

Advent 4
December 22, 2019

A baby changes everything. Anyone who has been or is a parent of a baby understands that statement. The birth of a child is both exciting and scary at the same time. It can be scary being a parent, especially a first time parent. You bring this little package home from the hospital, and the question crosses your mind in thinking – “*Now what?*” You soon realize that every decision you make now affects more than just you. It may cause you to look at the big picture more than it used to. Having a baby gives you a whole new timetable in life. Instead of just putting on a coat and hopping into your car and go, you now have to take much longer to be ready to go. The baby needs to be fed, change a diaper, gather his stuff, load him into the car seat, load the stroller into the car, begin to back out of the driveway, stop, change the diaper again. What used to take 5 minutes, now takes 30 minutes. Sleep? What’s that? *A baby changes everything.*

Yet, it can also be exciting. You love being greeted by that big old grin on your child’s face when you walk through the door at your house after work. It can be so cool to try to see the world through the eyes of a child. The little things in life take on a whole different meaning for you. A child causes you to not worry about the little things anymore. You think about all the many hopes and dreams that lay ahead of you. You treasure every day as you watch your child grow up. *A baby changes everything.*

A baby was soon going to change everything for a man whose name was Joseph. 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 and be intimate. 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. Mary would come home with a baby bump. This was something that Joseph never expected. Suddenly, all his plans, all his hopes, and dreams were put on hold. *A baby changes everything.*

We can only imagine the thoughts that were going through Joseph’s mind. What would people think? Nazareth was not a big city. People would talk. People would make assumptions. Would they turn their backs on him? What would they think of Mary? Perhaps, Joseph felt betrayed. How could Mary do this to him? What would happen now? He was afraid. His plans for a happy home with the woman he loved would be dashed before his eyes. His life, as well as Mary’s, had been interrupted big time. *A baby changes everything.*

As far as Joseph could see, there was only one way out for him. Matthew writes: **“Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.”** Joseph was a good man. He did not want to harm her or even embarrass her. He would divorce her privately. Yet, all Joseph could see was the problem. He didn’t realize that the solution for all the problems in his life was right there in front of him. I think we can understand how Joseph felt. All we can see is the problems that we face. We can’t see the solution that we see right there in front of us - Jesus. *A baby changes everything.*

Joseph 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. At that moment in time that promise in the book of Isaiah was the farthest thing out of Joseph’s mind. He couldn’t see how *a baby changes everything.*

So, God stepped in to Joseph’s life to connect the dots and fill in the blanks for him. God told him that this baby was going to change everything. This baby would change things not only in the lives of Mary and Joseph. It would change everything in this world. So, God sends an angel. **“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.”** This was the child that the whole world had been waiting for. This child would be the fulfillment of the promise that God made in the Garden of Eden. This child would save this world from its sin. This child would **“save his people from their sins.”** *This baby changes everything.*

God was asking Joseph to risk everything for Him. The challenges that Mary and Joseph were about to face were many. Even if Mary and Joseph believed these two angels, who would believe them? No doubt, there would be rumors that they would face. They would have to run for their lives to Egypt. They wouldn't have much money. It wasn't going to be easy for this young couple. So, what does Joseph do? **"When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife."** He trusted God that this *baby changed everything for him*.

How about you? Do you face a challenge that seems to be more than you can bear? Burdened with guilt? Facing a challenge that seems to have no way out? This morning, just as he did with Joseph, God wants you to see Him. He wants you to look forward to the birth of Jesus because that baby that will be lying in the manger changes everything. Your sins are forgiven by God. God says to you: **"Do not be afraid."** May we give thanks that the *baby Jesus changes everything*. Amen.