

Do You Believe that God Fulfills Promises?



Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do 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 as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: “Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,” which means, “God is with us.” When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

- Matthew 1:18-25 (NRSV)

Matthew tells us about the birth of Jesus with a focus on Joseph, while elsewhere in scripture, Luke compliments the telling of the story with more of the perspective of Mary.

Observant of the law and concerned about his own reputation according to the customs of his time, Joseph came to face the troubling matter of Mary being with child before they were married. We're told that Joseph was both a just and compassionate man who was not hasty to judge or react with hurt or anger. Instead, we learn that he intended to carry out the righteous act of leaving Mary in a merciful way, leaving her quietly.

But the angel of the Lord reminds Joseph “do not be afraid” and guides Mary and Joseph to an understanding that “God is with us” in the midst of their troubling reality. The angel of the Lord leads both Joseph and Mary to deeper understanding of their own lives and to a new and different path upon which to journey as they go forth together with their soon-to-be-born son, whom “you are to name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”

Through the message of the angel to Joseph we too are given the confidence to go forth in the midst of our troubling reality as face occupation, oppression, lack of safety and mistrust. Perhaps the angel of the Lord is calling us to be free from the customs of our time that might hold us back. Could it be that the guidance of the angel to Mary and Joseph might also remind us of the promises of God foretold in the prophets from of old, that even today “God is with us” as we face our apparently troubling matters.

As Joseph and Mary were guided towards a new path in the work entrusted to them, bringing forth new life, so too may this same God guide us all into an intimacy with God that is beyond all understanding and an awareness that propels us to act in communion with our sisters and brothers who are in need, to free the oppressed and the oppressor, to act justly and to walk tenderly with our God.

- Brother Jack Curran, FSC, PhD

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For Meditation

Are you ready to believe in the promises of God, even when you face perplexing circumstances and what may seem like insurmountable problems? Is there something that is holding you back from being more attentive to the promptings of the Spirit of God? Do you hear the angel of the Lord leading you today?

Prayer

Oh God,
Continue to send your angels
into my path.
Dispel my fears and stir in me the
grace of your Spirit.
Lead me and guide me in my efforts
to be of service for those you entrust
to my care.

