

Sermon Notes for September 11, The Witness of a Godly Husband, Mt 1:18-25

INTRODUCTION

- A. The speaker at a woman's club was lecturing on marriage & she asked how many in her audience wanted to "mother" their husbands.
 - 1. One lady in the back row raised her hand.
 - 2. "You do want to mother your husband?" the speaker asked. "Mother?" the woman echoed. "I thought you said smother."

- B. There is no doubt but that we husbands aren't always exactly the husbands are wives dreamed about.
 - 1. However, Scripture instructs us husbands on how to treat our wives.
 - a. "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Eph 5:25).
 - b. "Husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel" (1 Pt 3:7).

 - 2. In our text this morning, we have an example of what God expects husbands to be.
 - a. Joseph, in the way he cares for Mary and responds to God, provides us with a wonderful example of how we can leave a testimony of a godly husband.
 - b. The biblical truth about Joseph.
 - 1) The truth is that Joseph leaves us "A WITNESS OF A GODLY HUSBAND."
 - 2) We see that a GODLY HUSBAND is A LAWFUL HUSBAND, A LOVING HUSBAND, A LISTENING HUSBAND, & A LIMITED HUSBAND.

A LAWFUL, RIGHTEOUS, HUSBAND, vv 18-19

- A. "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 from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly."

- B. Joseph was a lawful, righteous, man in that he followed the law of God. He always did what God directed him to do, we see that through a series of dreams that Joseph will have and his response to those times when God sends an angel to communicate with him, he always does as God directs him to do.

- C. Mary & Joseph were betrothed to one another.

1. In Judaism, betrothals were much more binding than engagements are today.
 - a. For a betrothal to take place, the groom paid at least part-if not the entire-bridal price at this point.
 - b. The relationship had not yet been consummated sexually. However, they were considered married, for the betrothed had pledged themselves to one another; therefore, we find Joseph referred to as Mary's husband throughout this passage.
 - c. However, Joseph likely did not know Mary very well.
 - 1) Betrothals were commonly arranged by the parents.
 - 2) Plus, those betrothed in Palestine did not spend any private time together.

2. Joseph & Mary are betrothed to one another, and before they come together, Mary is found with child.
 - a. Matthew adds that Mary was found to be with child "from the Holy Spirit."
 - 1) We have the benefit of this text to know how Mary turned up expecting, but Joseph did not.
 - 2) An angel had been to Mary to inform her that she would be with child through the Holy Spirit, but no angel has yet been to Joseph.
 - 3) What is Joseph going to think?
 - a) Joseph knows without any doubt that he has not been intimate with Mary, and the child cannot be his.
 - b) But, Joseph knows that naturally children are conceived only one way, and surely he thinks that Mary has been immoral. What else could he think at this point?
 - c) Also, remember that most betrothed couples did not know each other very well, so Joseph may have had absolutely no reason to believe Mary's innocence.
 - b. In fact, Jesus has often been referred to as illegitimate.
 - 1) When Jesus was rejected at Nazareth, we read of the Jews said, "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?" (Mk 6:3).
 - a) Because the Jews traced genealogy through their fathers' lines, adult children were generally referred to as the children of their father, whether or not their father was living.
 - b) That the Jews refer to Jesus here as the "son of Mary" rather than the son of Joseph may indicate that they believed he was illegitimate.

- 2) Whether that is what the Jews meant or not, many Jewish texts have ascribed Jesus' conception to immorality and the idea of a virgin birth as a clever way to cover that up.
- 3) Origen, a second century Christian apologist, had to spend time refuting the idea that Jesus was born from a relationship between Mary & a Roman soldier named Pantera.

D. Because Joseph believes that Mary has been immoral, he plans to divorce her quietly.

1. Joseph planned on divorcing Mary, for he was "a just man."
 - a. The idea of being "a just man" is that he tries to do the right thing. For example, Jesus said, "the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Mt 13:43).
 - b. Joseph, then, is a man who wants to do the right thing.
2. As part of doing the right thing in this passage, Joseph plans on divorcing Mary.
 - a. Moses permitted divorce, but he did not require it (Deut 24:1-4).
 - b. However, if Joseph went ahead & married his betrothed, it would be a sign that the child was his. So, if Joseph is going to be a **LAWFUL HUSBAND**-a husband who does the right thing- he really has no choice but to divorce Mary, for he believes she has been guilty of adultery.

