

Christmas Eve in the morning

Sermon

Matthew 1:18-25

OUTLINE

1. The most shocking news
2. The most wonderful news

- We have had some shocking news this year.
- The Royal commission and the appalling news of abuse and cover up in institutions
- The news of widespread sexual harassment and sexual assault in the film industry
- There have been some horrible horrible terror attacks around the world... including just this week in Melbourne.
- In the church – I've been shocked and saddened by church leaders moving away from Biblical truth
- ... but the news that comes to us from our passage from Matthew this morning... rivals *any* of those for shock and impact.
- I hope you'll have that open in front you – Matthew 1:18-25... my message this morning will be brief – but I trust helpful as we explore this passage and its implications.
- Here is where we're heading:
 - The most shocking news
 - The most wonderful news

1. THE MOST SHOCKING NEWS

- Have a look with me at v18 – *This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah (a better translation) came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child... let me stop there.*
- *Found to be with child...* whilst **engaged** and **before** they were **married**?
- No big deal today. Common story. We know how it works!
- But 1st century Jewish Palestine? Unthinkable!
- Can you imagine Mary telling Joseph?
- Um: Joseph, we need to talk...
- She's a young girl – maybe 16 or 17... this news would have been shocking to **her** – to discover she's pregnant! – and then shocking for **Joseph**...!
- In fact, it's hard to say for whom it would have been a greater shock – for **Mary** – knowing that she was a virgin – or **Joseph** knowing he certainly hadn't slept with her!

- Now Joseph could have easily had Mary **stoned** for this... this was **adultery**... as far as he would have first understood the situation!
- This is completely **unacceptable**... it would have been a stain on **her** family – on **his** family – absolute **disaster**.
- Most **shocking news!** //
- How did you receive the news when you found out you were pregnant or your wife was pregnant?
- Should have been joy-filled and marvellous...
- **This** was anything **but!!**
- But as shocking as it was, it wasn't the **only** shock for Mary *or* Joseph... //
- Joseph was a good man.... He followed the law... he had a good heart... he didn't want to go through with pushing for her to be brought for punishment
- So – at the end of v19 *he had in mind to divorce her quietly...*
- No fuss... just simply walk away.
- But God has other plans for **Joseph**... and other plans for **Mary**...
- So – v20 – have a look with me – *but after he had considered 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 home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit."*
- Was that meant to make things **better** for Joseph?
- *What is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit???*
- That would have been **just** as shocking, wouldn't it?
- What?
- Conceived by the **Holy Spirit**...
- **How** did that happen?
- **Why** did that happen?
- What is going **on**??
- Perhaps there were elements of both **comfort** and **confusion** in the angel's message...
- **Comfort** in the fact that Mary had in fact not been unfaithful to Joseph... she hadn't been sleeping around...
- But – **confusion** – how on earth has this occurred – and for what **reason**? //
- Well – all will be revealed... but let's stop and think for a moment... because here is the **reality** of **Jesus'** birth
- He had an **earthly** mother
- ...but a **heavenly** Father...
- born of the virgin Mary, conceived by the Holy Spirit.
- the boy born was both **Man** and **God**
- not **half** man, **half** God

- but **fully** man, **fully** God
- ...**perfect** Man, **perfect** God.
- It was by **this** means, that **God entered** into our **world**.
- This is **how** God put on **human skin** and entered into our **world... our life... our experience...**
- ...into the **world** of **sin...** the world that had **rejected** him – the world that would **crucify** him...
- ...yet the world which he loved **so** much...
- This was the means by which he would **reveal** himself in all his **glory** to us...!
- Which *some* would **see...**
- ...but to which **others** would be **completely** and **utterly blind...** ///
- Yes – *this is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about – his mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child, **through the Holy Spirit!***
- **Most shocking news imaginable //**
- but how does Joseph **react?** Have a look with me a v24 *When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son.*
- He **trusted God**.
- Trusted the **dream**
- Trusted that the angel he heard from **in** the dream had in fact been sent from **God**
- Trusted the revelation that Mary's child was indeed conceived by the **Holy Spirit**
- Trusted that God's plans were for real.
- It's an amazing moment of **surrender** to God....
- **Your** will be done, not **mine**
- It is the equivalent of **Mary's** response when the angel appeared to her to tell her what was going on.
- Do you recall? Luke 1:38 - *I am the Lord's servant. **May it be to me as you have said.***
- *May it be to me as you have said,* said Mary
- *Joseph took Mary home as his wife...*
- **Trust; surrender; obedience.** //
- It's worth stepping aside for a moment and asking – is that how it is with **you** and **God...**?
- Are you able to **surrender** to his **will** and **purposes?**
- Now of course – I'm not expecting you've had such dramatic **dreams...**
- ...and I'm not expecting you've ever been told such **astonishing** news...
- but by and by we realise God's plans and purposes for us... we receive some **medical news...** some **family news...** we see God's plans **unfolding** before us...

