

In Jewish culture, two families would enter into a marriage agreement. When they did so the son and daughter would be considered husband and wife. But they were not permitted to come together physically yet. The man would be expected to build a house and prepare the home for his bride. She in the meantime would wait for him to finish and have all things ready. When the man's father gave his stamp of approval on the house (since the man might be in a hurry and cut corners) then he would go and get his wife, and they would have a big wedding ceremony and then finally consummate the marriage. Thus, Mary and Joseph were already betrothed.

A wedding in ancient Israel culture and UK culture can be a very public spectacle. Family, friends and preparation all add into the sense of occasion.

Have you ever had to cancel an event for any reason when expectation was high for those coming? What happened?

Read Matthew 1:18-25

1. How might Joseph have found out that Mary was pregnant?
2. When have you had to share difficult truths to other people?
3. How might he have felt when he discovered this? How might Mary have felt knowing what Joseph must have been thinking she had done?
4. What did Joseph plan to do?

4. Why does Joseph's plan in verse 19 show that he is a righteous man? What do you think of his plan?
5. In the following verses, how does what happens next teach us about God?
6. Why might Joseph have "been afraid to take Mary as his wife?"
7. What would people then think about him? Why do we care so much about others think of us?
8. How does the gospel speak into our fears of what others think about us? See the following. *Identity* - Eph 1:4-5, Rom 8:38-39 *Approval* Gal 1:10, *Encounter God in the fear* Matthew 10:29-31, *Free to love others instead of fearing them* Philippians 2:3-4
9. Why was it necessary for Jesus to be born of a virgin? Read Romans 5:15-17
10. What did Joseph do? What does this tell us about his character?
11. What lessons can we learn from this that we can apply to our lives today?

Prayer Points

Please pray for Chris Simpson and the family following the death of her husband John. Pray for the family and the arrangements taking place.

Pray for the Alpha course, the leaders, people to come and the courage to invite others.

Pray for the Baptist churches in north-east India. Pray that God would raise a great missional movement there, and that BMS will also have a catalytic role to play in this.

Sermon Notes



BIBLE STUDY

December 8th 2024

Do not be Afraid:

Fear of what others might think

Matthew 1:18-25

The Bible often says things like, “Do not fear,” “Do not be afraid,” and “Fear not.” Of course, these commands do not contradict the command to “fear God” (1 Peter 2:17). The fear of God keeps us *from* sin; the fear of man leads *to* sin, and that is what we are to avoid: “The fear of man brings a snare” (Proverbs 29:25, NKJV). Also, the biblical command *do not fear* does not negate the need for prudence and caution in this world. In the Christmas story we read of moments when God’s purposes lead people to go beyond their fears. What can we learn that would help us step more into the unfolding drama of God’s plan for this world?

If you would like to join a Connect Group, please contact the church office 01424 730001