

Do Not Be Afraid

Scripture Reading — Matthew 1:17-25

“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.” — Matthew 1:20

Matthew makes clear that David is centrally important in the family line of Jesus. But with Joseph there is a disconnect. He is a son (descendant) of David, but Joseph is not the father of Jesus. If the birth of Jesus puzzles you, think how puzzling it was to Joseph.

Joseph was engaged to Mary, and they had dreams of raising a family together. Before the wedding, however, she came to him with the news that she was pregnant—by the Spirit of God. *Oh, sure!*

Picture Joseph as he wrestled with his dilemma. He wanted to live God's way. The law of God said he had the right to have her stoned to death. But Joseph was also gracious and did not want to disgrace Mary. Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, to explain what God was doing. The angel began by saying, “Do not be afraid . . .”—and then assured Joseph that the child conceived in Mary was from the Holy Spirit and would be the long-promised Savior. This child was to be named Jesus, because he would “save his people from their sins.”

Is there something in the past, present, or future causing you to fear? Christmas reminds us of Immanuel (“God with us”). In Jesus, *God is with us*. And his promise at the end of Matthew still stands today: “I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).

Prayer

Dear Jesus, we long to be free of fear. Make us secure in the knowledge that you are with us, no matter what happens. Amen.

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