

(1)

"Four 'R's' of Christmas"
Matthew 1.18-25

FUNDAMENTALS OF EDUCATION - 3 'R's' reading, writing, rithmetic

WHAT IS ESSENCE OF CHRISTMAS - BASIC MESSAGE OF CHRISTIAN FAITH

1. RESPONSIBILITY - God expects us to do the right thing

JOSEPH IS A GOOD EXAMPLE OF THIS - couple of teenagers? probably

YOUNG JEWISH KIDS IN NAZARETH - FROM THE HOUSE OF DAVID

ENGAGEMENT - EQUIVALENT TO MARRIAGE - ONE BIG EXCEPTION
THEY DID NOT LIVE TOGETHER - SEXUAL RELATIONS WERE NOT ALLOWED

DURING ENGAGEMENT PERIOD THEY MADE THEMSELVES READY FOR E/OTHER
HUSBAND WOULD WORK TO PROVIDE HOUSE AND MEANS OF SUPPORT

NOTHING WOULD HAVE BEEN MORE HEARTBREAKING TO A YOUNG MAN

HIS BELOVED WAS UNFAITHFUL TO HIM - ANOTHER MAN - PREGNANT

OLD STORY - COMMON OCCURRENCE TODAY, MODERN SOLUTIONS:

1. ABORTION - murder the little unborn child
2. LIVE TOGETHER - who needs a piece of paper anyway
3. BABY W/OUT MARRIAGE - all we need is SSI and food stamps

Matthew 1:19 Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

WHAT DID A RIGHTEOUS MAN DO WITH A PREGNANT FIANCEE?

RIGHTEOUS - RESPONSIBLE MORAL AGENT - CONSEQUENCES TO HIS ACTIONS

LAW OF MOSES ALLOWED DIVORCE - JOSEPH WANTED TO DO SO GENTLY

DOCTOR OF PSYCHIATRY RECENTLY WROTE

"Patients with problems of humiliation are the most difficult to treat...Humiliation is perhaps the most persistent of all emotions...old humiliations stay with us for life. They wake us out of the deepest sleep and flush our face with shame and anger even when we are alone"

JOSEPH WAS NO DOUBT HUMILIATED BIG TIME

PEOPLE OF NAZARETH PROBABLY GOSSIPED ALMOST AS MUCH AS WE IN HILO
CLINTON'S DEFENSE AGAINST CHARGES OF ADULTERY -
so what - what does it matter compared to all the good I've done

THE SAME MAN WHO PROMISED TO BE FAITHFUL TO HIS WIFE
PROMISED TO FAITHFUL LEAD US ACCORDING TO THE CONSTITUTION

WHO A PERSON IS MAY NOT MATTER TO AMERICANS -
BUT IT MATTERS TO GOD

GOD'S INDICTMENT - of Joseph - of President - OF ALL OF US

Romans 3:10-12

"There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."

LAST DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENT - BORN AGAIN CHRISTIAN - JIMMY CARTER
shocked interview from Playboy magazine - admitted he
was adulterer, quoted words of Jesus

Matthew 5:28 But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman
lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

EVEN RIGHTEOUS JOSEPH COULD NOT HAVE NEVER LUSTED AFTER MARY

CHRISTMAS - AND CHRISTIANITY - IS ABOUT RESPONSIBILITY
GOD WANTS US TO MAKE THINGS RIGHT

2. REDEMPTION - God knows we cannot do the right thing

Matt 1 - long list of Jewish baby boys -
from Abraham, to David, to Jesus

ALL "FATHERED" BY SOMEONE - one with no human father

Matthew 1:16 Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born
Jesus, who is called Christ

ALTHOUGH JOSEPH HAD NO ADVANCE WARNING

Matthew 1:18 before they came together, Mary was found to be
with child through the Holy Spirit

Matthew 1:20 LATER an angel of the appeared to him in a dream and
said, "Joseph son of David, do be afraid to take Mary home as
your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy
Spirit.

ON A MISSION OF REDEMPTION - CAME INTO WORLD TO SAVE SINNERS

Matt 1:21 She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

HIGH BORN HINDU WOMAN IN INDIA REALIZED SHE WAS NOT RIGHT W/ GOD
"I need a very great prince to stand between my soul and God"
ASKED A SERVANT TO READ HER THE NEW TESTAMENT
MATT 1 - BEGAN WITH GENEALOGY, SHE THOUGHT

"what a very great prince this must be,
to have such a long line of ancestors"

HEARD vs. 21 "he will save his people from their sins."
EXCLAIMED "this is the Prince I want! this is the Prince I need!"

Luke 19:10
For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."

Romans 5:8 God demonstrates his own love for us in this:
While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

1 Timothy 1:15 Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full
acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners

BITTER PAIN OF VIET NAM VETERANS - RISKED THEIR LIVES
MANY WOUNDED, SAW MANY CLOSE FRIENDS DIE
RETURNED HOME - CRITICIZED - REJECTED - SPAT UPON
FEW THANKED THEM - FEW APPRECIATED THEIR SACRIFICE
for many today the sacrifice of Jesus is despised and ignored

TRAGIC POSSIBILITY THAT CHRIST'S REDEMPTION IS NOT FOR YOU

1829 GEORGE WILSON convicted of murder in Pennsylvania
SENTENCED TO EXECUTION - PARDONED BY PRESIDENT ANDREW JACKSON
REFUSED JACKSON'S PARDON - INSISTED NO PARDON UNLESS ACCEPTED
CASE WENT TO U.S. SUPREME COURT

