



READ: Matthew 1:18-25 (NIV)

This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: 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. Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. 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. 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." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us"). When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

ENTER THE STORY:

Have you ever struggled to fall asleep at night because you couldn't quit thinking about something?

I imagine that's what it was like for Joseph when he found out that Mary, his soon-to-be wife, was pregnant. I bet he tossed and turned for a long time before he finally drifted off to sleep, but just as soon as he started to dream, an angel showed up with a message from God.

You see, Joseph didn't believe Mary's story, and he had decided to leave her, but God had other plans. God chose Joseph to be the earthly father of his Son, and he wanted Joseph to take Mary as his wife and raise her baby as his own son. Even though this baby was God in the flesh, he would still have to grow in knowledge like any other child.

In this story, Joseph acted as a rescuer by taking Mary as his wife and restoring her reputation. And when their baby was born, they would do exactly as the angel told them and name him Jesus, which means "God saves" because that is exactly what Jesus came to do...to seek and to save the lost.

Many years later, at the perfect time, Jesus would act as a rescuer, too, for Mary and Joseph and anyone else that would put their faith in him. He would not merely rescue them from a difficult situation; he would do something FAR better. Jesus would lay down his life to pay the price for their sin. He is the bridge that brings us back into the presence of God. That is why we call him Immanuel - God with us.

If we have learned anything during this Advent, it's that God does things very differently than we do. This is why the Christmas story is so unique. Take a few moments today to think about what it means for us that through Jesus, we can enter into the very presence of God the Father.

PRAY: *Heavenly Father, we so often feel alone and empty in this world, afraid to step out in faith and trust that you will protect us and provide for us. Will you remind us this Christmas season that your presence is always with us through your Son, Jesus, our Immanuel?*