

ONCE UPON A TIME

Matthew 1:18-25

I. GOD'S ANGEL SPOKE

- A. *"But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream ..."* (Matthew 1:20)
- B. Too Good Not to Be True.
 - 1. Once upon a time a brother and a sister lost in the wood come on a house made of gingerbread. Once upon a time Cinderella, who lives in loneliness, is visited by an old woman.
 - 2. Once upon a time an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream. Once upon a time Gabriel says to an unmarried peasant woman, *"Don't be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God."*
 - 3. *"People are prepared for everything except for the fact that beyond the darkness of their blindness there is a great light."* (Buechner)

II. REGAIN A SENSE OF WONDER

- A. *"Joseph, Son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit..."* (Matthew 1:20)
- B. Something's Going to Happen.
 - 1. Wonder leads to expectancy.
 - 2. *"...she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."* (Matthew 1:21)
 - 3. We see with the eyes of faith.
- C. We Need Wonder-Full Moments.
 - 1. James Thurber once said of one of his anxious friends, *"He lives at the corner of Work and Worry."*
 - 2. Weddings, symbols of the season, the sacraments.

III. THIS IS ONLY THE BEGINNING

- A. *"Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel" (which means, God with us).* (Matthew 1:23)
- B. A Humbling Experience.
 - 1. It's good for us to realize that we don't know all the answers.
 - 2. *"Awaiting Further Light."*
- C. Looking Forward to the Future.
 - 1. Howard Thurman said, *"There must be always remaining in everyone's life some place for the singing of angels ... where the commonplace is shot through with a new glory."*
 - 2. *"Hoping it might be so."*
 - 3. Once upon a time God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son.

Prayer Concerns: Members – Burney Biesel, Sarah Clark, Laura Hart, Anne Miller ...**Friends** – Bobby Atkins, Lane Brasfield, Kathy Greer, Charles Hamilton, Jean Hansford, Jim Hixon, Benette Hobday, Linda Lindner, Judy Malaquias, Sarah Moore, Dustin Salter, Jennie Stafford, Rob Turnage, **Brett Wadham** ...

Christian Sympathy is extended to *the family of Mac Kerr* who died on Wednesday, December 6.

PASTORAL PRAYER

Lord God, we ask for your grace and strength as we strive to live in love and peace with each other. We ask for this in our homes, our work, our neighborhood, and our church.

During this season, help us to be patient with those who irritate us, and help us to say kind words to those who are harsh with us. Give us open ears to accept criticism, and help us to suppress the temptation to become defensive. Help us to see problems from the point of view of others. Enable us to identify minor annoyances for what they are, and never allow them to accelerate into major confrontations.

Help us to put public peace before personal pride, and help us to look beyond justice to see mercy. In short, we wish to be more like Jesus, who taught us to pray ...

THE LORD'S PRAYER: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

MATTHEW 1:18-25

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 of the Holy Spirit; and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of 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 a virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
And his name shall be called Emmanuel"
(which means, God with us).

When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took his wife, but knew her not until she had borne a son; and he called his name Jesus.

SERMON SCHEDULE

In the Sanctuary:

December 17	<i>The Search for Meaning</i>	Philippians 4:1-9
December 24		
8:30 & 10:40 a.m.	<i>Don't Forget to Remember Me</i>	Luke 2:1-20
6:00 & 9:00 p.m.	<i>Christmas Eve Communion</i>	
December 31	<i>Jesus/Left Behind</i>	Luke 2:41-52
On the Radio (1450 AM):		
December 17	<i>A Child Called Laughter</i>	Genesis 21:1-6
December 24	<i>A Child of Mystery</i>	Luke 2:8-20
December 31	<i>New Year Under Construction</i>	Matthew 7:24-27