

Christmas I

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Date: 29 December 2024

Preacher: Fr. Wade Miller

[0 : 00] In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. There is a lot of talk today about masculinity.

Many believe that men are being silenced with the constant threat of being labeled sexist or misogynistic. We hear cries of down with the patriarchy.

In our day, many think that a healthy society is one where men are seen but not heard. Men are supposed to be agreeable all the time.

Fathers are never to discipline their children. They are seen to be the aloof idiots in the family structure. It's no wonder we see so much chaos and fragmentation in our country today.

Now, you might be a little put off by the fact that on Christmas or during Christmas time, the priest is up here saying such things. I can assure you I have no axe to grind whatsoever.

[1 : 06] The reason why I bring up masculinity is because of our gospel text. Here in the first chapter of St. Matthew, it is all about the man, Joseph.

Joseph. And Joseph really highlights what it means to be a man and to be a leader. He's a person that both men and women can appreciate, emulate, and love.

We read that Joseph and Mary were betrothed to one another. Kind of a weird word, betrothal. Betrothal is not the same as being engaged in our country.

Betrothal meant that both Mary and Joseph were bound in covenant to one another. To understand this, we read in Genesis chapter 29 that Rachel was called the wife of Jacob before their actual wedding day by virtue of their betrothal.

So Mary and Joseph were betrothed. Mary was Joseph's wife. But then Joseph finds out that Mary is with child. She's pregnant.

[2 : 18] And there's a problem. They had not consummated their marriage. So what does Joseph do? Well, according to Deuteronomy chapter 22, Mary could have been stoned to death for adultery.

The penalty for cheating or stepping out was adultery. But we are told that Joseph was a just, he was a righteous man. He does not seek Mary's harm.

Instead, he sought to hide her away privately in order to spare her from public humiliation. Here's the first lesson we can learn from St. Joseph.

Joseph was a humble man, not seeking to harm the reputation of his wife. Joseph sought the high ground, not stooping to the level of rage or revenge.

And that's a good lesson for all of us men. The spirit of wrath is not from God. And marriage is not a competitive sport, keeping score of the wrongs done to us by our spouses.

[3 : 34] A marriage that keeps a ledger of wrongs is a marriage that's in big trouble. Being a faithful man and husband is living a life of humility, seeking to be gracious and seeking to be patient.

We all fail at that, but Joseph is a good reminder and a good example for us. But Joseph finds out that his wife's child did not come from relations with another man.

An angel appears and tells Joseph that Mary's conception was miraculous, as she was still a virgin. She was with child because the Holy Spirit had caused this new life to be formed within her womb.

And Joseph is told that he is to stay with her. And furthermore, he is to name the child Jesus, Yeshua, because he will save his people from their sins.

And this was to fulfill the words of Isaiah chapter 7, verse 14, which says, Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which is translated God with us.

[5 : 03] As Joseph wakes up from this dream and this vision, we read that he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and he took to him his wife.

This is the second lesson we can learn from Joseph. Joseph was not only a humble man, he was a decisive man who welcomed his vocation as protector of his family.

He didn't need to talk this whole thing out and work through his feelings. Joseph woke up and did his duty of being the protector of his wife, Mary, and their baby, Jesus.

He didn't wait for additional signs. He didn't need to work through the trauma of thinking that Mary might have been unfaithful to him.

He was a man that took action, and he fulfilled his vocation as a husband. Men, that's exactly what God calls us to do.

[6 : 07] He calls us to step up and to lead. Not to be helpless, not to be passive. He calls us to be decisive leaders.

Not to be sheepish guys, always wavering. And he calls us to do this with humility, with a gracious spirit like Joseph, considering others more highly than we consider ourselves.

There's much we can learn from St. Joseph this morning. First, humility is what we are called to practice. We are not to bring shame or embarrassment upon our spouses or any other people for that matter.

Men are called to lead, not to dictate. And the way to lead is through humility and grace, not by sticking out our chests and walking around like we have a chip on our shoulders.

We need strong and courageous leaders who will lead by caring for others. And this begins with our spouse, first and foremost.

[7 : 19] This means husbands need to be involved, not hands-off, not aloof spectators. Husbands need to work diligently.

And this also means helping their wives out at home. Husbands are not merely to bark out orders.

We are called to lead by example. And the goal is to be more like Christ and less like self.

To be servant leaders, placing ourselves under the kingship of our Lord and Savior, Jesus. Second, we need to be decisive leaders who will make decisions without having to be coddled or need a self-esteem seminar every single day of the week.

We need to be men of courage who will protect. We need men to step out in faith and act without fear. And we need men to take initiative, to act like adults and not like children.

[8 : 32] We need men who seek to live in full obedience to God no matter what the cost. Even if that means ridicule by others.

And sometimes, sadly, that ridicule can come from our own families. But there's one more lesson we need to learn from St. Joseph. The last lesson is simply this.

We are called to obey and follow the Lord even if that seems utterly crazy. Let me say that again.

We are called to follow, to obey the Lord even if that means or seems utterly crazy.

I'm sure Joseph had to think about the sanity of it all. His wife is with child. He finds out that his wife is pregnant through the miraculous work of God.

Men, this makes our troubles seem pretty small and petty. Therefore, let us be like St. Joseph. Let us walk in humility.

[9 : 46] Let us live decisive lives as protectors of our loved ones and our spouses. Let us lead by serving and throwing ourselves into our vocation, especially men as husbands and as fathers.

Let us seek to help our spouses. And may we not be afraid to go against the world, living courageously and following the Lord and rejecting the spirit of our age.

The life of Joseph is really the life of Jesus. Jesus is our bridegroom.

We are married to him as the church. And our bridegroom humbled himself being born in human flesh and living a life of sacrifice that culminated in the cross.

Jesus set his face towards Jerusalem decisively as he went boldly to the cross. And Jesus was rejected by the masses as he dared to challenge the unbelief of the people.

[11 : 05] This is why we celebrate Christmas. Joseph is an example of true faith and Jesus is the reason for our faith.

He is our life and he is our hope as he came not to be served but to serve and to lay down his life for you.

Amen. In the name of the Father and of the Son of the Holy Ghost. Amen.