

“NO ORDINARY JOSEPH”

I. [Matthew 1:18-25](#) [Philippians 2:5-11](#)

A. Let's begin with a couple stories, one true, the other from Hallmark...

1) George W. Bush wrote a personal note to the Alabama kicker, Cade Foster, after his three missed field goals in the Alabama-Auburn game. Foster has received a lot of hate mail since that game, not so from our former president. The note reads: "Dear Cade (#43), life has its setbacks. I know! However, you will be a stronger human with time. I wish you all the best. Sincerely, another 43, George Bush."

2) There's a new Hallmark Christmas movie out called, *Window Wonderland*. It's about a guy and a girl competing for first place in a window decorating contest for a department store called McGuire's (think Macy's) in downtown Manhattan... The competition is fierce and at the end, as they are handcuffed and ready to be hauled off to jail, their good friend the maintenance man, steps out of a limo, dressed to the nines, and it turns out, he's THE Mr. McGuire, the rich owner of the department store who doubles as the maintenance man... The cuffs are removed, the guy & girl are summarily promoted to poohbahs at the store, and they kiss and live happily ever after, all the while snow is falling on Christmas Eve...

3) Why do we like stories like these? Why do they captivate us? Because they are metaphors for the Gospel... But the story of the Gospel is not a metaphor and we've either been written into the script or God wants to do just that...

B. [Matthew 1:18-25](#) is the Matthew account of the birth of Jesus and the role of Joseph is featured in this account... While Luke tells us about the shepherds, Matthew tells about the Magi...

C. [Matt. 1:20-23](#) When the angel appears in Joseph's dream, he declares: "*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 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 Immanuel*" (which means, *God with us*)."

1) Matthew describes Joseph as a just man, a righteous man, and Luke describes Mary the same way... This is a fine young couple that God has chosen...

2) When Mary tells Joseph the news of her pregnancy, he evidently doesn't believe her. (I'm sure she didn't leave out the part about the angel Gabriel--probably described his appearance in vivid detail...)

3) Joseph plans to divorce Mary quietly, out of love, respect, and to spare her life. His inner turmoil was probably immeasurable...

4) Then the angel, probably Gabriel, appeared to Him in a dream, relieving his fears and affirming everything Mary had told him... Like Mary, he too would have a vital role in the redemptive plan of God with respect to the Messiah, God the Son...

5) Joseph would raise Jesus as his own Son, watch Him grow into manhood, teaching Him the Torah and the trade of carpenter... We know Jesus kept the Torah perfectly and then some. If an account by Justin Martyr is authentic, plows and yokes made by Joseph and Jesus were still in use into the second century...

D. If all my Christmas sermons could be summed up in a single word this year, that word would be, Immanuel, God with us... The amazing reality that God the Son came to us as a vulnerable Baby, simultaneously named Immanuel and Jesus. Fully God and fully man... Maker of galaxies and One that got splinters.; One who would bleed and suffocate on a cross for each of us...

E. [Philippians 2:5-11](#) is the credal hymn that describes it all well...

1) Illustrations and quotes by C.S. Lewis...

2) Illustration by Rev. Brett Blair...

3) Quote by Martin Luther...

F. So my prayer for us (the same as every Christmas) is that we machete our way through the jungle of commercialized materialism, narcissism, fanaticism, etc--to the staircase of heaven which came down to Bethlehem 2000 years ago and brought us Immanuel, Jesus, the Messiah, to transfer us from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of His resplendent light and glory, forevermore...

* Close with Prayer...

[Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff](#)

[Matthew 1:18-25 \(ESV\)](#)

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. **19** And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. **20** 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. **21** She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." **22** All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: **23** "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us). **24** When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, **25** but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

[Philippians 2:5-11 \(ESV\)](#)

5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, **6** who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, **7** but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant being born in the likeness of men. **8** And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. **9** Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, **10** so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, **11** and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

[C.S. Lewis On The Incarnation](#)

The central miracle asserted by Christians is the Incarnation. They say that God became Man. Every other miracle prepares for this, or exhibits this, or results from this. . . .

In the Christian story God descends to re-ascend. He comes down; down from the heights of absolute being into time and space, down into humanity . . . down to the very roots and sea-bed of the Nature He has created.

But He goes down to come up again and bring the ruined world up with Him. One has the picture of a strong man stooping lower and lower to get himself underneath some great complicated burden. He must stoop in order to lift, he must almost disappear under the load before he incredibly straightens his back and marches off with the whole mass swaying on his shoulders.

Or one may think of a diver, first reducing himself to nakedness, then glancing in mid-air, then gone with a splash, vanished, rushing down through green and warm water into black and cold water, down through increasing pressure into the death-like region of ooze and slime and old decay; then up again, back to colour and light, his lungs almost bursting, till suddenly he breaks surface again, holding in his hand the dripping, precious thing that he went down to recover. He and it are both coloured now that they have come up into the light: down below, where it lay colourless in the dark, he lost his colour, too.

In this descent and re-ascent everyone will recognise a familiar pattern: a thing written all over the world. It is the pattern of all vegetable life. It must belittle itself into something hard, small and deathlike, it must fall into the ground: thence the new life re-ascends.

