



Raquette Lake Chapel Sunday Blast December 5, 2021 -- 2 Advent

“Joseph’s, Husband of Mary, Angelic Visit”

The First Angelic Visit in Matt 1

“...an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”

[Matt 1:20-21]

Whatever Joseph’s expectations, hopes and dreams for himself and his family were, they were radically altered. As we recall the story of the birth of Christ, we would do well to pause and reflect on what Joseph’s life was like, as told in the Gospel of Matthew, chapters 1 and 2. We should pay attention to the dreams with divine, angelic visitors, and how Joseph responded, especially the first dream.

What did the First Angel Reveal to Joseph?

The angel that visited in a dream told Joseph many remarkable things: Mary’s pregnancy was a visitation from the Holy Spirit; a son would be born, and he was to be named Jesus. One day the son would “save his people from their sins”; and this birth was foretold in the Hebrew Bible. While modern day Christians understand the “Holy Spirit” as a member of the Trinity, Joseph, a Jew, would understand “Holy Spirit” as the divine force, quality, and influence of God over the universe or over his creatures.



Further, Joseph may have known that the name Jesus is the Greek form of this Hebrew name Yeshua and translates, in both languages, to the phrase “God – Yahweh – is Salvation.” And surely, Joseph would have heard Isaiah 7:14 read in his synagogue at some point: “...the Lord himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son and will call Him Immanuel.” This was quite a lot for Joseph to take in all at once! The Gospel of Matthew shows that some time passed, thankfully, for Joseph, as he began to adjust to his new unknown path. Not only would the family have to move under threat of danger, but their expectations, hopes, and dreams would be forever altered.

What Can Joseph Teach Us About Our Expectations?

Joseph was: “...a righteous man and unwilling to expose her [Mary] to public disgrace.” (Matt 1:19) We can admire Joseph for his courage and his compassion for Mary, even in the face of social customs and religious doctrines. Yet, we can safely assume that Joseph’s life followed his religious traditions, and that his behavior was guided by those traditions and his sense of fairness and justice.

On a personal level I wonder what would have happened if Joseph simply ignored the dream. That sounds outlandish; certainly, Joseph's life would have been much different. However, throughout time God has persisted in getting His word attended to! For us in this season we can look back and recollect when there was a clear message that pointed out God's path for us. Perhaps we can hold up Joseph, Mary's husband, as a model of justice and obedience, and we can continue, like Joseph, to be stewards of God's house, caring for the Church and our families.

Looking forward in Advent we can ponder how we respond to the lessons Joseph teaches us:

- Joseph teaches us kindness
- Joseph teaches us obedience
- Joseph was a protector

May it be so for us. Amen.

Special prayers this week: for those family members and friends who are undergoing treatments for cancer; for Elizabeth, Pete; for our soldiers abroad; for travellers. Hear our prayers O Lord!

"In the Bleak Mid-Winter" by Christina Georgina Rossetti

In the bleak mid-winter, frosty wind made moan,
Earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;
Snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow,
In the bleak midwinter, long ago.

Our God, Heaven cannot hold Him, nor earth sustain;
Heaven and earth shall flee away when He comes to reign.
In the bleak midwinter a stable place sufficed
The Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ.

Enough for Him, Whom cherubim, worship night and day,
A breastful of milk, and a mangerful of hay;
Enough for Him, Whom angels fall before,
The ox and ass and camel which adore.

Angels and archangels may have gathered there,
Cherubim and seraphim thronged the air;
But His mother only, in her maiden bliss,
Worshipped the beloved with a kiss.

What can I give Him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
If I were a Wise Man, I would do my part;
Yet what I can I give Him: give my heart.



The second candle in Advent symbolizes *faith* and is called the "Bethlehem Candle." It reminds us of the small city where Christ was born.