

Mary, Joseph and the Angel

by Erlo Stegen

The sermon explores the humility and faith of Mary and Joseph surrounding the birth of Jesus, emphasizing the importance of prioritizing spiritual over worldly values.

Duration: 1:27:12

Scripture: Luke 2:10

Topics: "Mary"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher reflects on the behavior of a person who showed them around and how it indicated their royal lineage. The preacher then discusses the vastness of the universe and how God holds it all in his hand. They emphasize the humility of God, who chose to be born in a stable, even lower than any human being. The sermon also touches on the disappointment and evil that occurred during the time of Jesus' birth, as well as the changing societal attitudes towards pregnancy and parenting.

Transcript

We remember the birth of our Lord Jesus, Him coming into this earth, He who is the Son of God and the Son of Man. He is greater than anything else, above all. He is the highest.

He is the highest there is. And He is also the beginning. He is the Alpha and the Omega.

But at Christmas time, we see Him as the smallest thing here on this earth. He was the least, the lowest, and the last. In spite of the fact that even then He was God, and then He came down to our level.

In fact, He didn't just come to our level, He stooped even lower than that. When you were born, were you born in a stable, in a cow shed? Is there somebody who was born in the dump, in a cow shed? A cow shed is not something special. I remember when Busi first came here to Sizabantu.

When she first came here, she started working at the cow shed with the cows there amongst the cow dung. And then a very important person came here, who is in fact a Parliament Minister or an And he said to her, Oh my, what are you up to? What are you going to do here in this stable in a cow shed? And he said, Look, actually you're a disgrace to the family, an embarrassment. How can you do such a low down job? You could have a much better job, a good job in fact, but you lower yourself to this level? And then she answered him and said, You know, in fact, this place is the best place there is.

It's the best I could get. I'm blessed when I'm in such a place. Just to be able to breathe in the air here.

This odor of the cows and even of the dung. I'm privileged, I'm blessed that I can breathe in this air, which is the first thing our Lord, when he was born, breathed in. That's the first thing he smelt.

I'm privileged, I'm blessed, she said, that I can breathe in the air, which was the first air which our Lord breathed in here on earth. Many people want high positions. If you look at Busi today and you think of what she does and that she is doing what she is, that she is so respected, so gifted.

Well, I'm not surprised that she is where she is today, because she was prepared to start where she started. And the Lord says the least will be the greatest. The least will be the greatest.

Man always strives for high positions. That's what they want. They don't learn from their Lord, who stooped to such low depths for us.

People love high positions. Like some people, they want to work in a bank. And then when they are at the bank, they want to become the manager of the bank.

And most people just want to start right at the top. Well, the communists do it. They would take a street sweeper and promote him immediately to general manager of a huge corporation.

And we see the results. All over where the communists rule, things go backwards. In fact, there is only one place where you can start at the top.

That's when you dig a grave. You start at the top. And then it just goes down from there.

Take note of it. Do you hear it or are you asleep already? The Lord Jesus said, if you're not faithful in the small things, you will not be entrusted with greater things. And if you're not prepared to be the least, He will not be able to lift you up.

But if you uplift yourself, you will be humbled. The amazing thing about godly humility is that a person doesn't even notice that he's humble. Others will say, my, he's such a humble person.

But a person won't even be aware of it himself because it's just the way he is. So others will say, my, that is a humble person. But that person himself is not even aware of it.

He is just doing what he feels he ought to do. Now God, who holds the whole world in His hands. Not just the earth, the whole universe, everything, all the stars, all the planets, everything He holds in His one hand.

The earth in itself is something wonderful, something great. And yet it's such a small speck in the universe, you cannot even imagine and comprehend what it all is. But He holds it in His hand.

So He holds it in the hollow, in the palm of His hand. Everything fits in there. He holds it in the palm of His hand.

And there His fingers cover everything. And yet this great God, who's so great, humbled Himself, lowered Himself lower than even us, each one of us. Where He was prepared to be born in a stable, there amongst the dung where it stank.

