

Angel Perspectives: Inspired to Believe

A devotional series

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Joseph Devotional

QUESTION:

Share as a family a time that you have either given or been shown mercy. Pray that God will help you to extend mercy to those around you.

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 1:18-25 NASB

DEVOTIONAL:

As we approach the Christmas season, we are overtaken by the celebrations. Joy, Peace, Love all permeate the air around us as the music of the season loudly proclaims the Savior's birth. But there is another principle that we must remember: Mercy. Mercy, like threads in a shirt, tie the components of the Christmas story together, binding them into the perfect story of our future.

In Matthew, we see the visit of the angel of the Lord to Joseph. Here, Joseph, betrothed to Mary, is struggling to deal with the reality of her pregnancy. While they are not fully married at this time, according to Jewish tradition, a formal divorce is required to break the betrothal. Joseph, believing he has been betrayed by Mary seeks to hold to the Law and divorce her. But, due to his love of Mary, he will seek to do so in a private and merciful way. As he wrestles with this, God reaches out to him through an angelic dream. In the dream, God commands Joseph to fulfill the marriage to Mary and name the Child, Jesus. God also emphasizes Joseph's lineage in the House of David.

Man's mercy can only reach so far. What God was asking Joseph to do illustrates that God's mercy reaches further and is more complete than ours. God's promise to David, found in 2 Samuel 7:13, is that his kingdom will be forever. Even after receiving this promise, David went on to betray the precepts of the Law (2 Samuel 11). However, God holds true to His promises despite our failings. The story of Christ's birth is supernatural Salvation, and Salvation is Mercy manifest. Even the name God designated for his Son, Jesus, means The Salvation of Yahweh.

God's Mercy also reaches through the long years of history. In Isaiah, God, through the prophet Isaiah, describes the coming Savior of Israel (Isaiah 7: 10-16). He would walk among us, as one of us. His name would be Immanuel, meaning "God with us". God would be with us, dwell with us, be close to us. The Christmas story, and even the whole of Scripture, is the story of God reaching for us. He is straining, trying to open our hearts to the Mercy he has brought.

Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit. This wonderfully supernatural event, described to Joseph by the angel, illustrates the role Jesus would perform on earth. He would be the Adam that didn't fall for the tricks of the Evil One. He would be the David that didn't succumb to the failings of the flesh. He would be the High Priest that would open the House of God to all and establish the New Covenant. He would be Mercy incarnate, saving us all from debts of sin.

This Season of Christmas is a time to rejoice, to be at peace, and to know securely that God is in control. Christ's birth wasn't just some historical necessity, but the fulfillment of centuries of prophecies. It was the fulfillment of the Story of Mercy that God has written throughout all of history. Let us reflect joyfully upon that thought. God will use us, however far removed from greatness we think we are. He has and will always fulfill His promises. He has and will continue to bring us Salvation.

Rejoice, oh you downtrodden! Christ has brought forth Mercy incarnate.

Rejoice, oh you lost! Christ leads us forward to the Father.

Rejoice, all this day! Christ is Immanuel, the fulfillment of history!

ACTIVITY:

Tell a story of when you didn't receive a punishment you deserved. How did this make you feel? How does God do that for us through the Birth, Crucifixion, and Resurrection of Christ?