

Sermon Draft for December 10, 2025

Advent Midweek 2

She Was Betrothed to a Man

Text: Luke 1:27

Learning about the blessed virgin Mary, we first heard last week how the angel Gabriel came to her and told her that she was to be the mother of the Christ Child. Now Scripture is very succinct here it says that the angel came ***“to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David”*** (v 27). This is a very short reference to this man to whom Mary was affianced. But with diligence, we can learn more about our Savior, Jesus by learning something about Mary’s husband.

How much can we say about Joseph, given the few references the Bible gives us? Tradition has it that he was significantly older than Mary; often in Christmas pageants he’s portrayed as gray-haired. We can say for certain that he became established in business: ***“Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas?”***

(Matthew 13:55). Therefore, he would have been able to support a wife and family.

One essential thing about Joseph is that he was a father to the child as he grew. However old Joseph was, he was certainly alive at least in the first decade or so of Jesus' life. For ***“when [Jesus] was twelve years old, they”—Joseph, Mary, and Jesus—“went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast. . . . As they returned, the Boy Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem. And Joseph and His mother did not know it”*** (Luke 2:42–43).

So, Joseph was present to teach Jesus the things that fathers teach their sons how to hunt and fish, how to handle tools and weapons, how to read the Bible and pray, how to be courteous to women and elders, how to respect and care for his mother.

It's significant that Luke says Joseph was ***“of the house of David,”*** a descendant of King David. As a direct descendant of David, he would have had some prestige in the community. David was the greatest king that Israel had ever had.

During his reign, the territory of the nation reached vastly beyond its old borders, from north to south, east to west. David slew Goliath of Gath when he was just a boy. Time after time, he was successful in war. Yet he was a poet and musician and wrote many of the lyrics in the book of Psalms. Exact genealogies were kept by the Israelites. Why? Because the promised Messiah would be born to some mother in Israel, some mother who would be Mary and be born in the line of David.

There are in Scripture numerous messianic prophecies, each one narrowing the field. The first concerns Eve: ***“I will put enmity between you and the woman. . . . He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel”*** (Genesis 3:15). From this, we know that the Christ will be a human being, specifically male. Next, God spoke to Abraham: ***“In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed”*** (Genesis 12:3). So, the Messiah will be a descendant of Abraham. Similar promises are spoken to Isaac and Jacob, and to the tribe of Judah.

At last, God's Word came to the prophet Nathan, commanding him to say to King David: ***"I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. . . . I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever"*** (2 Samuel 7:12–13). So, the everlasting kingdom of David is established when the Christ enters the world. And that requires a father who is a son of David. Enter Mary's husband: ***"Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age, being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph"*** (Luke 3:23).

Now we come back to the angel's proclamation. This Jesus to be born of Mary ***"will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end"*** (Luke 1:32–33).

We learn something else about Jesus from Mary's husband. Joseph and Mary were "betrothed." That's what we would call "engaged." Except it was far more serious in those days.

It was tantamount to marriage. It was a binding contract. But God's Word is clear that Joseph protected his wife's virginity, Matthew writes, ***“until she had given birth to a son”*** (Matthew 1:25).

I don't have to tell you that these days, engagement counts for nothing. In an earlier time in America, engagement was binding. If you broke off an engagement, you could be sued. Now the old standards have fallen. Most young people who are attracted to each other just start living together. They want to see if they are compatible before making a commitment. Then, if they do decide to get married, they want a church wedding with the bride in a white dress.

So then, let's say you have a coin. On one side is the Law: ***“You shall not commit adultery.”*** But turn it over. What do you find on the other side? Gospel. There we find Jesus Christ, the faithful Bridegroom. From eternity, he has been pledged to his Bride, the church.

“Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word” (Ephesians 5:25–26). Jesus was himself betrothed, espoused, engaged, call it what you will. It was binding. It was marriage, in fact. It could only be broken by divorce. Joseph himself thought about divorcing Mary when she turned up pregnant and he assumed she’d been unfaithful. But an angel told him God’s miraculous plan Mary was pregnant without a man, by the power of the Holy Spirit and Joseph kept his commitment to her (Matthew 1:18–20, 24).

Jewish wedding customs in those days stipulated that once the contract was drawn up, there would be a period of waiting. The couple lived apart, she with her father. The wedding feast had to be organized, the guest list drawn up. Lots to do. Then at last, the shout went up! The bridegroom and his men were coming, the doors were opened, the guests came streaming in, and the marriage supper began.

You recognize this in several of the parables Jesus told, especially the tale of the ten virgins. Five were wise and five were foolish. The wise girls brought along extra oil for their lamps. This is the Word of God that feeds the flame of faith. We are saved we are admitted to the wedding feast of the lamb by faith alone. The foolish virgins were excluded.

So, it is today. Jesus came into this world and, by his blood shed on the cross, sealed an everlasting covenant between himself and his Bride, the church. Then he ascended into heaven. He's been gone a long time. A very long time. Two thousand years now. The love of many has grown cold. Persecution has come upon us. Many churches are struggling, shrinking. Many pastors are discouraged, barely hanging on by a thread.

But like faithful Joseph, Jesus has not abandoned his church. ***"I go to prepare a place for you"*** (John 14:2). This is certain. Why? Because of his resurrection from the dead. Because of this, all God's promises are secure.

This, too, is certain: Christ will come again to bring an end to the world. He will come in power and glory. All will be raised from the dead. All will stand before him. Woe to the man who lacks faith on that day! Like a foolish virgin, he will be cast into outer darkness, where the fire is not quenched and the worm does not die.

Not so for you, dear friend in Christ. Not so for you. On that dreadful day when empires fall, we will stand. On that awful day when evil men try to run from God, we will run to our heavenly Father, who will greet us with open arms. On that doomsday when sinful men's hearts faint within them, you and I will take courage as Mary's Son calls: ***"Well done, you good and faithful servant; enter into the joy of your master"*** (Matthew 25:21).

In the name of Jesus. Amen.