

**When God does the unexpected, how do we respond?**

Every day we make up our own remarkable stories. Our boss asks to speak to us, our teenager is out too late, or a friend doesn't return our call, and we instantly fill in the blanks. When the unexpected happens in our lives, we jump to all kinds of conclusions in our minds. Sometimes, those conclusions are so wrong because we don't have all the information that we need to make that conclusion. Ever done that? Don't answer. I already know your answer because we all have done it. What if God does the unexpected in your life? How do you respond? Let us look at the words of our text to find the answer to the question: **When God does the unexpected, how do we respond?**

Joseph is sometimes the forgotten man in the Christmas story. We know very little of Joseph. The Bible doesn't even record a single word that Joseph spoke. Joseph met a young lady who he had fallen in love with. They became engaged. They were considered to be husband and wife, even though they had not yet begun to live together. He was most likely getting their home ready for his bride. Mary had gone off to see her cousin, Elizabeth, for 3 months. When she returned home, Joseph had the surprise of his life. He would have to deal with something he NEVER would have expected. His Mary was pregnant. Suddenly, all his plans were put on hold. Joseph must have been devastated.

We can only imagine the thoughts that were going through Joseph's mind. How could this happen? What would people think? Where was God? Even IF Joseph WANTED to believe Mary about who this child was going to be, he just couldn't. Joseph jumped to the only conclusion that he could with the information that he had. Mary was pregnant. He wasn't the father. Mary must have been unfaithful. His plans for a happy home with the woman he loved were dashed before his eyes. His life, as well as hers, had been powerfully interrupted. God had thrown the unexpected at them.

If we are not careful, our response to the unexpected can send us down the wrong path. Joseph nearly went down the wrong path. As much as he loved her and wanted to be with her, there was nothing to do but divorce her. At that time, an engagement was much more binding than an engagement today. The only way out of the engagement was divorce.

Yet because he was a good man, he did not want to harm her or even embarrass her. He would divorce her privately. But what a mistake it would have been. All Joseph could see was the problem. All he was trying to do was to figure out a way he could get out of the problem. I think we can understand where Joseph was at. Sometimes, as we are trying to work through the problems in our lives, all we can see is the problem. We can't see the solution, even when the solution is standing right in front of us, we can't see it.

The solution to his problem was right in front of him, but he couldn't see it. He couldn't connect the dots. He couldn't fill in the blanks. I wonder, how many times Joseph may have heard those words of the prophet Isaiah: **"The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"—which means, "God with us."** God could not have been clearer. Joseph knew that promise. I'm sure he believed that promise. But how could this be happening to him. Why would God choose him and his wife? They were both descendants of King David. But who were they? They were no-bodies. That promise in Isaiah was the farthest thing out of Joseph's mind. All Joseph could see was the problem and not the big picture.

So, God stepped in to Joseph's life to connect the dots and fill in the blanks for him. God was going to take this "trouble" and turn it into something good, not just good for them, but for this entire world. He sent an angel with the message: **"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. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."**

**"Do not be afraid."** Joseph had good reason to be afraid. What would people think about Mary and Joseph? Even if they would BOTH believe the angel, who would believe them. God was asking Joseph to risk everything for Him. The challenges that he and Mary faced in the eyes of people, wouldn't end with Jesus' birth. People would probably talk about his mother. There would still be the rumors that surrounded them. They would have to run for their lives to Egypt

and back to Nazareth. They didn't have much money. It was not going to be easy. So, what does Joseph do? **"He did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife."** When God would tell Joseph to take his family to Egypt in the middle of the night to get away from Herod, he goes. When God tells Joseph to take his family back to the land of Israel, he goes. When the Law of the Lord requires Joseph to take his son, Jesus, to Jerusalem, he goes.

Why does Joseph go? Why does he follow God's will? The answer is in our text: **"She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins," and "they will call him Immanuel – which means, 'God with us.'"** When God does the unexpected, how do we respond? We trust the God who saved his people from their sins and came to be with us. That's how we respond to the unexpected in life – we follow Christ who did the most unexpected thing in this world – he came to be with us to save us from our sins.