



new life fellowship

Sermon Title: Advent: The Light that Overcomes Separation

Speaker: Jacqueline Snape, Executive Pastor

Scripture: Matthew 1:18-21, 24

¹⁸ This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about^[a]: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet^[e] did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

²⁰ But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus,^[f] because he will save his people from their sins.”
(NIV)

Sermon Outline:

Many people, whether they are Christian or not, have heard about or know about today's passage. The reason is it so well known, has to do with the miraculous birth of Jesus Christ. There is another miracle, not so well known, in this scripture that has to do with Joseph. The miracle that Joseph did not leave Mary after being told about Mary's pregnancy.

When Joseph receives this bombshell of news of Mary's pregnancy, he is at a crossroads. He could either stay with Mary and continue being connected to Mary or he could choose to cut her off completely. Joseph's initial reaction was to divorce Mary. After taking some time to consider staying with Mary, was reassured by God that he was making the right choice.

In our current society and culture, it is extremely easy to separate ourselves from those who we no longer want to be connected to. With the click of a button, through social media or emails, we can cut off people without much effort. For many of us, this has become the norm and not the exception. Who have you separated from over the last year?

Why is there such a gravitational pull to cut ourselves off from those around us and move on? If we go back to Adam and Eve, we see their unwise choice ended up causing them to separate themselves from God in the garden. They also separated from each other by pointing fingers at one another.

- Unhealthy separation takes place when you separate from someone else because you just can't stand the tension that takes place when you are in relationship with this person. Separation limits us so that God does not have a chance to come in and heal us.
- Healthy separation takes place when you recognize that you are a child of God and the other person is a child of God, not needing to cut them off or fix them, so you can stay connected to them.

The true miracle of this scripture is that Joseph manages to hold one moment open so that God had space to come in, meet him and speak with him. The miracle takes place despite the tension and chaos that was taking place. Although Joseph was a righteous man, he was wrong in his thinking about leaving Mary. Joseph needed to be stripped down to his human self and Mary was sent to usher Joseph onto a new relationship with God. Mary was not only sent to deliver Jesus Mary was also sent to deliver Joseph.

God works in mysterious ways and chooses to stay connected to us and not to separate from us. God chooses us no matter what mistakes we have made, and He will stay connected to us no matter what.

A person is a person because he recognizes others as persons. –Archbishop Desmond Tutu

We do not get to cancel each other out because we realize we are all children of God, and we are flawed and make mistakes. Connecting and not separating is a miracle that you can experience now. It is a promised miracle that Jesus secured for us on the cross.

Sermon Summary:

This Sunday, Jacqueline Snape, Executive Pastor, continues our Advent Series: The Light that Overcomes. Pastor Jackie explores The Light that Overcomes Separation, and how easy it is for us to cut ourselves off from others and what Jesus has to say about this.

Sermon Questions:

1. How does this scripture connect for you the topic that was discussed today? What words resonate with you? Why?
2. In your family of origin did you see members of your family being cut off from their relationships with one another? Did you live without contact with those who were cut off from the family? Do you know why they were cut off from the family? How did your experience growing up affect the way you might cut people off today? Is this something that is easy for you to do or is it difficult? Journal about your responses to these questions, offering them up to God and asking for healing where you may need to heal.
3. Who are you avoiding right now? Why and how have you cut them off? Can you find time this week to share this with someone, either a close trusted friend or another brother or sister in Christ, asking God for healing in this relationship?
4. Is there someone who has cut you off and you do not know why? Maybe you do know why they decided to cut you off and you are heartbroken or confused. Can you share this in your small group this week or with a close trusted friend, asking God for wisdom, grace, and healing in this relationship?