The great God was prepared to lower Himself, to be lower than anyone who ever was, and who will be, and even who were at that time, and are at now. And so God, the Creator of everything that exists, He was

prepared to be born there in that stable, in that manger, where the cows go and chew their food, and when they chew, you know, the saliva runs, but that's where He lay. So now because Christmas Day is going to be on Saturday, I'd like to look at the events that took place around His birth.

At the time when He was born, there was great rejoicing, but also disappointment, and there was good that happened, but there was a lot of evil that happened at that time too. Now we all traditionally know about Christmas, and that it was when the Lord Jesus was born, that God in that way came to live amongst us, and then He became our Saviour, and we have Christmas trees, so we celebrate Christmas, and yet we don't really understand what happened then, and what it was all about. Now Mary, who was of a royal line, she was engaged to Joseph, who himself was of the line of David.

There are some theologians that estimate that Mary may have been around about 16 at the time, but that's just their estimate, but what we do know is that she was still very young. Joseph was a bit old already. The royal household of David had fallen, collapsed.

Joseph was a prince. He was to carry the royal scepter. And yet we find him here sawing planks.

He was a carpenter. Of course, that makes Uncle Robbie very happy. So when he works in the carpentry shop with wood and planks, he says he does the work that his Lord Himself did.

So that amazes us that we find even Joseph here working as a carpenter, a lowly job, and yet he was a prince. He should have been carrying that royal scepter. Even Mary was of a royal line.

Yet we find both of them extremely poor. They had nothing. They lived from hand to mouth.

They didn't have money. They didn't have money to buy smart horses. They couldn't afford big cars or any luxuries in life.

They were poor people. As I said, at the time of the Lord's birth, there was rejoicing, but others were sad at that time, and other things were sad. That is not darkness.

If someone is poor, he mustn't just give up and say, I just don't seem to be fortunate enough in this life. Being poor is also not something that you need to be embarrassed about. You don't need to see it as just the end of all things and as if nothing is going your way.

Don't see it as having lost everything if you are poor. The Bible teaches us that if we have clothes to wear, food to eat, we should be content. If you just treat everyone fairly, then even if you are poor, it doesn't matter.

We don't need more than that. Because even Mary and Joseph didn't have much. We came into this world with absolutely nothing, and so we will leave this world with absolutely nothing.

There was a white man who lived between here and Greytown. He spoke to our neighbor. He was a well-to-do man, and he said to our neighbor, Look, death is not something that really worries me.

What really worries me is how I will part with all my wealth. So if you hang and cling on to what you've got, remember the day is coming where you will have to part with it. It would be wonderful if your wealth, if your riches are not earthly riches, but heavenly riches.

But Mary and Joseph were pious people, God-fearing. They were righteous. They were right from the heart.

They were upright, and they weren't people that were interested in worldly things. Like so many people today, they loved the world so much they prepared to even sacrifice their faith for it. Their calling, the Lord's work.

And many forsake even their calling and everything to go into the wide world to make their fortune. And they don't realize that they will still have to part with all that. And then we are so easily deceived.

We see those people later, they arrive with a big car, and then we think, my, it's going well with them. They are prospering. And we don't realize that they've got a mountain of debt which they've incurred to be able to get to that lifestyle.

They don't know how to service that. But Mary and Joseph were not and are not to be counted among those masses who are so blinded, not just in their eyes but in their mind themselves. Mary and Joseph were people that looked upwards, towards heaven.

That's where their focus and their aim was. Not on earthly and worldly things. They had heaven before their eyes, not their world, not what the world offered them.

But they looked up towards heaven. They weren't attracted by what the world, even the glamour of this world which it has to offer. No, they were attracted by heaven.

They realized that they were just passing through this world. Just pilgrims on this earth. And even strangers.

Their hearts were up there in heaven. And the Lord Jesus says, there where your treasure is, there your heart will be. They were not like Judas who sold his Lord for just thirty pieces of silver.

That's the price of a slave. So Judas was the treasurer and he was the one that kept the purse. But he was not faithful, he was dishonest.

When money came in, he took some of it for himself. And the Lord says, if you're not faithful in financial things, how can he entrust heavenly things to you? So let's go on, because we've got even much more to say about that. Mary and Joseph were engaged to each other.