CHIEF JUSTICE JOHN MARSHALL wrote "a pardon is a paper, the value
of which depends upon its acceptance by the person implicated. It
is hardly to be supposed that one under the sentence of death
would refuse to accept a pardon, but if it is refused it is no
pardon. George Wilson must be hanged" AND HE WAS HANGED

John 1:12 to all who received him, to those who believed in his
name, he gave the right to become children of God

3. REMAINS God knows how we are and still wants to be with us

ALL THIS IN FULFILLMENT OF GOD'S PROMISE TO ISAIAH-700 yrs before

Isaiah 7:14 The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

GOD WAS NOT COMING FOR A CHRISTMAS VISIT - BUT TO BE WITH US

MOST OF OUR LIFE WE TRY TO HIDE WHO WE REALLY ARE -
RITUAL OF DATING - FIND OUT WHO WE'LL SPEND REST OF LIFE WITH
spend great amounts of time and money preparing ourselves
WEAR CLOTHES WE'VE NEVER WORN - EAT IN PLACES WE'VE NEVER EATEN
TWO PEOPLE SPEND TIME TOGETHER - HOPING NOT TO BE FOUND OUT
GET MARRIED - SURPRISE!!! - HAD YOU FOOLED, DIDN'T I!!

NOT SO WITH GOD - HE KNOWS US - INSIDE AND OUT
BETTER THAN WE KNOW OURSELVES - HE IS OUR MAKER
HE SAYS "you're the very person, I care about, just like you are"
"I want to be with you"

ANGELS SAID TO SHEPHERDS 2.10 "bring you" GOOD NEWS / GREAT JOY

NOT CAESAR - KING OF JEWS - HIGH PRIEST - Shepherds/Sinners

OUTCASTS IN ISRAEL - HANG OUT WITH SHEEP ALL NIGHT

WORK PREVENTED THEM FROM GOING TO TEMPLE - LAW BREAKERS
ACCUSED OF PLANNING AND PERFORMING CRIMES

DAYS OF TRANSCONTINENTAL RAILROAD ACROSS AMERICA
DELAYED SCHEDULE TO STOP FOR WATER FOR THE ENGINES
PROBLEM SOLVED -
PLACING METAL TROUGHS 1/4 MILE LONG IN MIDDLE OF TRACK
TRAIN KEPT FULL SPEED - FIREMAN DROPPED SCOOP INTO TROUGH
SCOOPED UP WATER AS TRAIN KEPT MOVING AHEAD
MANY OF US TONIGHT - MIDST OF OUR CHRISTMAS RUSH - BUSY LIVES
KNOW YOU NEED GOD - GIVE HIM A FEW MINUTES ON THE RUN
SOME OF YOU THINK THIS HOUR WILL CARRY YOU UNTIL NEXT YEAR

Have you come to know the joy of a relationship with Christ?
GOD MORE THAN AN IMPERSONAL FORCE - Heavenly Father
JESUS MORE THAN ANCIENT HISTORY - Savior, Healer, Friend
HOLY SPIRIT MORE THAN CONFUSION - Power, Presence, Comfort of God

SOME COMING TO CHURCH IS LIKE SEEING AGED GRANDPA IN REST HOME
DON'T LIKE TO GO - BUT FEEL GUILTY IF YOU DON'T SEE HIM
TRY TO GO AS INFREQUENTLY AS POSSIBLE

ROMAN CATHOLIC THEOLOGY SAYS -
"you cannot have God as your Father, unless you have the Church
as your Mother"
AGREE - NOT THAT CHURCH GIVES SALVATION - PLACE YOU REMAIN IN IT

4. REJECTION doing God's right thing is never popular

NO BACHELOR PARTIES FOR JOSEPH - NO BRIDAL SHOWER FOR MARY
GOD MAY HAVE EXPLAINED THINGS TO THEM - BUT NOT EVERYONE ELSE
TONGUES OF NAZARETH WERE WAGGING ABOUT THESE OVER-SEXED KIDS
REJECTED FROM ANY COMFORTABLE LODGING IN BETHLEHEM - stable
REJECTED BY KING HEROD WHO KILLED ALL BABIES IN TOWN

Kids told to draw Christmas pictures - JET AIRPLANE ???
"flight to Egypt" -

4 People: Jesus, Mary, Joseph, Pontius the Pilot

WRONG DETAILS - RIGHT IDEA - JESUS WAS REJECTED

NO BABY SHOWER AT THEIR HOMECOMING IN NAZARETH - BASTARD!

Isaiah 53:3

He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. As one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Luke 9:22 JESUS said, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life."

Psalms 118:22 The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone

SERENE MOMENT OF THIS CANDLELIGHT SERVICE - WARM, FUZZY, FEELINGS

JESUS IS NOT ABOUT WARM FEELINGS -

1. RESPONSIBILITY - God expects us to do the right thing

standard of righteousness in and unrighteous world

2. REDEMPTION - God knows we cannot do the right thing

blood and sweat, life and death, heaven and hell
bearing our sins upon the cross - dying our death for us

3. REMAINS God knows how we are and still wants to be with us

warts and all, he has made a covenant promise to be faithful

4. REJECTION doing God's right thing is never popular
CYCLE - WITH REDEMPTION COMES PRESENCE & POWER FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS
CALLS US TO FOLLOW

Luke 9:23 "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

1 Peter 2:4 As you come to him, the living Stone--rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him--

PARAPHRASED BY DIETRICH BONEHOEFFER

"when Jesus calls a man, he calls him to come and die"

Hebrews 13:12,13 Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood. Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore.

IF YOU REALLY WANT A MERRY CHRISTMAS - YOU WILL FOLLOW HIM
TONIGHT AND FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE