

The Incarnate King

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[0 : 00] Well, like most people, Christmas is probably my favorite season of the year. It's at least top three. But our most enduring tradition as a family, I'm sure we all have different traditions that we like to do.

! Some of them are much more adventurous than what I'm about to describe to you. But probably our most enduring tradition is just simply to make a list of our favorite Christmas movies every year. And we watch through them, some of them a couple of times, our favorites. Every night, just about over these couple of weeks, Julie will have a different Christmas favorite that the girls love. And we'll pull it up and we'll watch. And I think that I've determined that all of the Christmas movies out there, or at least most of them, fit in three categories.

The first category, and the most ubiquitous one, even though it's probably the worst of them, is the Finding Love at Christmas theme. Finding Love at Christmas. This is Hallmark, right?

[0 : 58] This is the Hallmark standard. And all of the love stories, nobody really wants that at Christmas, but they keep making movies about that. And that's a common thing that we find. Second, that I think is quite common, is the Home for Christmas theme, right?

Home for Christmas. Somebody's trying to get home so that they can enjoy Christmas. Maybe it's been a while since they've been with their family and their friends for the Christmas season. They're trying to get there, and there's all kinds of obstacles that are standing in the way, preventing them from getting there, until finally, the climax of the movie, at the end, they finally make it, right?

And it's sometimes even better than what they had hoped. So that would be the second thing. And then there's the third thing that I actually think might become the most common before long. It's the Christmas is in trouble theme.

Christmas is in trouble theme. Think of the entire Tim Allen, Santa Claus's movies. Something's always in trouble, going to prevent Christmas from happening.

Think of the Christmas Chronicles, if you want more of a modern movie. And then, of course, there's the great cinematic classic, Ernest Saves Christmas. All of them have this theme, right?

[2 : 09] There's something that's going to stand in the way of Christmas. Christmas isn't going to come, and if Christmas doesn't come, there's going to be catastrophic consequences for the whole world.

And as you reach the climactic moment in the movie, what do we find? Often, a surprising hero emerges and saves Christmas, which then, in turn, saves the world.

And it's actually with that thought that I want to pose a question to you. In that kind of movie, the issue is, if Christmas doesn't happen, we're doomed.

The world's going to fall apart. We're going to go into another dark ages. What would happen if we didn't have Christmas? What if something really did prevent this holiday from taking place this year? What would be the consequences if our cultural celebrations of the holiday just didn't take place? I recognize the kids are in the service today, and I'm not trying to start any fights with anybody in the service today.

[3 : 17] But here's the answer. What would happen? Well, nothing would happen. We would all be just fine. We would exist like a good bit of people in the world who have never celebrated Christmas in their entire life, and they get along just fine.

If we didn't have Christmas, everything would be okay. Okay. But there is something related to Christmas that is actually absolutely essential for everyone, whether you acknowledge it or not.

If it didn't happen, or if you could prove it to be a lie or a farce, the consequences of it would not just be hard or difficult.

The consequences of it would be eternally destructive for everybody. And, of course, that thing is the incarnation of Jesus Christ.

By incarnation, we mean that the eternal God, the almighty God, has become man through a virgin birth so that he might reconcile sinners to himself.

[4 : 35] That's what we mean by incarnation. God has become man, and he has become man without losing his divinity in the process. So that what we have in this individual is a unique, one-of-a-kind person.

Truly God in every way. Truly man in every way. That's the incarnation. And the truth of the incarnation is actually central to the Christian gospel.

If there is no incarnation, there is no gospel hope for any of us. And it's the proclamation and defense of this gospel of the incarnation that is the very purpose of the four gospel books that we have in the New Testament.

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The whole purpose of their writing is to proclaim and to defend the incarnation. That God has come. He has become man in order to save us from our sins.

Two of those gospels, Matthew and Luke, cover the events and the explanations of the incarnation with respect to Jesus' birth. And it's Matthew's account that I want to draw your attention to this morning.

[6 : 00] Look with me at verse 18. Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit.

And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins. All of this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet.

Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which means God with us. When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him.

He took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son, and he called his name Jesus. But there's some things that Matthew is doing around this text that will actually serve to help us understand what he meant to do with this text.

