

NEXT SUNDAY – DECEMBER 27

SLIDE Fathom-at-home

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INTRODUCE

Well, good morning church! If I haven't met you yet, my name is Chris Martin, and I'm the Lead Pastor here.

If you've got your Bibles, and I hope you do, please open them up to Matthew chapter 1. Matthew 1. That's where we're going to be.

We want every person to have a hand on their Bible. You can open your phone or tablet to Matthew 1.

INTRODUCTION

As you turn there, there are so many new people in the last few months here, that I want to give you a little bit about me.

I wasn't really raised in the church, but I do have a number of Christian experiences during my childhood which all played a part in who I am today.

And often I get asked... "*when did you become a Christian?*" But that seems like a difficult question to answer.

SUNDAY SCHOOL

So, we never regularly went to Sunday School or anything like that when I was a kid.

- But it seemed that every once in a while,

- my mom had a guilty conscience...
- or needed a morning off from us kids...
- or just didn't want us to grow up to deal drugs
- and murder her while she slept.

But for whatever reason,

- on those Sunday's
- she would drag my brother and I reluctantly out of our beds,
- and put us in Sunday School.

And listen, I hated going to Sunday School. Why?

- Because I didn't know any of the stories...
- I didn't know any of the songs about Father Abraham...
- and everything had hand motions that I didn't know...
- and I didn't know any of the kids.

And they'd be doing what they called "Sword Drills" which was a race to see who could find a book of the Bible fastest.

- Nothing like a bunch of 2nd graders
- having little anxiety attacks in Sunday School.
 - "Ahh!!! How do you spell...Habakkuk!!!"
- And I'm the one kid who has to use the Table of Contents.
- I felt like an idiot.

But listen, I'm sure that at some point in one of those Sunday School classes I "prayed the prayer" to ask Jesus into my heart.

So, was that when I became a Christian? Did I really trust in Jesus at that point?

AWANAS

And then, on the block that I grew up on, there was one Christian family I knew, and they invited us to Awana.

- Now, Awana is like a Christian-Cub-Scouts.
- They've got vests and sashes
- with little crown pins with jewels that you earned.
- Ok, little militant Christian kids all decked out like Patton.

Now, this is not a judgment on Awana, because they are a great ministry.

- But I remember going a couple of times,
- and all the other kids there had their vests
- all decked out with jewels and badges.

And I had nothing.

- A red vest with nothing on it.
- I couldn't memorize scripture.
- I couldn't win in the sword drills.
- But I wanted some vest bling.

So, there was one pin I could get...it was the salvation pin.

- So, to get this pin
- you had to "be born again"
- which meant all I had to do was pray the prayer
- with an Awana leader,
- and I would get the salvation pin!

But, was that when I became a Christian? Did I really trust in Jesus at that point?

YOUTH GROUP/YOUNG LIFE

And then, when I was in 8th grade, I was invited to a youth group and to Young Life by a Christian friend of mine...

- And I went on retreats and to camps and on mission trips.
- And I probably prayed the prayer to give my life to Christ
- more times that I can count. Ok?

Like at a retreat or camp...

- all hopped up on pixie sticks and mountain dew...
- sleep deprived...
- pseudo delirious...
- and then there's that Saturday night,
- youth camp night where they preach the Gospel,
- and the band plays the right song on repeat,
- and everyone's crying...
- like I probably gave my life to Jesus a dozen times or more,
- just to make sure it stuck.

TRANSITION

So, in reality, I'm not really sure when I became a Christian. Technically it could have been at Sunday School, or at Awana, or at any myriad of youth camps I attended.

But it must have been at some point...because at 16, I knew I was saved...I just can't pin-point it.

How did I know? Well, everything had changed. And that's my main idea for this morning: **SLIDE WHEN JESUS COMES, HE CHANGES**

EVERYTHING. And even though I don't know the day or the hour, I know he changed everything in my life.

JOSEPH

In our text today, Jesus is going to change everything, and we CAN pinpoint it for a guy named Joseph, the adoptive father of Jesus. **BLANK**

SLIDE

Now, it's interesting, but Matthew's gospel account of the Christmas story is told from Joseph's perspective. Unlike Luke's account which focuses on Mary's perspective.

- And Mary gets a lot of press and reps...right?
 - I mean some traditions even pray to Mary...
 - They venerate Mary...
 - They're looking for the Virgin Mary in their burnt toast...
- but man, Joseph kinda gets the shaft.

I mean, really, we don't even hear about Joseph after Matthew 1 & 2 and Luke 1 & 2. Which is interesting because Matthew places him front and center in these two chapters.

TRANSITION

WHEN JESUS COMES, HE CHANGES EVERYTHING. Just like he did in my life, he does so for Joseph. When Jesus comes, he changes everything.

Let's start working through our passage.

MATTHEW 1:18–19

[18] 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. [19] And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.

EXPLAIN: BETROTHED

Now, the text says that **Mary had been betrothed to Joseph**. And the first thing we need to note and understand is what is meant by *betrothed*. What is a betrothal? Because this is not something that we practice in our day and age.

- We have engagements,
- and then marriages. Right?

But in this Jewish culture, a young woman would be betrothed to a man.

- A betrothal was a legally binding contact,
- where for all intents and purposes,
- the couple was married,
- but during the betrothal period,
- which normally lasted for a year,
- they would live with their parents
- before they could move in together
- and consummate the marriage.
- And so serious was this betrothal,
- that it required a legal divorce to annul it.

ILLUSTRATION: PRE-MARITAL

Now, this has to be one of the dumbest traditions ever invented.

- Listen, I do a lot of pre-marital counseling...
- I've done some of y'all's...
- how do you think it would go over?
- Can you imagine if I tried to encourage this practice...
 - *"Yeah, you can be legally married..."*
 - *all the responsibilities of a marriage...*
 - *but none of the perks!"*
- *"Hey, where do I sign up for that?"*

EXPLAIN: BRIDE PRICE

But families wanted to make sure that the girl was pure, this was a huge deal back then...

- So, they required a year of waiting
- before you could live or sleep together
- to make sure she wasn't pre-pregnant or whatever.
- And then after a year, that was clear,
- So, then you could live together
- and consummate the marriage.

So, Joseph and Mary were publicly and legally betrothed...married for all intents and purposes...just none of the benefits.

EXPLAIN: VIRGIN CONCEPTION

But before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Apparently this betrothal thing did what it's supposed to do!

- Now, Matthew lets us know where the child was from...
- the Holy Spirit.
- But, in real time no one else knew that.
- In real time that verse read like this:
- but before they came together she was found to be with child.
 - Period.

Now, this is what is known as the virgin birth, but really it ought to be called the virgin conception.

And this is a very complicated situation if you think about it. You see the conundrum here, right?

- I mean imagine for a minute how humiliating
 - this was for Joseph?
- What would it have been like to hear this...
 - from the girl you just married,
 - but haven't been allowed to sleep with yet?

By public opinion: either Mary is guilty...or Joseph is guilty.

- Either Mary has been unfaithful to Joseph
 - by breaking the betrothal,
- or Joseph has cheated the betrothal
 - and consummated the marriage early.

EXPLAIN: JOSEPH'S RESPONSE

But Mary is found to be with child,

- and so, you imagine she tries to tell Joseph it's from the Spirit!
- That she's still a virgin!
- And, of course, Joseph doesn't believe her?
- *"Virgins don't get pregnant, Mary!"*

But we're told in verse 19 that Joseph is **a just man**, and doesn't want to **put her to shame**, so he plans to **divorce her quietly**.

Now, this is a window into the character of Joseph. You see, Joseph has a dilemma here:

- he has to divorce Mary because of her pregnancy.
- This is an honor/shame culture.
- So, there was no real option in the first century.
 - Jewish law virtually demanded
 - that a husband expose a wife
 - who by infidelity had so diminished his honor.

Yet, **Joseph did not want to put her to shame**

- by making an example of her
- and disgracing her publicly as an adulteress.

So, he compromised by deciding to divorce her privately,

- in front of two witnesses
- rather than in front of the whole town.

TRANSITION

So, with a divorce plan in his mind the story goes on. Verse 20:

MATTHEW 1:20-21

[20] But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. [21] She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”

EXPLAIN: DREAM

An angel shows up to him in a dream, and gives him 5 pieces of information in this dream.

