

WHEN GOD MESSES WITH YOUR PLANS

Scripture: John 1:6-8, 19-28

Scripture Reading: Matthew 1:18-25

Introduction:

There's something special about Christmas pageants, even those in which everything seems to go wrong.

I think you'll like this story:

A church tried to outdo the previous years Christmas pageants, so they decided to rent a donkey for Mary to ride on.

It seemed like a great idea at the time.

Have you ever noticed that a lot of things “sound like a good idea at the time?”

The day of Christmas pageant arrived.

The congregation sang beautifully some Christmas carols and the angel choir, complete with haloes, got through their first big number “almost on key and in unison.”

The time came for the grand entrance of Joseph and Mary, with Mary riding on the donkey.

She was “carrying what later proved to be a Raggedy Andy doll.”

Then it happened.

The donkey made two hesitant steps through the door of the church sanctuary.

He took a look at the whole scene and then locked his legs.

The donkey would not move and the entire procession came to a halt.

Jerking on the halter had no effect on the locked legged donkey.

The donkey would not move.

Just then the Trustee chairman seated in the front row and dressed in his Sunday best, came to the rescue.

The floor of the sanctuary was a polished cement.

With another man pulling on the halter, the trustee chairman got behind the donkey, now picture this in your mind.

Crouched and the behind of the donkey and pushed.

Slowly sliding the rigid donkey across the floor, inch by inch.

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They moved towards the front.

The Choir director chose at that moment to turn on a tape recorder, which blared forth the Hallelujah Chorus sung by the Mormon Tabernacle Choir.

This scared the already bewildered donkey.

The donkey wanted out of the church and unseated Mary onto the floor.

By this time the whole congregation was in a uproar of laughter.

And the Organizers of the Christmas pageant decided never again to put on a Christmas play.

Illus.

Let me tell you this story about a little town in South Dakoto.

Cliff Thomas says it is the custom in their town to give a Christmas gift of a few dollars to the trash collector.

Some collectors he says in his town remind their customers by taping a card to the trash can:

It would say something like this: "Seasons Greetings from your trash collector."

He said, "Last year I forgot to respond to the first greeting card.

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And just a day or two before Christmas, there appeared a second card on my trash can:

"Seasons Greetings from your trash collector.
SECOND NOTICE."

That's funny!

One more:

One of the members invited his brother's family to their church for a special Christmas service.

During the service, a 4 year old boy began to squirm in the pew and whispered to his dad that he had to go to the potty.

The father took the boy's hand and led him out of his seat into the aisle toward the rest room.

About halfway down the aisle, the little 4 year old boy stopped, turned around and said loud and clear:

"I have go to the potty, God, but I'll be right back."

Hey guy's, do you remember the days of your engagement?

You had fallen in love with the dream of your life.

And what was even better, SHE HAD FALLEN IN
LOVE WITH YOU TOO!

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There came that time when you made up your mind to ask her to marry you.

You contemplated and wondered if she would say “Yes.”

And you were nervous about it, but finally you got your nerve up.

And you popped the question, “Will you marry me?”

And She said “Yes, I’ll marry you.”

Wow! What a feeling. She said “Yes.”

And you went everywhere telling people you were engaged to be married.

THIS MORNING, I WANT TO TEACH YOU ABOUT THE MARRIAGE OF JOSEPH AND MARY:

The title of my sermon is “When God Messes With Your Plans.”

Engagements in the days of Joseph and Mary were a lot different than our engagements today.

Back then it was a betrothal.

In the Greek it’s called a **Kiddushin**.

It’s far more binding than our modern engagement.

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In our society engagements are something like this:

guy meets a girl.

they begin to date.

They fall in love.

He asks her to marry him.

He goes to the father and asks if he can marry his daughter.

Most guys skip this last part and just tell the parents they’re gettin’ married.

Illus.

I’ll never forget after I asked Drusilla to marry me and she said, “Yes.”

It was in a downtown Columbus parking garage when I gave her ring.