[7 : 33] We're not going to read through it. You can read through it on your own. But just know that before he gets to this point, he records Jesus' ancestry. And he does that for a very specific reason.

He's putting emphasis on Jesus of Nazareth as a descendant of King David. After this section, when you get to verse 26, or excuse me, the first verse of chapter 2.

After this section, Matthew tells of King Herod's reaction to the news that a baby had been born that some people thought would become, quote, the king of the Jews.

So Matthew is presenting here for us Jesus as a kind of king who is from the line of King David, whom Herod viewed as a legitimate threat to his own rule.

And still, it's worth noting that Matthew didn't himself use the term king when he was describing Jesus. He's using king around some of the other statements of people.

[8 : 42] He's not using king especially right now with his own words. He's using a different word. He's using the word Christ. Look with me just at verse 16.

At the end of the genealogy, the ancestry, we see that in Jacob, the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.

And then we get to verse 18, as we read just a moment ago, and he tells us, now I'm going to tell you about the birth of Jesus, but he doesn't call him Jesus yet, and he doesn't call him a king. He calls him a Christ. Well, why is he doing this?

If he's presenting Jesus as a kind of king, why isn't he using the language of king? Well, to be a king is no small thing, and certainly that is implied at the very least in the term Christ.

But Jesus is much more than a king. He's much more than that. He is the messianic fulfillment of all that the scriptures foretold of a savior king who would save his people and would rule as God's righteous king, not for a limited amount of time, but for eternity.

[9 : 55] And this is actually what establishes the purpose of Matthew's gospel. This is what you see. He's cluing us in into why he's writing this book. He is proclaiming and defending the essential truth that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, which means that Jesus of Nazareth is the son of God and the son of David.

That's the whole purpose of his writing. Now, if Jesus is the Christ, what are his origins? How did he become the Christ?

Was he a man that God chose to use as a Christ figure? Is there something different? How does that actually work itself out? Well, that's what Matthew is answering in this section in verses 18 to 25.

By giving us the birth story, brief as it is in Matthew's account, he's answering those questions for us. Sandwiched in between the genealogy and Herod's reaction is this brief account of Jesus' birth. Significant to Matthew's account and unique to Matthew's account is that it's told entirely with an eye toward one person.

[11 : 15] Joseph. It's not Mary in Matthew's case. Of course, Mary's there, but that's not the focus. Of course, Jesus is at the heart of it. He's telling about Jesus. But he's telling about Jesus through the lens of Joseph.

Historically referred to as quiet Joseph. Why? Because he doesn't actually say anything. After this point, he's mostly forgotten.

And this is more important than you might think at first. Joseph's identity and Joseph's actions in this text are critical to showing that Jesus really is that promised Christ.

And these events help prove that Jesus truly is the incarnate king, born of a virgin to save his people from their sins.

The first thing I want you to notice is a marriage in jeopardy. A marriage in jeopardy. Now, the scandal of Jesus' birth should be totally unsurprising when you really think about it.

[12 : 27] I mean, think about this. The gospel authors, they're presenting Jesus as an incarnate king, as the divine son of God and son of David. How could the incarnation, God becoming truly man while remaining truly God, happen without some kind of significant controversy being around it?

I mean, it just makes sense, right? There's no other way for this to have happened apart from a human perspective looking at it scandalously. This is such an utterly unique occurrence that we should fully expect to come about in ways that defy our imaginations and what we would otherwise think impossible.

But grasping the weight of the scandal itself is also helpful in seeing the godliness of Joseph and Mary. And I think it would be helpful if we let the weight of this scandal settle before we get into the rest of the story.

So I'm going to read these first two verses, but I'm going to leave out the one phrase that Matthew gives us that clues us in to the thing that scandalizes the whole thing. We're going to skip that. We'll come back to it. We're going to skip it for now.

Look again at verse 18. Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found to be with child.

[13 : 52] And her husband Joseph, being a just man but unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. It's a marriage in jeopardy.

Just think about what this actually means in the cultural context of the day. Joseph and Mary's marriage would have been arranged probably when they were young by their fathers.

Some type of financial arrangement probably was part of this. They would have been picked out.

The thing about marriage in those days and in people's minds is it was far too significant, serious of a thing to leave to the heart.