During that time, Joseph got a terrible shock when he got a message. He got a shock when he got the news that the one he's engaged to was pregnant. Well, nowadays that means nothing anymore.

It's nothing serious in Africa. Many fall pregnant. Many fall... Many people nowadays, many girls fall pregnant.

It's no longer a disgrace. In fact, some girls even want it. They look for it.

And so people don't even... it's not a shock anymore. And people live like the animals, no longer like people. And you usually find that the children are like that, because that's the way they've been brought up.

The parents have allowed it. They've given their children opportunities. If they have a daughter, they let the boyfriend come over, and he even sleeps with her.

And so the children are given opportunities. In Mary and Joseph's time, however, it was different. At that time, it was a disgrace, in fact a curse, if a girl lost her virginity and the boy as well.

In fact, it was such an abomination, such a cursed thing, that if a couple were caught in the act, they were taken out of the city and stoned publicly. Moses had a very strict law. They didn't tolerate anything unclean.

And sex in that way, out of wedlock, was a curse and a thing that was just not allowed. And if someone had lost their virginity, they were taken before the judges. It was a serious thing, because they wanted to root out this evil in their midst.

So Joseph was shocked when he saw and heard that things had seemingly gone wrong with Mary, and it deprived him of his sleep. He couldn't sleep anymore. This thing troubled him deeply.

He was looking forward to getting married to her, having a wonderful marriage. He had been so happy with Mary, because he had got to know her as a decent girl, upright girl, God-fearing. So he was looking forward to getting married to this wonderful girl.

So you can imagine the terrible shock it was to him. It was the worst thing that he could have imagined, that here she now became unfaithful to him, after they were even engaged already. That time he didn't realize that this thing was of God, that the Holy Spirit had come upon her.

Now for a moment, let's just leave Joseph, let's go to Mary. It's interesting that at the time when she discovered what had happened, that she didn't send a message to Joseph, even though they didn't visit each other, but at least just sent a message to him that something's happened here. It's interesting that she didn't just even send him a message to say, look, just that you know that the archangel Gabriel himself appeared to me and told me this and said that this would happen to me.

But Mary did nothing wrong by keeping silent about this matter. In fact, it was a good thing. Because God himself had sent Gabriel to bring the message.

And Gabriel never... Gabriel didn't tell Mary, Mary, now go and tell Joseph, it may be better if you just let him know. Neither did she go to her friends and say, listen, I just want to tell you about what has happened. Do you understand that? You who cannot keep the mysteries of God, who always talk so much.

Being a degraded person, you can't keep it secret. You take the pearl and throw it before the swine. So Mary said, God didn't say I must tell my parents or that I should tell my friends or that I should send a message to Joseph.

He never said it. This was an amazing child. Of course, nowadays, things have changed.

It's not always the case that one can look up to royalty anymore. I remember once we were taken somewhere where a prince was living. He was of a royal line, even though nowadays they don't practice as kings anymore.

He said he'd just leave her secretly without anyone even noticing. He thought he'd just leave her secretly and not disgrace her publicly because she had not been a disgrace in the past. He thought he'd just leave her secretly and not disgrace her publicly because she had not been a disgrace in the past.

Now, it's interesting that he decided just to leave her secretly because today people do that. They get a girl pregnant and then they just drop her all on her own. In fact, they even deny that it's their own child.

And so he left the country even, and eventually the girl phoned him to talk to him about it, but he treated her terribly. She said, yes, I'm prepared to go through all that. For Jesus, she was prepared to lose everything.

She was prepared to stoop as low as anything. She was prepared to sacrifice all. All her ambitions, her dreams, that wedding day, everything, she was prepared to sacrifice it all for her Lord.

Remember Paul in Philippians 3 verse 8 where he says, for the greatness of knowing Christ, I was prepared to forsake all, to count it but loss, even which was gain to me, I was prepared to count it but loss. An amazing person, an amazing girl. I'm not surprised that Jesus was prepared to enter into Mary because he saw an upright girl, a God-fearing girl and that's why she would be called blessed for all generations among all women.

