

Jacob Hanson
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Sermon Title: "Lessons from Joseph's Dreams"

Prelude

UMH #219 "What Child Is This"

UMH #218 "It Came upon the Midnight Clear"

Advent Reading: Matthew 1:18-21, 22-23 (Joseph's Dream) (On Screen/Insert)

Sharing of Blessings and Concerns

Prayer of Confession: UMH #890

Children's Message: How Does God Talk To Us?

Apostle's Creed UMH #881

Lord's Prayer UMH #896

Matthew 1:18-25

Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23

Sermon: Lessons from Joseph's Dreams

Choir Sings "Advent Celebration

Doxology: "Glory Be to the Father" UMH #71

UMH #234 "O Come, All Ye Faithful"

Sending Prayer

Benediction

Announcements/Dismissal

Postlude

Questions:

- 1) What do we know about Joseph? Why was he an important figure in scripture?
- 2) Joseph receives four revelations from God through dreams about where to go and what to do. Can you name other figures from scripture who also were spoken to in dreams? Think there are any connections?
- 3) While we may never have the Lord speak to us through a dream, He certainly talks to us in other ways. How does the Lord definitively speak to you? Are you listening?

Memory Verse: Matthew 1:23 "The Virgin will be with child and will call Him Immanuel... which means, God with us."

Pastor Jacob Hanson

"Lessons from Joseph's Dreams"

12/09/2018

Opening Prayer

Welcome to Kasson/Pleasant Corners UMC. I am Pastor Jacob Hanson, and it is a blessing to be here with you folks today. It is an exciting time in the Christian calendar, as we have entered the second week of the Advent Season. Advent, if you remember, means something akin to "coming" in Greek, which is appropriate because this time of year in the church is all about celebrating the coming of Jesus. We of course celebrate the coming of Jesus as a babe in the manger because it directly leads to His crucifixion and resurrection... the salvation of our sins. Christmas doesn't matter without Easter. Now before we get into the meat of the message for today (and also do a quick review from last week for those who couldn't make it) I want to take just a second to explain how Christmas ended up being celebrated on December 25th because really many folks don't know but would like to know why.

While there are a lot of different reasons why it could be celebrated in December, the most widely known has to do with the celebrations that were already taking place around the world when Christ was born. Scripture is silent about the specific birth day of Jesus, so in theory it could have been any day. However, as early as Roman Emperor Constantine (around 336AD) we see the celebration of Christmas on the 25th. Hanukah, a Jewish holiday, as well as pagan celebrations of the winter solstice, already took place around that same time period... so its very possible people just switched their celebrations over to Jesus's birth from other reasons and we just stuck to it. No matter what the real reason it was started at this time of year was, there are two things you should remember. #1 is that nothing in scripture says that Jesus was born in December, He could have been born in August for all we know. #2 Although the Christmas season may not have its roots totally in church related things, it is still alright to celebrate the season SO LONG AS we remember Christ is at the heart of what we celebrate now. Now, on to our actual sermon topic.

Last week we talked about how the king is coming, about how the Hebrews were awaiting their Savior that was promised to them all the way back in the time of King David. To illustrate that point we looked at a bunch of prophecies that were made about the birth of the coming Messiah. In fact, our memory verse for today: Matthew 1:23, is a direct recitation in the New Testament of such a prophecy. Because the Jews had these prophecies and promises, they came to understand that a Messiah was coming who was going to redeem the world, establish a kingdom through the line of David, and overall bring good news. We understand today as

Christians, that these prophecies directly lead us to Jesus. Therefore in the Christmas season it is good for us to celebrate the coming of the king. (If you would like to read that sermon, check it out on the website or pick up a copy of it afterwards from my mailbox.) This week we are going to be looking at one of David's decedents, Joseph, and how he played a pretty interesting role in the birth of our Savior. Perhaps most importantly about Joseph's story today is that we can learn a few lessons from the dreams God gave him.

When we last left off in our walk through the Advent season we read about the angel Gabriel coming and revealing to Mary that she would give birth to the Messiah. Gabriel told her that she would be overshadowed by the Holy Spirit, and that she would become pregnant according to the prophecy about the Messiah being born to a virgin found in the book of Isaiah. Notice that Mary was revealed this, but not her betrothed Joseph. Joseph, in fact, it seems does not know anything about the miraculous conception. Whether she told him and he did not believe her, or she did not mention it at all until she began to show that she was pregnant, we don't know. What we do know is that when Joseph finds out that his soon-to-be wife is pregnant by someone other than him. While skeptics like to argue that the ancient folks didn't know much and were tricked into believing the story that Mary is a virgin, it turns out that people in this time period still knew where babies come from... hence why Joseph sought to "put away Mary quietly." For the Jews of this time period being engaged wasn't simply a waiting period as it is for us today, but rather it was actually legally binding, which is why it would have taken an official certificate of divorce for Joseph to leave Mary. Think of it like signing the mortgage for a house, but not yet living in it. You are not yet able to enjoy the full benefits of the house, but you are still the rightful owner. While Joseph is pondering this decision to divorce Mary quietly (we read he was righteous and wanted to keep her from disgrace) we read about Joseph's first encounter with an angel in a dream.