Dru said, “Do you think you need to go and ask my Dad for permission to marry me.”

I said, “Well, if that’s what you think I should do I’ll do it.”

And she said, “Well, I think that’s what you’re suppose to do.”

So we both agreed I would do it right away.

So I rehearsed going to Her Dad, George.

I remember going to her home at 330 Maplewood Ave. in Whitehall.

George was sitting on the couch reading the newspaper.

I sat down across from him and greeted him and said “hi, how are you doing?”

He said, “hi” reading the paper.

I cleared my throat and said, “George could I talk to you about something important?”

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“Ya’ll, Dan, what is it?”
I said, “George, I love your daughter Drusilla, would it be okay with you if I married her?”
And I waited for a moment while he looked at me.
I didn’t know what he was going to say.
And George said, “Well I reckon if that’s what she wants.”
And I said, “Well thanks!”
And that was it.

Back then engagements were handled so much differently than today in our society.

In those days, engagements were pre-arranged by the parents.

It could have been when the child was born. Or it could have been when they were children.

But there came a point when the couple were engaged and began to make plans for their marriage.

Can imagine with me this morning, Joseph.

The wedding date is approaching.
He is making plans to see Mary.
His engagement to Mary is going to last for one year.
During this engagement it just like being married.
The engagement was as binding as marriage.
They didn’t live together during this time.
But Joseph was known as Mary’s husband during their time of engagement.
The only thing that could end it was a formal divorce.

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And an infidelity during this engagement was considered adultery.

Can you see Mary with me this morning?

The date that every young girl lives for is just about to arrive.

She dreams as she and her parents make the wedding plans.

She loved Joseph although Joseph was quite older than her.

The engagement had already been set when the Angel Gabriel appeared to her.

Mary and Joseph had PLANS.

They live together as husband and wife.

BUT THEN, GOD MESSED WITH THEIR PLANS.

Let me reason with us this morning: Think about this:

It was never in their goals for Mary to become pregnant before their wedding.

And certainly, the idea of becoming pregnant miraculously and giving birth without knowing a man added to their perplexity.

She even asked in Luke 1:34

“How can this be, seeing I know not a man?”

What Joseph’s reaction?

Quite different than Mary’s reaction! Wouldn’t you say?

When he finds out that Mary’s pregnant and he knows it wasn’t him

He has to make a decision.

Is there any way that he can believe that Mary has been faithful to him?

I mean how can she become pregnant by the Holy Spirit and she is going to give birth to the Son of God.

The Messiah?

Can Joseph really believe this?

Or is he going to have to break off the engagement?

Of course, you and I know the rest of the story.

They did go ahead and get married.

And Mary gave birth to the Messiah and the rest is history.

LET ME SHARE WITH YOU THREE
OBSERVATIONS BASED UPON THIS BIBLICAL
SCENE:

**I. THE FIRST ONE IS – GOD DIDN’T ASK
JOSEPH AND MARY FOR PERMISSION – HE
TOLD THEM!**

**A. God simply told them His plan and His will
for their lives.**

Doesn’t God still do that today with us?

I mean – no where in the Scripture do I find where the angel announces God’s plan, and then asks Mary or Joseph if this is okay with them.

God simply said, This is my plan! This is my Will!

Application:

Let me ask you this question:

How many of you are doing what you planned on doing when you say, you were in the 7th or 8th grade of school?

I thought I would have liked to become a fireman.

I thought I would have liked to have become a farmer.

I thought I would have liked to have become a truckdriver.

The farthest thing from my mind was to be in the clergy.

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You see, most of us aren't doing what we thought we would be doing when we graduated from High School!

It has been my experience that the majority of the plans I had as a young person became different than what has really come to pass in my life.

What about you? What did you have plans to be?

Some of the plans have changed because I have changed my decisions and decided on another plan.

But other plans were changed because of the circumstances beyond my control.

And God has never asked me when He has chosen to put those circumstances into my life.

B. God has A Plan For Your Life.

He made that plan before you ever were born into this world.

