

December 31, 2019

*“What Is Next” by Pastor Ed Terry*  
Matthew 2: 13 - 23

Now that the Christmas parties, the family get-togethers, and the Christmas holidays are almost over. Next Thursday the reality of our daily routine will return. We all wonder what 2020 will bring. So what is next?

After The Magi left I feel sure that Mary and Joseph wondered *“What is next”*

Mary and Joseph unknowingly fulfilled four 700 year old prophecies that we read about in our scripture lesson. God works His will despite the opposition of sinful people. Earthly kings like Herod may try to circumvent God’s divine purpose, but in the end everybody who opposes God will fail.

Micah 5:2 prophesied; ***“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.”*** This was fulfilled when Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

(Matthew 2:5-6)

Jeremiah 31:15 prophesied; ***“A voice is heard in Ramah, mourning and great weeping, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more.”*** This was fulfilled when Herod had all the boys under two to be killed, (Matthew 2:17-18)

Hosea 11:1 prophesied; ***“When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.”*** This was fulfilled when an angel of The Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and told Joseph to return to the land of Israel. (Matthew 2:19 & 20)

When Joseph & Mary returned for Egypt they settled in Nazareth and fulfilled what was said through the prophets, ***“He shall be called a Nazarene”*** (Matthew 2:23)

If you and I had been in Joseph’s shoes we would have wonder why God didn’t strike King Herod dead and protect Jesus that way, but God chose not to. God choose a different approach which included some inconveniences for Joseph and Mary.

I am sure that some of you are wondering what message this part of the Christmas story has for us on New Year’s Eve. Ecclesiastics 1:9 clearly states that; ***“What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again”*** What was true in the first advent of Jesus will also hold true for us as we enter 2020. So do you really believe that what God has done in the past God will do for you in the future. The point is this; God knows the future, God has a plan for each one of us, God loves you, and God protects and provides for His people

So what are the lessons that we can and we should learn from Joseph:

- First of all Joseph was ***“a righteous man”***. (Matthew 1: 19) To be righteous means to be *“right with The Lord”* We all need to have and to maintain a close personal relationship with The Lord if we want The Lord to guide us and to protect us in 2020.
- Secondly Joseph accepted God’s plan for His life. Joseph did not say; *“why me”* or *“I have my own plans”* or *“this is not a good time - maybe next year Lord.”* *“I am not*

*qualified*” or “*Lord get someone else*”. You see when we make lame excuses like these we are really saying “*Lord I know better than you.*” Remember God created you, God gave you specific gifts and abilities, and God put you in this place at this time to do specific jobs for Him.

- Thirdly Joseph listened to God’s messages and Joseph obeyed God’s commands. (Matthew 1:24; 2:14; 2:21) Three times The Bible tells us that Joseph obeyed without hesitation. Remember emotionally Joseph faced ridicule and embarrassment by marrying a woman who was pregnant with a child that was not his. And the trips to Bethlehem and to Egypt were not easy.
- Next Joseph believed God. God did not reveal His entire plan to Joseph at the beginning. God only gave Joseph the next step to take. God sent an angel to Joseph three different times to tell Joseph what to do next. As Christians we are to walk by faith not by sight. (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:7)
- Joseph trusted God. God did not remove all of Joseph’s problems or Joseph’s enemies. Joseph’s life contained several detours. Sometimes the future we are preparing for is not the future The Lord has planned for us. Sometimes God shatters our dreams so The Lord can give us bigger dreams.
- Remember Devine guidance comes to those people who have a personal relationship with The Lord and to those who are walking with The Lord each day.

Now I have never had an angel come to me and tell me what to do. But when we asked Jesus to be our savior God puts His Holy Spirit in us and one of the names and the ministries of The Holy Spirit is “*counselor*”. Jesus said; “*If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever*” (John 14: 15 & 16) The Indwelling Holy Spirit gives Godly wisdom and Devine guidance to Jesus’ faithful disciples. So if you want The Lord to give you guidance in 2020 you need to be in a close personal relationship with The Lord and you need to walk closely with The Lord every day.

The Bible also contains Godly wisdom and Devine guidance. So if we want The Lord to give us Godly wisdom and Devine guidance in 2020 we need to seriously study our Bibles each day.

The Bible also contains numerous promises about guidance, protecting, and providing for His faithful children. I have listed a few as examples:

***“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future”.*** (Jeremiah 29:11)

***“The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them.”*** (Psalm 34:7)

***“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”*** (Isaiah 41: 10)

***“Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, ‘This is the way; walk in it.’ (Isaiah 30:21***

***God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.” (Hebrews 13:5)***

***“And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:20b)***

***“Do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well”***

***(Matthew 6:31 & 33)***

***“And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:19)***

***“For nothing is impossible with God.” (Luke 1:37)***

***“If God is for us, who can be against us? (Romans 8:31)***

The Bible contains the words or phrases telling us not to worry 365 times. Friends that is not a mistake – God gave us one for each day of the year.

A copy of these promises will be on the table where the bulletins are so you can pick one up on your way out.

Remember God uses ordinary people who are available and obedient to accomplish His plans. You see there was really nothing special about Joseph. Joseph was available and obedient. What about you have you surrendered your life to The Lord and will you let Him use you in 2020? Will you do whatever The Lord tells you to do?

We each have a choice; we can face 2020 alone or we can believe God’s promises, listen to Him, obey Him, and trust in Him to provide for us and to protect us, and to be with us. The choice is yours.

AMEN