It is the pattern of all animal generation too. There is descent from the full and perfect organisms into the spermatozoon and ovum, and in the dark womb a life at first inferior in kind to that of the species which is being reproduced: then the slow ascent to the perfect embryo, to the living, conscious baby, and finally to the adult.

So it is also in our moral and emotional life. The first innocent and spontaneous desires have to submit to the deathlike process of control or total denial: but from that there is a re-ascent to fully formed character in which the strength of the original material all operates but in a new way. Death and Rebirth—go down to go up—it is a key principle. Through this bottleneck, this belittlement, the highroad nearly always lies.

The doctrine of the Incarnation, if accepted, puts this principle even more emphatically at the centre. The pattern is there in Nature because it was first there in God. All the instances of it which I have mentioned turn out to be but transpositions of the Divine theme into a minor key. I am not now referring simply to the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ. The total pattern, of which they are only the turning point, is the real Death and Re-birth: for certainly no seed ever fell from so fair a tree into so dark and cold a soil as would furnish more than a faint analogy to this huge descent and re-ascension in which God dredged the salt and oozy bottom of Creation.

- C. S. Lewis, *Miracles* (New York: Macmillan, 1947), 112, 115-17.

Becoming A Dog by C.S. Lewis

Lying at your feet is your dog. Imagine, for the moment, that your dog and every dog is in deep distress. Some of us love dogs very much. If it would help all the dogs in the world to become like men, would you be willing to become a dog? Would you put down your human nature, leave your loved ones, your job, hobbies, your art and literature and music, and choose instead of the intimate communion with your beloved, the poor substitute of looking into the beloved's face and wagging your tail, unable to smile or speak? Christ by becoming man limited the thing which to Him was the most precious thing in the world; his unhampered, unhindered communion with the Father.

The Story of A Persian King

By Rev. Brett Blair, United Methodist Minister, Yale Graduate

Long ago, there ruled in Persia a wise and good king. He loved his people. He wanted to know how they lived. He wanted to know about their hardships. Often he dressed in the clothes of a working man or a beggar, and went to the homes of the poor. No one whom he visited thought that he was their ruler. One time he visited a very poor man who lived in a cellar. He ate the coarse food the poor man ate. He spoke cheerful, kind words to him. Then he left. Later he visited the poor man again and disclosed his identity by saying, "I am your king!" The king thought the man would surely ask for some gift or favor, but he didn't. Instead he said, "You left your palace and your glory to visit me in this dark, dreary place. You ate the course food I ate. You brought gladness to my heart! To others you have given your rich gifts. To me you have given yourself!"

Quote by Martin Luther

"The mystery of the humanity of Christ, that He sunk Himself into our flesh, is beyond all human understanding.

Video Clips for Growing Believers

"Window Wonderland" Hallmark Movie Trailer

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jcirB6jSbkU>

43 to 43 - Former President Bush Writes Alabama Kicker

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2A1Rb-8gZNq>

Remembering Christmas Truth - Francis Chan, Music by Eden's Bridge

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sQyl26laM1g>

"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" - Shane & Shane

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P0XwURD2lhk>

Why Christmas? by John Piper

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U-1OTVpOtyc>

Bonus Stuff

Joseph & Jesus' Plows & Yokes

"In the second century, Christian apologist Justin Martyr grew up over the hill from Galilee. Interestingly, he notes that the plows made by Joseph and Jesus were still being used widely in his day. How intriguing to think of Jesus' plow rather than his cross – to wonder what it was that made his plows and yokes last and stand out."

- Os Guinness, *The Call*.

Quote by J.I. Packer

"God became man; the divine Son became a Jew; the Almighty appeared on earth as a helpless human baby, unable to do more than lie and stare and wriggle and make noises, needing to be fed and changed and taught to talk like any other child. And there was no illusion or deception in this: the babyhood of the Son of God was a reality. The more you think about it, the more staggering it gets. Nothing in fiction is so fantastic as is this truth of the Incarnation."

At The Name of Jesus

Words by Caroline M. Noel, 1870

Music by James Mountain, 1876

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fFI5I8v_OUY

At the Name of Jesus, every knee shall bow,
Every tongue confess Him King of glory now;
'Tis the Father's pleasure we should call Him Lord,
Who from the beginning was the mighty Word.

Mighty and mysterious in the highest height,
God from everlasting, very light of light:
In the Father's bosom with the spirit blest,
Love, in love eternal, rest, in perfect rest.

At His voice creation sprang at once to sight,
All the angel faces, all the hosts of light,
Thrones and dominations, stars upon their way,
All the heavenly orders, in their great array.

Humbled for a season, to receive a name
From the lips of sinners unto whom He came,
Faithfully He bore it, spotless to the last,
Brought it back victorious when from death He passed.

Bore it up triumphant with its human light,
Through all ranks of creatures, to the central height,
To the throne of Godhead, to the Father's breast;
Filled it with the glory of that perfect rest.

Name Him, brothers, name Him, with love strong as death
But with awe and wonder, and with bated breath!
He is God the Savior, He is Christ the Lord,
Ever to be worshipped, trusted and adored.

In your hearts enthrone Him; there let Him subdue
All that is not holy, all that is not true;
Crown Him as your Captain in temptation's hour;
Let His will enfold you in its light and power.

Brothers, this Lord Jesus shall return again,
With His Father's glory, with His angel train;
For all wreaths of empire meet upon His brow,
And our hearts confess Him King of glory now.