E. Joseph was a **LAWFUL HUSBAND**, not only in that he was going to divorce Mary, but when he discovers that Mary is a virgin, that she has committed no sexual immorality, and that the Child has been conceived through the power of God, Joseph takes Mary as his wife as he's been instructed.

F. Guys, are we **LAWFUL HUSBANDS**?

1. Are we men who strive to lead our families in doing what is right? That was Joshua's mission: "As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Josh 24:15). Is that our mission?
2. Are we men who strive to love our wives the way Jesus loved the church? Are we men who monitor what immorality our children are exposed to? Are we men who are **LAWFUL**, striving to follow the law of God?

A LOVING MAN, v 19

- A. Joseph obviously cared about Mary; "Her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly."
- B. The picture of Joseph in this passage is one of a man caught between a rock & a hard place.
1. Being a just man of good reputation, he needs to put Mary away, but on the other hand, he is a loving caring man who was developing feelings for Mary, so he resolves to divorce Mary quietly.
 2. A public divorce would have been a big deal.
 - a. In first century Palestine, a woman with a child would be hard pressed to find a husband. Therefore, if her parents died, the woman would be without any means of income.
 - b. Furthermore, she would have been subject to the death penalty.
 - 1) Granted, the death penalty was rarely-if ever-used in first-century Judea for adultery.
 - 2) But, could you imagine the eyes glaring oat Mary as she walked into the synagogue on the Sabbath? "She should have died!"
 3. Joseph could have divorced her without much public shame, for a divorce simply required a plain document with two witnesses.
- C. Here's the point:
1. Joseph is a man who is just and desperately wants to do the upright thing. Thus, he is going to divorce a woman who, in his mind, has been immoral.
 2. However, because his cares he is a loving man, he is going to act in a way not to embarrass her.
- D. Husbands need to love their wives deeply.
1. "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Eph 5:25).
 2. "Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them" (Col 3:19).
 3. Are we men who are loving our wives?

A LISTENING HUSBAND, vv 20-24

- A. Joseph listened to the will of God; READ TEXT.
- B. I would love to have seen Joseph's face when he woke up from that dream!
1. He's planning on divorcing his betrothed because she turns up with child before they come together.
 2. The angel comes to Joseph and says, "Son of David [reminding Joseph of his royal lineage], don't worry about going through with your marriage. Mary has not been immoral. She is a virgin. This is from God, not man. In fact, the Child in her is the Messiah, and he's going to bring salvation."
 3. Can you imagine the look on his face? A look of relief, a look of guilt for not believing Mary, a look of responsibility knowing that he is about to become the step-father of the Messiah.
- C. Far more amazing than the look on Joseph's face is the reaction from his heart: he listens to the angel, wakes up from his dream & takes Mary as his wife.
1. On the one hand, this shouldn't surprise us at all, for we have already been informed that Joseph is a just man, a righteous man.
 2. On the other hand, Joseph had to give up so much to take Mary as his wife.
 - a. As we've already mentioned, the fact that Joseph goes ahead with the marriage is a sign to people that he has been immoral with Mary. Who is going to believe that this Child was conceived miraculously?
 - b. He gave up the right to father his firstborn.
 - 1) Remember that in ancient Israel the firstborn was very important. In fact, the greatest honor for a Jewish father was siring his firstborn.
 - a) When the death angel went through Egypt, he slew all the firstborn.
 - b) The importance of the firstborn was seen in the command to consecrate the firstborn: "Consecrate to me all the firstborn. Whatever is the first to open the womb among the people of Israel, both of man and of beast, is mine" (Ex 13:2).
 - 2) The firstborn was a sign of vitality & strength.
 - c. Under the societal customs of the day, husbands were required to divorce wives who had committed adultery. Thus, if people

believed Mary had been unfaithful, Joseph was doing the publicly unacceptable thing in marrying her.

- d. Furthermore, by delaying consummating the marriage, Joseph could not produce the evidence of Mary's virginity (Deut 22:15); therefore, Mary & Joseph would be required to begin their marriage in shame.

D. Think about all of this!

1. Joseph takes his will, his desires, his wants, his wishes, and places them under the will of God in obedience.
2. How many people today are willing to yield their will to the will of God?
 - a. How many times do you see a kid in Wal-Mart screaming & crying because Mommy won't buy him that new toy? Aren't there many who act that way when it comes to the Word of God? "But, God, I want. God I think. But, God!!!!"
 - b. Joseph doesn't complain, Joseph doesn't argue; Joseph simply does what God commands.