She lost literally everything, even her purity. She lost everything that was gain to her for Jesus' sake. And Paul says, Paul even said that even that which would have been regarded gain to me, I regard as done itself.

Paul said, Now parents, do you live this life? Is this the life you teach your children to live? If you don't, you'll be guilty before God. If you don't, you'll be guilty before God. If you don't, you'll be guilty before God.

Glory to God. Mary was an amazing person. All she was concerned about was the Messiah.

It had been promised that He would save all people from their sin, for everyone, and she was prepared to sacrifice everything for this one thing that she knew would mean so much and which meant so much to her. She was prepared to risk stoning. She was prepared to lose everything.

She didn't say, oh my, look at me, what a poor person I am, look what I'm losing out on. No, that was no concern to her. Even though outwardly it looked like it was a disgrace to many people, yes, it was a disgrace Yet she wasn't concerned because she knew that that was what was within her was something that would be a blessing to all nations.

Imagine being so blessed that she knew that she was blessed. Her womb, her breasts, everything blessed to be able to nurse her Lord Himself. Dear Christian, are you proud of being a Christian that you've got the Lord or do you see it as a disadvantage that you say, oh my, poor me, poor me that I have to be a Christian? What a shame, what a disgrace, what dishonor you bring to the heavenly hosts and to God and to the Messiah.

What a fool you are. She was at peace, she had joy, she was rejoicing because of this which she had received. But you say you're a child of the Lord, you received something from Him, yet you are depressed, you're down in the dumps, you've got no joy.

If that's what Christianity is, then just throw it overboard, then just go another way. Go into the world then, if Christianity doesn't offer you more than that. Go into the world then, if Christianity doesn't offer you more than that, then just go another way.

And Gabriel said, Mary, He who is in you, His name will be Jesus, Emmanuel. He will set His people free from their sin, God with us. Do you see why Mary was able to forget everything else? Because she recognized this Jesus.

Is this the Jesus that you know or who's within you? Is it just a ghost or is it really this Jesus, like we've been speaking about in these youth services, about this Jesus, is this the one you know that's in you? And so she just left everything in God's hands, even regarding Joseph. She just said, Lord, this is your doing, it's your matter, your cause, you work the way you want to. You fight for me.

Now you can imagine the joy and the relief when that angel appeared and said, Joseph, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for what's within her is born of the Holy Spirit. It is Jesus, the one who will save His people from their sin. Emmanuel, God with us, take her as your wife.

She has not been disloyal to you. And so he took her as his wife. And what did he do when he took her as his wife? What were they busy with? Talking about sex? Was it all just about lust? No, not at all.

In fact, he didn't even go into her until that child was born. Now, they were not like many who just can't wait for that first experience to get married. And that's all they think about, just about being together.

That's all that's in their mind. With them, it wasn't so. They, he took her as his wife, but they weren't busy with those things that so many are busy with.

They were busy with what God had done, how the Holy Spirit had worked. What he had done. Now, Jesus didn't come into this world like all of us.

If he had, he would have been a sinner like any of us. But he was divine. And his, the blood in his veins was divine blood.

And that's why he could shed that blood so that we could be cleansed from our sin. That they can be washed whiter than snow. Literally, I said the blood was heavenly blood, special blood, divine blood.

That's why he could be a savior for all mankind to save them from their sins. Otherwise, he would have been born in sin like every other person. Well, they must have had wonderful times together after he had taken her as his wife.

When they were together, speaking about these wonderful things, the miracles that God had done. And Mary must have shared how the child jumped within her when she went to see her cousin, Elizabeth, and how they must have marveled at God's working and how God was establishing his heavenly kingdom now. In verse 20, But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.

For she will bring forth a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins. Now we have spoken about things concerning the birth of our Lord Jesus, and I hope that the Holy Spirit has revealed something wonderful to you about the greatest story that ever was. Let's bow our heads.

O come, to Bethlehem. Lord, when we hear the story about how you came into this earth, it's something we cannot fathom and fully comprehend. We need your Holy Spirit to reveal it to us.

But you'll reveal to us what it means that one can sacrifice everything, family, parents, everything, for the greatness of knowing Christ. Lord, may the grace of that child be with us all. Amen.

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