And so your parents chipped in and helped you out. Actually, I like that. I think we might should go back to that. But this actual step, the arrangement of the marriage as they were young, that's actually the closest thing to modern engagement that we have.

Not the betrothal part. This part, the arrangement, could be broken at any time from either side without religious, civil, or financial consequences.

[15 : 01] However, the betrothal is different. Betrothal occurred when the two would have been at proper age. And it legally ratified the marriage so that when we get to verse 19 and we see that they're betrothed but Joseph is still referred to as Mary's husband.

Culturally speaking, that was exactly right. There was no wedding yet. There was no consummation of the marriage yet. But this betrothal period, it locked in the marriage contract so that she would have been understood to be Joseph's wife.

Joseph would have been understood to be Mary's husband. And to break that required formal proceedings for divorce. The betrothal period, it would have lasted a year.

During that time, Joseph would have been preparing a place for his bride before the final wedding ceremony and consummation. Now, it's during that betrothal period that we read here, before Joseph and Mary consummate the marriage, that Mary is found to be pregnant.

Which puts their marriage in jeopardy. Different from engagement, this would have required a serious divorce proceeding.

[16:16] Joseph was within his legal rights to actually put Mary to great shame, which would have prevented her from marrying again. This is truly catastrophic for both of them.

But especially for Mary. Joseph knows the child isn't his. He's left reeling and trying to determine how to handle the divorce.

Now, if we step outside the story for just a second, we're looking in and we think, Okay, we understand this was supposed to be of God? Before we accuse God of injustice and cruelty toward Joseph and Mary.

Remember, there's no other way for this to happen. It has to happen with a virgin. There's no way to avoid the controversy. There's no way to avoid the appearance of scandal.

But even more than that, God would prove faithful to them as he always proves faithful. Giving them strength and grace each step of the way.

[17:23] God does not lead his people to places that he does not intend to supernaturally sustain them in it. And that's as true for you as it was for Joseph and Mary.

Joseph reflects on what will happen and what he will do. And what we actually find as he is reflecting and considering these things.

Is we find that Joseph images, pictures, and mirrors the justice and the mercy of God so well here. That he was a just man means that he was concerned to obey God's law as it related to this dilemma.

He couldn't just turn a blind eye toward it. That wouldn't have been just for him to do. He couldn't have done that. He couldn't have just let it go. Douglas Sean O'Donnell, he said this, When Matthew says that Joseph was just, He means that Joseph was concerned about being obedient to God's law as he was considering the dilemma.

And yet, that's not the only thing that he's concerned with. We also see that he has a desire to demonstrate love and mercy toward Mary.

[19:07] Whom he thinks at this point has committed adultery with another man. He was unwilling to put her to public shame.

Even though it was his right to do so. He resolved. That's a strong word. He resolved. Perhaps he had friends and people around him encouraging him to do otherwise.

He was resolved to divorce her quietly. Not for himself. For her. Knowing the mercy of God.

He was determined to show as much mercy as possible to Mary. And we all know. We've lived long enough to know. That this is not natural to us.

This kind of thoughtfulness and godliness and righteousness can only be explained as God's work of grace and of sanctification in Joseph's life.

[20:11] This idea of God being unjust and cruel and forcing this upon Joseph who otherwise had done nothing wrong. It's not the way to think about this.

No, God is working in Joseph's life here. And he has so worked in Joseph's heart that Joseph does the righteous thing. He stops before he acts. And he thinks.

And he meditates on the word of God. And he thinks mercifully in relation to the character of God. And it's during that time and during that demonstration that God begins to do an important work in Joseph.

Was it a serious scandal? Yes. Was their marriage truly in jeopardy at this moment? Absolutely. Was God working his will in and through them in glorious ways?

Yes and yes. And it was all necessary for the incarnation to actually take place. So we find that there is a marriage in jeopardy.

[21 : 09] But secondly we see that there is a message from heaven. A message from heaven. Look at verse 20. As Joseph considered these things. As he's trying to figure out what to do.

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 that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son. You shall call his name Jesus. For he will save his people from their sins. Now this is Matthew's commentary now. The angel finishes speaking in verse 21.

Verse 22 picks up Matthew's commentary on that message. Matthew says all of this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet. And he quotes the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah chapter 7 and verse 14 in particular.

Behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a son. And they shall call his name Emmanuel. And then in parenthesis Matthew gives us an explanation of what that name means.

[22 : 11] It means God is with us. In other words Isaiah said a virgin would conceive. And the child that she would conceive would be understood to be God with us.

God in flesh. And now he's telling us all of this is taking place to fulfill that. Now the explanation of Mary's pregnancy.

It makes all the difference for us here doesn't it? Matthew clues us into it in verse 18 when he says Mary was pregnant by the Holy Spirit. But it's here that we see this heavenly message bringing clarity.

Joseph considers the situation. And God sends his messenger to deliver his word. God's word is always enough. And it always comes at the right time.

Three things that the message of the angel clarifies. First it clarifies Joseph's role in the whole thing. It clarifies Joseph's role in the whole thing. Did you notice anything peculiar about the way he addresses Joseph?

[23 : 17] What does he call him? Joseph what? Son of David. Son of David. This is unique. There's only one person.

One person in the New Testament referred to ever as the son of David. Other than Jesus Christ. And it's Joseph. Why does he address him this way?

Because that's what he was. He was an heir of David. He had royal blood coursing through his veins. And his identity as part of David's lineage is what reveals God's purpose for him in the incarnation.

Why Joseph? Because he was from David's line. As the legal father of Mary's child.

Joseph ensured that Jesus would truly be. Truly, legally. Be. The son of David. Which is essential if he is to be the promised Christ.

[24 : 18] Listen, Joseph was not just some chump who gets included in the story because he happened to be the one who hitched up with Mary.

We think of him that way, don't we? We put all of this emphasis on Mary. And we think, well, he just gets to tag along because he happened to be the one who snatched her up first.

But that's not true. He was chosen by God for this thing just as much as Mary was.

And his place in the story helps to give proof of Jesus' messianic identity. And that's so important. If it's not Joseph, then he's not the son of David.

And if he's not the son of David, he's not the Christ. And if he's not the Christ, we're lost. The message brings clarity. Helps Joseph understand why him. Second, it clarifies Mary's pregnancy.

[25 : 15] That's the big thing that it does. It clarifies the pregnancy itself. Okay, he's son of David, but what's he supposed to do with the fact that Mary is pregnant? The angel told him that he didn't need to be afraid of marrying her as if marrying her would be a sin otherwise.

He's saying it won't be a sin for you to marry her in this case. Don't be afraid. For she truly is a virgin.

She has not broken God's law. The child's conception was not the result of biological processes. It was a creative act of God the Holy Spirit.

That doesn't mean that Jesus was then created. We know he is the preexistent, eternal God. That's not what I mean to say by that. It only means to say that the process of God the Son taking on flesh required a creative act of the Holy Spirit that is beyond natural processes.

This makes it a truly virgin conception, which is essential to the incarnation. People keep getting tripped up on this, don't they?

[26 : 28] Modern times, nobody wants to admit that something like this could happen as if God could actually bring salvation in a way that isn't supernatural. How could he do that?

No, we need to be prepared to recognize that God works in ways that are beyond natural processes. And here, in the incarnation, God works in a way supernaturally, becoming man. The Christ must not only be from God. He must be God in flesh. This is so necessary. John chapter 1, in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God, and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory. Glory is the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. No one has ever seen God, John says. The only God. That's a reference to Jesus. The only God who is at the Father's side. He has made him known to us.

[27 : 35] When you look at Jesus, you look at God. When you listen to Jesus, you listen to God. When you follow Jesus, you follow God. He wasn't created in this moment, but he did become flesh in this moment.

But he is the pre-existing God, and this is necessary. This brings clarity to Mary's pregnancy for Joseph, doesn't it? You're the son of David. That's important here. But Mary, she hasn't disobeyed. She hasn't broken God's law. This is an act of God, Joseph. Don't be afraid. Third, it clarifies the child's purpose, doesn't it? It clarifies the child's purpose.

She will bear a son, Joseph. And you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins. The purpose of the incarnation is revealed in Jesus' name.

It's the New Testament equivalent of Joshua, which means the Lord saves or God is our salvation. The angel reveals that through this child, God would save his people from their sins.