- are we able to react like Joseph and Mary – *may it be to me as you have said – your will be done... you're in charge Lord – you're calling the shots Lord – I will surrender and obey... !! Not my will but yours be done!! ///*
- well – the most **shocking** news... **Mary** is **pregnant**...
- **more** shocking news – she's pregnant by the miraculous working of the **Holy Spirit**... /
- but friends, this is also

2. THE MOST WONDERFUL NEWS

- And we see the wonderful nature of this news, because of the two names we read were given to this miraculous outcome of God's working... this baby.
- Have a look with me... v21 – the angel is still filling Joseph in – *she will give birth to a son and you are to give him the name Jesus...* //
- You are to give him the name **Jesus**. /
- Jesus – it's the Hebrew **Joshua**...
- And the name itself means "**God saves**"
- Back when names meant something... when you didn't have to go and Google what a name means... when people knew...
- The boy – the miraculous child with no earthly father – his **name** – his **purpose** – his **reason for being** – will be "**God saves**".
- How **brilliant!**
- Here at the beginning of Matthew's Gospel we're left in no doubt whatsoever about the purpose – about the mission of God in the conception of the boy...
- This **controversy** – this most shocking news – is all for **good reason** – **great** reason... **God saves!!!**
- And then, so we are in now doubt about the nature of the saving work of God through the boy – the angel tells Joseph – *you will give him the name Jesus – because he will save his people from their sins!*
- That phrase tells us **two** things...
- **First**... that our sins are **serious**.
- Not just naughty things wrong... or good things omitted.
- Our sins are **so** significant, they are something we need **saving** from!
- Because our sin – our rebellion – our doing our own thing our own way – cut us from God...
- We need **saving** because sin separates us from God... ultimately means we **cannot** stand in his **presence!**
- God steps into our world in the person of His Son, to bear in **himself** the penalty for our sin... *the wages of sin is death*, the Apostle Paul will teach... and Jesus has **taken** that for us...
- *You will give him the name Jesus – for he will save his people from their sin...* **that's** what Jesus came to do... //
- Have YOU been saved from your **sin**? – by **Jesus**?

- That's what he came to do!! – and if you've admitted your need and asked to be saved – you have been!
- That's **simple** isn't it...?
- All you have to do is **admit** your need and asked to be **saved**... and on the basis of Jesus' **death** and **resurrection** you'll be **saved**!
- Don't miss out because you're too **stubborn** to admit your situation or too arrogant to ask for help!
- Take **hold** of Jesus' salvation offer while it's still on **offer**!! //
- *Jesus – because he will save his people from their sin...///*
- But there's **another** name mentioned here too...
- Have a look with me! – *v22 all this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and she will call him Immanuel – which means, "God with us".*
- God with us...
- God **alongside** us...
- ...as **one** of us...
- in our **world**, our **space**, our **experiences**
- knowing our **joys**, **sadness**, **losses**, **tragedies**...
- inside knowledge of **ridicule**, **persecution**, **suffering**...
- **alongside** us to **share of himself**... **reveal himself**... /
- fascinating that Matthew's gospel **begins** with this revelation of Jesus' name as God with us – and **ends** with Jesus himself proclaiming that he will be with us **to the end of the age**....
- With us by his **Spirit**...
- With **you**
- Within **you**
- **Still** alongside you, **knowing** your **joys**... experiencing your **pains**, **trials**, **anxieties**, **stresses** and **strains**...
- God with **YOU**... even **now**...
- Each and every day – **God with you**... ///

Let's sum up:

- The most **shocking** news.... Mary **pregnant** by the **Holy Spirit**... **amazing**, **astonishing**, **controversial**... but also the...
- ...most **wonderful** news ever...
- for by this **miraculous intervention**, God was entering our **world** in **human flesh**...
- to **save** his people from their **sin**
- and to be **Immanuel** – **God with us**... //

- may the message come to your hearts this Christmas with **new power**, with **fresh insight**...
//
- if you've **never** been saved from your sin – then this Christmas is the **best** opportunity to do that – admit your need and take hold of God's forgiveness....
- And if you've known **and have been assured for a very long time that** you're saved... give thanks **again** this Christmas... and feel wonderfully the presence of **Immanuel – God with us** – and joyfully **surrender** to his good and perfect plans for you, saying – **may it be to me as you have said! ///**
- *you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.*
- *they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us")*