The angel (this time unnamed) says to Joseph "do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 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." To Joseph's credit, he believes the angel and follows the Lord's direction. In fact, although Joseph does not show up much in scripture, what we do know about him points to his taking care of Jesus as his own. It seems Jesus is raised as a carpenter just as Joseph was, and Jesus is known as one of Joseph's sons. So while Joseph is not Jesus's father (that would be the Lord), he is definitely a great Dad. This dream about Jesus being born from a virgin is given the most attention by us during the Advent season generally, but it isn't the only one Joseph receives.

Later we read about how Joseph heeds the Lord's calling through a dream to go to Egypt, then he gets another to leave Egypt, and finally we read that the family's decision to settle in Nazareth is given to Joseph in yet another dream. All these things are done by the Lord to fulfill prophecies concerning the Messiah. Hosea 11:1 mentions that the Messiah will come out of Egypt, and so does Exodus 4:22. In addition to their fulfillment of prophecy, thereby proving

who Jesus is/was, the dreams Joseph has also hold merit for us today. So beyond proving that Jesus is the Messiah, Emmanuel, through prophecy, what lessons should we be taking away from Joseph's dreams? Here are a couple:

#1 God's plans can be vastly contrary to what we expect, but they are still good. Joseph probably didn't expect that the greatest thing in his life would be becoming the "father" of the Father, but what a great legacy. Your life may not be going the way you always pictured it today, but know that it means God has some bigger and better things in store for you if you are following Him! There are untold numbers of people, including many of you in our church, that could attest to this. A career change, a divorce, an unexpected move, etc. all can be used by the Lord for great things. In talking to many of you here in town, it was one of these unexpected twists in life that really strengthened your faith. In Joseph's case it was about the biggest surprise imaginable, and God obviously used it to great effect in Joseph's life and in service of God's kingdom. God can do the same with you.

#2 God speaks to us in many ways. We touched on this in the children's sermon at KUMC, (sorry PCUMC, you get the shortened version) but it is worth repeating. God may never speak to you through a dream or directly, but He is no less talking to you. Through scripture, through other people, and through prayer He talks to you often if you put yourself in a place to listen. That means quieting your mind, paying attention, and checking everything against His written word. God spoke to Joseph in a dream... who knows how He may be speaking to you today. To use an example from my own life, I had a Youth Director when I was sixteen tell me that someday I would be doing his job. I laughed in his face... funny how God speaks to us. I wish I would have listened to Him right away! Joseph, to his credit, listened when the Lord spoke to Him. I pray we would have that same sort of attitude.

We can learn a lot from our look at Jesus's earthly not-blood-related father. We of course read that in him and through him many prophecies regarding the Messiah were fulfilled, but we also see a human like us who is used in the greatest way because he listened to God speaking to him. Through Joseph and his dreams we can have faith that Jesus is who we believe Him to be. Through Joseph we also can appreciate that God's hidden plans for us are truly great, and that God does speak to us in a myriad of ways.

This brings our lesson for today to a close, but I want to once again remind you that the Advent season is all about Christ coming to us not only for a joyous Christmas, but more importantly for a hope-filled Easter. The manger doesn't matter without the cross, don't forget that this season. May God walk with you this week, and may He speak to you... we pray that you would be listening! Let us pray,

Closing Prayer

Advent Reading: Isaiah 9:2-3a, 6-7 (The King is Coming)

“The people who walk in darkness will see a great light; those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them. You shall multiply the nation, You shall increase their gladness; they will be glad in Your presence.”

“Praise be to God! The time is coming where the King will join us, where His majesty will come and dwell amongst us. Through Him our sins will be forgiven, by His stripes we are healed.”

“For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this.”

“Praise be to God! The King is coming, may we be prepared in our hearts for His arrival. For He will be the one who will take our sins and make us right with God.”

Advent Reading: Matthew 1:18-21, 22-23 (Joseph’s Dream)

“Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly. But when he had considered this, 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 the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.’”

“Praise the Lord, the Messiah has come! Shown to be true by the miracle of the virgin birth, we honor our Lord Jesus, the one who takes away the sins of the world.”

“Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: ‘Behold, the virgin shall be with Child and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which translated means, ‘God with us.’”

“Praise the Lord! Christ Jesus, Immanuel, has come to dwell amongst us as was prophesied long ago, may we heed His call.”

Advent Reading: Luke 2:1-7, 8-12, 13-16 (God’s Revelation to the Shepherds) (What Child is This UMH #219, It Came upon the Midnight Clear UMH #218, O Little Town of Bethlehem UMH #230,

“Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth. This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city. Joseph also went up to Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child. While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.”

“O little town of Bethlehem, blessed are you among cities of men, for in you is born the Savior of the world, Jesus Christ. What a humble birthplace for the Savior of mankind, wrapped in swaddling clothes next to common livestock in a manger.”

“In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find the baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.’”

“The Lord be praised for His love of all people! The announcement of His Son’s birth could have been made to kings and queens, rulers and religious leaders... but it was instead made to the common men, shepherds tending their flocks. A shepherd is whom first heard of Christ’s birth, a fitting announcement since Christ would be the shepherd for all of God’s people.”

“And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.’ When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds began

happened which the Lord has made known to us.’ So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger.”

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men! May His name be praised.”

Advent Reading: Matthew 2:1-4, 5-9, 10-12 (The Visit of the Magi) (UMH 245, The First Noel; UMH 254, We Three Kings;

“Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, ‘Where is He who has been born of King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him.’ When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born.”

“Praise be to God that Christ has arrived among men. While Herod designed for the Messiah to be put to death, God protected His Son, ensuring that Immanuel would not be harmed before His time.”

“They said to him, ‘In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet: And you, Bethlehem of Judea; land of Judah, are by no means least among the leaders of Judah; for out of you shall come forth a ruler who will shepherd My people Israel.’ Then Herod secretly called the magi and determined from them the exact time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, ‘Go and search carefully for the Child; and when you have found Him, report to me, so that I too may come and worship Him.’ After hearing the king, they went their way; and the star, which they had seen in the east, went on before them until it came and stood over the place where the Child was.”

“Praise be to God, that those who are faithful and alert will see the Messiah, Christ Jesus.”

“When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. After coming into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell to the ground and worshipped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned by God in a dream not to return to Herod, the magi left for their own country by another way.”

“Praise be to God, Christ is here. He will come to take away the sins of the world, to redeem His people. He will give sight to the blind, free the prisoners, and release us from our sins.”

Christmas Eve

UMH #238 “Angels We Have Heard on High”

UMH #239 “Silent Night, Holy Night”

UMH #346 “Joy to the World”

The Parable of the Sower of Seed

Get to Know You Game: Describe Yourself

You will talk to three different people who you likely did not know before very well, and will ask them different questions. If you can repeat the answers to all three folks when randomly called on, then you can win a prize. Also have to do something random with said person.

-Find someone who goes to a different school (high school/mid school counts). If you had to describe yourself in three words what would they be and why? Make up a handshake with person.

-Find someone who likes totally different music than you. Why do you like the music you do, and who is your favorite artist? Make up a great rapper sound. (Burr! Gah Gah Gah! Etc.)

-Find someone you haven't really talked to before. Find something that you two have in common. This is your partner for the Bible lesson, sit next to them... you will be discussing some of these questions for the topic with them.

Pre-Questions:

-What is a sower? (Old time farmer who spreads seed.)

-What is a parable? (Anecdotal story used for teaching... understandable by those who actually want to hear, but impossible for those outside to understand.)

After Reading:

-Seed by the Road

-What happens to this seed? (It is taken immediately by Satan)

-Do you think that we have any say in if the word gets taken from us? (We do, must stay alert and away from the dangers of the enemy)

-Where do we have the word stolen from us? (Before church, before good things are set to happen, when we don't choose the Lord over all else)

-Seed in Shallow Soil

-What happens to this seed? (Withers under the sun)

-How is this seed supposed to strengthen itself? Can it? (Grow deep roots, don't stay at that shallow level so that it might survive trials and temptations)

-Seed in Thorns

-What happens to this seed? (It is choked out by the garbage of this world)

-How does this seed find itself in this situation? How does it get out of it? (It doesn't care for the more important things. Can escape by setting its sights on higher things)

-Seed in Good Soil

-What happens to this seed? (Grows and Reproduces)

-If this is the Christian life and ideal, what should be happening as a part of our faith? (Growth in us and spreading the word!)

Game:

-Since our scripture topic had to do with spreading deceit and/or goodness and stuff, we are going to be playing mafia...