

A Super Parent

Matthew 1:18-25

Introduction: Do you ever feel like a person who sort of blends in with the woodwork? Do you sometimes feel like the clerk, the waiter, the agent acts as though you weren't there? It's almost like you, you're an invisible person. I know a place for you to go where you will get special attention...a new car showroom...you may have to deal with another set of emotions.

Our Scripture reading today refers to a man who goes unnoticed. Even though the event in which he participated is vividly displayed each year at Christmas time. I once looked at twenty-five Christmas carols and his name was never mentioned. He is usually depicted as leading a donkey, standing behind this wife or knocking on the door of an inn. His name was Joseph, the adoptive father of Jesus. Someone once asked Leonard Bernstein, famed conductor of the New York Philharmonic, which instrument was the most difficult to play. His immediate response was a second fiddle. I think that was the role of Joseph. He was overshadowed by the virgin mother and the baby Jesus. He surrendered his welfare for the well-being of his wife and her child. What can we learn from this man Joseph who had a non-speaking role in the Christmas drama? Someone said our actions speak louder than words and in this case,

JOSEPH'S CHOICES WERE LOUDER THAN WORDS.

Let's look at a few of his choices that apply to a parent who is called upon to be a parent.

He chose compassion over embarrassment. Matt. 1:18-21

The bill of divorcement would have vindicated him and removed him from scandal and gossip. But he was sensitive to a dream in which the the angel encouraged him to marry Mary. If you have at least one child you will experience some embarrassment or humiliation. You will learn the promotional question of Southwest Airlines, "Want to Get Away?"

Note: Joseph displayed one of the images of the Church that is often overlooked. We usually hear about the church being salt and light which she should be, but we are also called to be willing to suffer humiliation. Romans 8:36, "we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." Actually the step father walked the same path that his step son would later take. I Peter 2:21-23

He chose the divine will over human desires.

Notice the 2nd dream; go to Egypt, 2:13 What did that involve? They were poor people. This would be a strange land. What might have been Joseph's argument? I have relatives. They will hide us. But no, *he got up.* (instant obedience)

Observe the 3rd dream: Go back to Israel, 2:19 What? We have finally learned this culture. The Egyptians have been good to us. The wage scale is better here. We have planted our roots here. *So he got up.* (instant obedience) Examine the 4th dream: Go to Nazareth. 2:22. I have a sermon that is entitled, ***Nazareth, A Lousy Place to Raise a Kid.*** It was a Roman military post. It did not have the religious and righteous atmosphere of Jerusalem. Joseph might have asked, "God are you sure?" There is a saying that is popular throughout Israel. ***"Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?"*** *And he went* (instant obedience)! Sometimes this is called upon by the biological parent, the step parent, the single parent, and the foster parent, the rearrangement of dreams, agenda and aspirations of our lives for their well-being.

He chose obscurity over notoriety. Matthew 1:16

If Israel had been a free country at that time, then Joseph would have been the person with the royal right to reign. Both Matthew and Luke show that Joseph had the right to be King.

Instead he became the person of influence for the early years of Jesus. Jesus will later be called, the Carpenter of Nazareth. I can see them as they go into the woods and Joseph shows him the kind of tree that would best serve in making the yoke for the oxen. I can see his huge hand on the small hand of Jesus showing him how to use the plane. He taught him how to carve with the chisel and knife. I hear the words of Joseph come through the images of Jesus as he speaks of building a house on a rock foundation, the yoke, etc.

Joseph is the model for the obscure people in the church of Jesus Christ. The unnamed, the unheralded, the behind the scene persons who faithfully and quietly serve without notice or mention. They are gifted by the Holy Spirit. Paul talks about them in I Cor. 12.

There is a short film called The Giving Tree. a simple fanciful piece about a tree that loved a boy. When the boy was young, he swung from the tree's branches, climbed all over her, ate her apples, slept in her shade. Such happy carefree days. The tree loved a boy. But as the boy grew, he spent less and less time with the tree, "Come on, let's play," invited the Tree on one occasion, but the young man was interested only in money. "Take my apples and sell them," said the tree. He did, and then the young man didn't return for a long time, but the tree smiled when he passed by one day, "Come on, let's play!" But the man was older and tired of his world. He wanted to get away from it all. "Cut me down." Take my large trunk and make yourself a boat. Then you can sail away," said the tree. The man did, and the tree was happy.

Many seasons passed, summers and winters, windy day and lonely nights, and the tree waited. Finally, the old man returned, too old and too tired to play, to pursue riches, or to sail the seas. "I have a have a pretty good

stump left, my friend. Why don't you just sit down here and rest?" said the tree. He did, and the tree was happy. There have been a lot of Giving trees in my life, my father and mother. They were so young. She was 17 and he was 18 when they married. She was 20 years old when I was born. When I acknowledged Jesus as my One and Only Savior I was brought into the family of God. There have been so many giving trees to me. A number of them have been quiet, unobtrusive plain folks who just stood by me and helped me. People who adopted me like Joseph adopted Jesus.

CONCLUSION: We should be in prayer today for the fathers of the children in America. I would not want to try to be a father in today's world without the grace, wisdom and strength of the Lord. I am privileged to have three fine children and I am so thankful to be the biological father of each of them. But what a noble thing to say, "I will raise someone else's child." I will be willing to rearrange my life to influence a little person's life."