[28 : 44] Now, how that would happen is not disclosed to Joseph, at least in Matthew's account. But we know it would come through his suffering, his crucifixion, his resurrection from the dead.

The Christ would save his people from their sins by taking their punishment, God's wrath, upon himself. The incarnation was necessary if this was going to be effective, which Paul helps us with in Philippians 2.

Christ Jesus, though he was in the form of God, form there meaning his very essence, that unchangeable quality of him was divine. That though he was in the form of God, his essence is God.

He did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped. But he emptied himself by taking on the form of a servant. Being born in the likeness of men.

And being born, being found in the human form. He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death. Even death on a cross.

[29 : 49] God becomes man. So that he might be murdered by men. Taking their place. Forgiving their sins.

The incarnation. The incarnation. This condescension. Of the divine. The humiliation. Of the Christ. Is God's love.

Incarnate. He has come not because we asked him to. He has come because we needed him to. And he himself lays down his life.

So that we might be forgiven. So that we might be at peace with God. And then of course. Matthew adds a touch of commentary. Doesn't he? This was how God fulfilled his word through the prophets.

A virgin would conceive. So that God would be with us. So that God could save us. Now there's several reasons why this was necessary.

[30 : 53] There's one I want you to consider now. If Joseph. Or some other man. Had been Jesus's biological father.

That means that Jesus would have been in Adam. Meaning he would have been born with the same sinful. Corrupt nature.

As the rest of us. That would mean that he couldn't have possibly provided an atonement for our sins. But given the fact of the incarnation through the virgin birth.

We understand Jesus's death. To be an atonement for our sin. Not his own. For in him there is no sin. And how is that possible?

Because he's not just a man. He's the God man. He is God in flesh. And this requires a virgin birth. Without the virgin birth.

[31 : 58] There is no gospel. If you're Christian today. You can't weaken on this. There is no gospel.

We lose the gospel. We lose hope. We lose the atonement. If we do not proclaim and defend the virgin birth.

So we see that there is a marriage in jeopardy. We see that there is a message from heaven. Finally we find a man with great faith. A man with great faith.

Look at verses 24 and 25. When Joseph woke from sleep. He did as the angel of the Lord commanded him. He took his wife.

But knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name. Jesus. Now just because Joseph heard the word of the Lord. Didn't guarantee that he would respond to it appropriately.

[33 : 02] Just like there's no guarantee that even after hearing the word of the Lord this morning in this service. That you will respond appropriately. That was true for Joseph too. He could have continued to pursue the divorce.

And he would have at least been justified in the eyes of men. If he had done so. And while that would have saved him from some potential embarrassment and ridicule from others.

It would have been sinful. Disobedience to God. And a lack of faith. Do you realize that that's exactly the position that you're in at this moment?

This is the word of the Lord. Not what I'm saying. What he has said here. You cannot be indifferent to it.

You have to respond. And you will respond in some way. You can save yourself some potential embarrassment and ridicule. By just continuing on as if it doesn't matter.

[34 : 14] But that will be in disobedience sinfully to the Lord God. That's not how Joseph responds. He did all that God commanded.

But why? What's the positive here for Joseph? From a human perspective there isn't one. He did all that God commanded.

Because he believed all that God said. He took Mary as his wife. He refused to consummate until after the birth.

And he named the child Jesus. Obedience is the only right response. But true obedience only comes through genuine faith in God's word.

Joseph's faith and obedience then validated Mary's virginity. And it officially made Jesus the son of God. And this was all according to God's eternal plan in Christ.

[35 : 16] To save us from our sins. Obedience. Obedience. Obedience. Essential. But obedience only follows genuine faith. There's no upside for Joseph from a human perspective.

He obeys because he believes. But just because it was the faithful and obedient response doesn't mean it was the easy response.

It certainly wasn't. Joseph and Mary's faith was costly. I was talking with the girls earlier this week about, I don't know, I guess just being a girl dad, this stuff comes up a lot.

But we were talking about weddings and how terrible of a thing that is. And how they can't get married and all of that kind of thing. You just have to stay at home forever. And when I think about how ladies in particular, maybe not all of them, but a lot of them, there's things that you think about a lot as you're growing.