E. How willing are we to obey the will of God regardless of what we ourselves desire?

1. God expects us to be obedient.
 - a. When Saul justified his disobedience by saying that he was going to sacrifice the spoil of the Amalekites, Samuel replied, "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams" (1 Sam 15:23).
 - b. "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Mt 7:21).
2. One man once wisely said: "The first duty of every soul is to find not its freedom but its Master."
 - a. Joseph successfully found the master of his soul in the will of God.
 - b. Have you found the master of your soul in the will of God?

A LIMITED HUSBAND, v 25

- A. Joseph limited himself sexually; he "knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus."

- B. Weddings in ancient Palestine were large feasts which normally lasted 7 days.
1. The marriage was then consummated on the 7th night of the feast.
 2. However, Joseph abstained from sexual intercourse with Mary until after the birth of Jesus.
 - a. The Greek literally reads, "was knowing her not," and draws attention to the period of time between the wedding & Jesus' birth during which Joseph did not have marital relations with Mary.
 - b. Why did Joseph not have marital relations with Mary until after the birth of Jesus?
 - 1) It cannot be because there is something inappropriate about sexuality in marriage.
 - a) "Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth, a lovely deer, a graceful doe. Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight; be intoxicated always in her love" (Prov 5:18-19).
 - b) "The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another" (1 Cor 7:3-5).
 - 2) Because Joseph could rightfully have intercourse with Mary, the only logical explanation as to why he refrained was to demonstrate beyond all doubt that Jesus was not his biological Son.
 3. The interesting thing about Joseph's abstaining from marital relations is that Jewish teachers taught that men had no self-control, but Joseph has no sexual knowledge of his wife, thus he stands as a model of self-control.
- C. What can we learn from Joseph's self-control?
1. Sex is not the most important part of life.
 - a. I understand that statement likely seems quite odd to you.
 - 1) However, our society has so glamorized sex that I'm afraid we need to be reminded of that truth.
 - a) Flip on the television and you can watch programs where housewives are desperate to have sex with someone other than their spouses,

- where girlfriends get together & talk openly about sex, or you can see advertisements where the producers remembered the axiom "Sex sells."
- b) Today we need filters on our personal computers to protect our children because if you make a little mistake in spelling, you may end up on a site not fit to mention.
- 2) I fear that too often we ourselves become immune to a proper view of sex because of the sensationalism we see all around us.
 - a) How many of us-if we were to be honest-have watched programming that should not even be mentioned among saints?
 - b) How many of us-if we're honest-have bought something we didn't really need because "Sex sells."
- b. However, Scripture presents a totally different view of sexuality.
 - 1) Sexuality is wholesome & good. God, Himself created us as sexual creatures.
 - 2) But, we are far more than sexual creatures.
 - a) Joseph does not have marital relations with Mary until after Jesus was born.
 - b) Paul writes to the Corinthians, "To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single" (1 Cor 7:8). Because sexuality properly belongs in marriage, Paul believes these Corinthians could live good lives without sex.
 - c) Additionally to the Corinthians Paul writes, "Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control" (1 Cor 7:5).
2. We guys also learn that we need to see our wives as more than sexual objects.
 - a. I fear that here, too, we can be adversely affected by our society. Because we Christian guys are bombarded by sexual images all the time & know that sexuality belongs in marriage, we may inappropriately believe that our wives need to give themselves to us whenever we want them to.
 - b. However, Joseph is married, his love for Mary is growing, and he does not have sex with her. Think of the special bond they share because of how God has involved Himself in their lives.

- c. What if something happened to our wives to where we could not engage in sexual activity?
 - 1) Such accidents do happen & many couples face the reality of such a situation.
 - 2) If such were to happen to our wives, would our marriages survive? They could, but only if we see our wives as much more than sexual objects?

Conclusion:

Joseph's example to us, we are to be: Godly, Righteous, Loving, Listening and Limited/Disciplined/Self-Controlled as directed by God.

- A. Joseph was in tune with God he knew when God was directing him and he followed through. I think it is so much easier for us when we know it's God.
- B. We have to be careful satan is talking to us as well and I fear we can't always distinguish his voice/message from God's. I think for Joseph this was easy because he was obedient to God...
- C. Invitation: Which way does you dial need to be turned to tune in God?