even those more famous and renowned. Joseph was a sinner who needed a Savior. When he gave the child the name Jesus, it was because that he, too, needed someone who would save him from his own sins. God would then use this average Joe to protect Jesus from Herod’s soldiers, who ran their spears through all the innocents in Bethlehem. But one day, Joseph’s adopted son would allow himself to be run through with a spear on Calvary. And the Son of Joseph did it for his earthly father and for all who are part of his family in faith. Joseph’s son came to save his average, forgettable people from their sins.**

**Joseph serves as a silent but faithful witness to the church of ages since. May God strengthen us that we may be comforted in knowing that our God not only remembers us but that He also sent His Son to save us from our sins. Merry Christmas. In His Holy name. Amen.**