Even as young girls, you begin to think about that wedding day. And you have this dream of what your marriage will be and what it will look like. And surely Mary, understanding the custom of the day, embracing the fact that there was a man set aside for her to love, to care for, and to serve.

[36 : 38] And he would love and care for. Surely she had this amazing idea of what her life was going to be like. Surely Joseph, as he is preparing a place for his bride in that betrothal season, was dreaming about how awesome it would be to have a family of his own.

And in this moment, all of that goes away. At least what their dream was, what they thought it would be, what they thought it would be like. In order to be faithful to the Lord, they have to turn away from all of that.

It's costly. Few would have believed their story. Sounds far-fetched, doesn't it? Joseph, Mary's pregnant?

What did you do? Oh, well, it wasn't me. There was this angel that appeared to me. He said his name was Gabriel, and he said that God did this. Not many people are going to believe that.

They would have dealt with shameful looks and ridicule for the rest of their life. Is there any wonder why they didn't immediately want to go back to Nazareth? Why they maybe tried to camp out around Bethlehem or Jerusalem for a little while?

[37 : 54] Maybe a place where they weren't as well known? People didn't understand their situation quite as much? Mary understood the cost when she said to the angel in Luke chapter 1, Behold, I am the servant of the Lord.

Let it be to me according to your word. When Mary says that to God, she understands what the cost will be. When Joseph takes Mary as his wife and he raises the child as his own, he understands what the cost will be.

And in the end, they knew the truth, even if no one else did and no one else would believe them. But even more than that, they trusted God. They believed God's word.

They trusted that God would be faithful, that he would see them through, that this was of him, and that it would pay off in the end. And eventually, their faith was vindicated.

But it wasn't vindicated before Joseph died. It was vindicated after. It was vindicated in the suffering, in the life, in the crucifixion, in the resurrection of their child.

[39 : 00] That's when their faith was vindicated. It was costly. But it was true and it was worth it. And it's in this way that Joseph and Mary show the only right response to the incarnation.

It is faith and obedience, which is always costly, and it will be costly for you. But those who believe and follow Jesus, by God's grace, they know the truth and they trust God.

Isn't that what we're studying right now in 1 Peter? As we're going through, we're thinking about life in exile. suffering and the struggle that relates specifically to believing God and living out that faith in practical ways.

And that's hard and it's costly and it always will be. The incarnation, it grounds that faith. It grounds that obedience. And one day, our faith will also be vindicated.

It will be vindicated when the son returns. When he comes again, all who like Joseph and Mary, trust and obey, will be saved forever from their sins.

[40 : 16] And it's all because of the incarnation. As wonderful as the Christmas holiday is, we'd be just fine if we didn't have it.

But without the incarnation of Jesus Christ, we'd all be doomed to God's eternal judgment. All of us. Matthew didn't write this to entertain us with an interesting and unbelievable story. It's not a work of fiction. No, he recorded the facts of what happened so that we might know Jesus is the Christ, the incarnate son of God, and that by believing, John said, we would have life and forgiveness in his name.

And as we close, I just want you to see the flow of how he lays this out. Isn't the flow of Joseph's experience giving us a picture of the Lord's work in the gospel? Like Joseph, some of you, you know something isn't right with your life.

You can't exactly put your thumb on what it is. You try all kinds of things. And every time you try something, maybe it helps for a little while, but you eventually end up with the same emptiness and the same struggle and the same anxiety and the same issues as before.

[41 : 37] And you just don't know something's wrong and I can't figure it out. And you're trying to sort it out. Isn't that where Joseph was? Something's wrong. He's trying to sort it out. He's trying to figure out what to do about it to make things better and make them right.

And it's at that point that he hears the word of the Lord. You'll never grasp the truth of who you are and how you feel and the struggle that you have apart from God's word and the good news of Jesus.

But now that you've heard that word, the only right response is faith and obedience.

That will always be costly. As Paul said again to the Philippians, the cost cannot compare to the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus as Savior and Lord because that's who he is.

Will you come to him this Christmas? Will you believe this Christmas? Will you lay down your dreams and everything that you want in order to know him to love him and to serve him?

[43 : 13] He's worth it because it really is true and he really is that good. And this is the only hope you have but it's a glorious hope.

Let's pray together.