1. First, it's unnecessary to divorce Mary. **Don't fear to take Mary as your wife.**
2. Second, Mary's pregnancy **is from the Holy Spirit.**
 - a. That information is super helpful...
 - b. when Joseph knows it isn't his child...
 - c. it's gotta be someone's child...
 - d. *“no, Joseph, this baby is from God.”*

And I'm telling you, this is a big piece of information, because it would take an angelic visit for me to buy into this one.

- If Maryse had shown up pregnant while we were engaged...
- man, there better be a burning bush or something.

In many ways, Joseph had to display MORE faith than Mary,

- because Mary KNEW she hadn't slept with anyone,
- and yet there was a baby growing in her...
- But Joseph had to trust this angel.

3. Third, **she will bear a son**. Alright, a divine ultrasound. You're gonna have a boy.
4. Fourth, you're gonna need to **call his name Jesus**.
5. And fifth, in connection with his name, **he will save his people from their sins**. He's going to be a savior. The name *Jesus* means *God saves*.

EXPLAIN: CHANGE

WHEN JESUS COMES, HE CHANGES EVERYTHING. This is a life changer for Joseph, right? I mean, think of the consequences.

It must have ruined both of their reputations.

- The angel didn't show up
- and explain the situation to everybody else. Right?
- Just them!
- From that point on,
- the public opinion on these newlyweds must have been terrible.

This may have been one of the reasons why they seemed to want to settle in Judea instead of moving back to Nazareth after the birth of Jesus.

- For the rest of their lives,
- they would have to live with the opinion
- of naysayers all around them.

TRANSITION

Now, let's finish up our passage, because there are some major implications in how this thing ends. Verse 22:

MATTHEW 1:22-25

[22] All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

[23] “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall call his name Immanuel”

(which means, God with us). [24] When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, [25] but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

EXPLAIN: PROPHECY

Now, Matthew adds this commentary in verses 22-23 when he quotes Isaiah, a prophet in the Old Testament.

And remember back a couple of weeks, we said that Matthew is specifically targeting a Jewish audience.

- He’s specifically showing us
- that Jesus didn’t come to start a new religions or faith.
- But rather, to fulfill what God had already begun
- in the Hebrew people.
- This isn’t something new,
- it’s a fulfillment of God’s promises!

SLIDE 2 CORINTHIANS 1:20 says

“For all the promises of God find their Yes in him.”

Jesus is the fulfillment.

- This is why there's a genealogy
- covering Jesus,
- the son of David,
- the son of Abraham.
- He is the fulfillment of those covenant promises.

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Matthew identifies more about this child than simply his immaculate conception...

- he identifies him as Immanuel...
- that means *God with us*.

This isn't simply a miracle child!

- He's the fulfillment of all that God has been doing
- in all of human history.
- God is with us.
- God in the flesh.

I know many of us have become so comfortable with this story that it doesn't hit us the same way as it might...

- but God is now with us.
- Dwelling among us!
- It's incredible.

WHEN JESUS COMES, HE CHANGES EVERYTHING!

EXPLAIN: JOSEPH'S RESPONSE

So, Joseph wakes up from his dream and he immediately does what the angel said. To those five pieces of information, he obeys.

- He takes Mary as his wife,
- and they move out of the betrothal period.
- This is why they would travel together to Bethlehem...
- but he does not consummate the marriage
- until after the birth of Jesus
- to further ensure there were no questions about Jesus' origins.

We know that everything has changed for Joseph, because he believed the angel, and obeyed his instructions.

EXPLAIN: GENESIS

Now, I want you to look at something really important here. Look back at Matthew 1:1. My text reads: "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ."

In the Greek the word translated "genealogy" in verse 1 is *genesis*. As in origin or beginning.

Now, on to verse 18: "Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way."

Now, the word translated in verse 18 to read "birth" is also the Greek word *genesis*. The same word!

- It's literally "The book of the genesis of Jesus Christ"
- and "Now the genesis of Jesus Christ took place in this way."

Now, why is that important?

Well, in verses 1-17 Matthew is establishing

- the *genesis* of Jesus' NATURAL origins.
 - The lineage.
 - *This man was the father of that man,*
 - *who was the father of this guy.*

But then in verses 18-25 Matthew moves on to

- the *genesis* of Jesus' DIVINE origins.
 - That which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

EXPLAIN: SON OF GOD, SON OF MAN

Now, this is of the utmost importance! The virgin conception is essential to our salvation.