Listen friend, God has no intention of asking you for your permission to proceed on with His plan.

I remember as a young boy listening to my pastors.

I remember one pastor preaching as saying that God has a plan for your life.

I remember vividly one Sunday evening sitting in church and the Pastor Don Carter preaching and

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prophesied that there was a young man sitting in the service that night that God was going to call to preach.

And I felt strange all over.

I couldn't think of me doing such a thing.

But God didn't come down and ask me permission to call me into full-time ministry.

God said, "Dan, this is my calling for your life."

Listen friend, God has no intention of asking your permission to proceed with His plan for your life.

But you could choose not to obey His will.

But you cannot change His will for your life.

II. SECONDLY, NOTICE WITH ME – GOD'S PLAN FOR MARY AND JOSEPH WAS NOT AN EASY ONE.

A. Sometimes we have a wrong idea of God's will for us.

Sometimes we think if we are in the will of God, then everything will be pie in the sky.

Everything will be easy.

Why life will be without any trial.

Life will be without any difficulty.

Life will be without any hardship.

But this was not the case for Joseph and Mary and neither will it be the case for you and me.

B. Consider the Following with me:

First: Why didn't God work it out so the Tax was collected either before Joseph and Mary were married, or after the Baby was born?

God could have done that!

God could have caused Mary to have Baby Jesus before the tax was collected.

Think about the hardship.

Think about the trial they had to go through.

Why she was so pregnant that she barely got to Bethlehem before the baby was born.

Second: Think about it. Traveling on foot, by camel, or a donkey for that long of a distance, **THAT IS NOT AN EASY THING FOR A PREGNANT GIRL TO DO.**

Surely God could have worked things out better than that!

Third, the Baby was Born in a Manger Because there was No Room for them in the Inn.

Have you ever been out late driving on the freeway looking for a place to stay at a hotel and you couldn't find one because they all were full?

Dru and I had that happen to us one year on vacation.

Both the kids were young and small.

I kept saying. Dru, we'll just drive a little further and than get a place.

Well, I drove too far and too late.

It was well after midnight when we finally found a room. If I remember right it was one of those real cheap hotels, Hotel 6 or something like that, and it was roach infested.

I remember going out and sleeping in the car. I couldn't handle the roaches.

You talking about frustration.

See with me the frustrations of Joseph.

He had brought his pregnant wife a long distance.

Mary is about to give birth. She is ready to deliver.

Four: AND THEY CANNOT EVEN FIND A PLACE THAT IS COMFORTABLE.

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I complained because of a cheap room and all they had was a stable.

Do you know what it was like to sleep in a stable? I was raised around the farm and I know what it's like.

I know how it smells.

Now, listen, reason with me, God is a Sovereign God!

He could have on His own reserved a room for Joseph and Mary before they ever got there and even without the use of a modern phone system.

God is able to do anything He wants to do!

It was obvious that it was NOT HIS WILL for there to be a room in the Inn.

God isn't making it easy for them.

All He wants is that they are willing to obey what He has willed for their lives.

5) The Fifth Consideration is – Why were they forced to flee Bethlehem to Egypt because of the threat of King Herod?

Again, see with me the Hand of God at work.

God sent an angel messenger to them to warn them of the danger so they could flee.

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But why didn't God just make the king's heart soften so they would have no danger at all?

Why did all the babies 2 years old and younger have to be killed especially after Mary and Joseph were gone?

How very terrible and tragic for all those little ones to have to die!

You see, understand this, the Baby Jesus was about 2 years old when his parents left to flee to Egypt.

And that wouldn't have been an easy trip either.

6) The Sixth Consideration is – After all of this, somewhere between when Joseph took his family back home and when Jesus was 30 years, Joseph died.

Jesus had to become the head of the family being the oldest.

He had to take care of his mother and his brothers and sisters.

SOMETIMES WE ERR IN OUR CONCEPT OF CHRISTIANITY THINKING LIFE IS GOING TO BE EASY JUST BECAUSE WE ARE CHRISTIANS.

Sometimes we think just because we become a Christian that God is going to manipulate and

change everything so we don't have to experience the tough challenges of life.

Jesus told us in the Word when He said:

“The broad and easy way that almost everyone takes is the way that leads to death.

“The straight and narrow and the more difficult way, is the way that leads to eternal life.”

C. When we choose the Easy Road in Life, we are not necessarily choosing the way that is the Will of God.

Folks, Jesus choose a path that led to pain, suffering, beatings, the Old Rugged Cross and finally death.

The Apostle Paul choose a path that led to imprisonment and execution.

Both of them chose paths that were to be God's plan for them.

Christian friend, listen to me, God does not choose Or promise to give us an easy trip in life.

But He promises us not to put more on us then what we can withstand. PTL.

The next time you are going through a tough time in your life.

And you begin to think how rough it is.

And you think life is unfair to you.

And you can't seem to take anymore.

Remember Jesus and what He had to go through to save you from your sins.

Recall the Apostle Paul and others who had to face the trails and the hardships of life.

DO YOU NEED A VERSE TO HELP YOU RIGHT NOW?

LOOK AT ISAIAH 43:2

“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, when you pass through the rivers, they shall not overflow you: when you walk through the fire, the flames will not burn you.”

III. MY THIRD POINT IS THIS: THOUGH THINGS WERE DIFFICULT, GOD BLESSED THEM.

In this thought there are two things:

The first one is: They wondered at the child as He grew.

Look at verses 52 in Luke chapter 2

“And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.”

Luke 2: 49-51

“And he said to them, ‘Why were you searching for Me? Didn’t you know I had to be about My Father’s business. But they didn’t understand what He was saying to them.’”

Luke 2:40

“And the child grew and became strong; He was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon Him.”

“Luke 2:33

“The child’s father and mother marveled at what was said about Him.”

Ultimately, Jesus grew up to be a blessing to the whole world. Wouldn’t you agree?

No one person has ever touched mankind like Jesus has!

No one person has ever made a difference in the lives of people like Jesus did!

Any parent would want their child to grow up to be someone of positive influence.

We are blessed if our children grow up to do something that is good for mankind.

Can you imagine Mary, the mother watching as Jesus visibly, bodily and gradually ascended up into heaven?

Can you imagine the excitement as she realized all this had come to fruition when she remembered the words of the angel Gabriel when he said,

“Congratulations! You are favored by God! The Lord is with you! Don’t be afraid, God is going to bless you greatly, soon you will become pregnant and you are going to give birth to a baby boy, and you are to name Him Jesus. He shall be great and will be called the Son of the Highest and He will reign on the throne of His father David and of His kingdom there will be no end.”

Joseph’s life can teach us that when difficult times come – and when it seems as if life has thrown us something we can’t handle ...

We can pray as Joseph did.

We can forgive those who wrong us.

And no matter how difficult it is to do so, we must always obey God.

Conclusion:

God’s plan for our lives is not always going to be exactly what we think.

God’s plan for our lives is not always easy.

But if we will agree to follow God’s plan, no matter how difficult, eternity will record a far reaching impact for good because of it.

Think about it this way: As Joseph responded to the God's Messiah - All of us play an important role in the Christmas story as we respond to the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

And if you are here this morning and are not a Christian, then now is the time for you to take your cue from the Holy Spirit and repent of your sins and put your trust in the One Who came as a babe in a manger at Bethlehem.

Jesus, the very Son of God, God's gift to us and our Messiah wants to come into your heart and life.

Won't you open your hearts door and invite Him to in?

Others may need to respond by publically following God's leading to come to this altar to let people know you've made a decision to follow Christ.

Maybe last weekend you raised your hand and accepted Jesus as your Savior.

The Bible instructs us that we need to publically show others by obeying Him.

You need to let others know about your decision and you need to follow the Biblical instruction to be baptized.

We show our love for God by obeying His commands.

Won't you obey and do as He tells you as we stand and sing