Jesus can only

- be the savior...
- the one who saves his people from their sins...
- if the virgin conception is true.

So, you're going to need to put on your big-boy/big-girl theology pants for a moment, and I promise, it'll all come together.

- Jesus is divine.
 - He is Immanuel,
 - God with us.
 - He is God,
 - and thus, he is infinitely holy, just, and perfect.

- But Jesus is also natural.
 - He is a man.
 - Therefore, he can be tempted,
 - and hurt,
 - and ultimately, he can die.

So, Jesus is God,

- he is infinitely holy
- and thus, he's able to atone for the sum total
- of every sin ever committed in the whole world.
 - But he can't die.
 - God can't die.

But Jesus is also a man. So, he can die.

- And thus he is uniquely qualified to identify with us,
- and actually become a sacrifice for sins.

Son of God. And Son of Man.

Fully God. And fully man.

And no other option would have worked! Only the son of God and the son of man as one being could be the savior.

If you took our Fathom Academy Christian Theology course online this summer, which you can still go and back log on demand anytime you want, this is called the hypostatic union.

Drop that at your next Christmas party and you'll really impress some people...

- “Christmas celebrates when God became a man!”
- “Oh, you mean the hypostatic union?”
 - And then you mic-drop and walk away...
 - and they’re like, “wow...who was that guy?”

TRANSITION

Jesus is fully God and fully man...and thus he is our savior.
Remember last week, Matthew was so focused in on Jesus as our King.
But that in no way should diminish his role as savior.

- The debt we owed to God the king
- was paid in full by God the Son.

This is a fundamental theology for those of us who call Jesus our Lord and our Savior.

CONCLUSION

Pastor and scholar N.T. Wright says this: **SLIDE**

“How can you live with a terrifying thought that the hurricane has become human, that the fire has become flesh, that Life itself has walked into our midst? Christianity either means that or it means nothing. It is the most devastating disclosure of the deepest reality of the world; or it is a sham, a total nonsense. Most people, unable to cope with either of those two things, are condemned to live in the shallow world in between.” **BLANK SLIDE**

Thanks fancy NT Wright talk for what we've been saying: WHEN JESUS COMES, IT CHANGES EVERYTHING!

Or to quote John Stott from his book Basic Christianity:

SLIDE *"If you read the Bible you'll see that nobody who ever met Jesus Christ ever had a moderate reaction to him. There are only three reactions to Jesus: they either hated him and wanted to kill him, they were afraid of him and wanted to run away, or they were absolutely smitten with him and they tried to give their whole lives to him."* **BLANK SLIDE**

Church, I don't know exactly when I became a Christian, but I do know that he has changed everything in my life!

The question I want to pose to you is this: Has he changed everything about you?

- He's either a sham; or he's real.
 - You've got to make a decision!
- He's either who he claimed to be;
 - or else he is a depraved, wicked, lunatic...
- You either need to fall at His feet in absolute adoration...
 - or just pass on by.

But there is no in-between!

SLIDE **WHEN JESUS COMES, HE CHANGES EVERYTHING.** Has he changed you? If you aren't sure, man, we'd love to talk to you about this.

- *Veiled in flesh the Godhead see,*
- *Hail the incarnate Deity!*
- *Pleased as man with men to dwell,*
- *Jesus our Immanuel.*

Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel.

This Christmas...

- behold the Son of God.
- Behold the Son of Man.
- Behold the King of Kings.
- Behold the Savior of the world.

Behold Jesus, this Christmas.

Let's pray. **LYRICS SLIDE W/PADS**

RESPONSES:

Well, every week at Fathom we respond in 4 ways:

- COMMUNION – THE LORD’S SUPPER
- GIVING TITHES & OFFERINGS – fathomchurch.org/give
- PRAYER - fathomchurch.org/prayer
- SINGING

So, I’m going to read the Words of Institution from the Apostle Paul, we’ll take communion, and then we’ll sing:

1 CORINTHIANS 11:23–26 – WORDS OF INSTITUTION

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

Love you church, let’s stand and sing together.

RESOURCES USED:

- Anderson, David. *The Birth of the Promised King*.
- Carson, D.A. Matthew: The Expositor's Bible Commentary.
- Keller, Timothy. *God With Us*.
- Osborne, Grant R. Matthew: Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament.