



Peace on Earth (Matthew 1:18-24)
Practicing Christmas pt. 2
Pastor Tim Peck

THE BIG IDEA

Joseph embodies the practices of faithful obedience to God's word, showing compassion to others, and humble decision-making. These practices enable Joseph to "make things whole" in a very difficult situation.

OPENING

- How do you feel when someone breaks a promise to you? What temptations do you face in this situation?
- What's one situation in your life where you feel the least at peace right now?

DIGGING DEEPER

- According to Bible scholar Craig Keener, people would have expected Joseph to divorce Mary and expose her to public shame because of his commitment to God's law.¹ Why do you think Joseph's faith community would have expected him to do this? How does he deviate from these expectations?
- Read 2 Timothy 3:16. How is the Bible useful for us? What does it do? The word translated "God-breathed" (or "inspired by God" in some translations) means "God is the source behind biblical writings and acted through the Holy Spirit with the biblical writers...to communicate what God wished to communicate."² How does this make the Bible unique?
- The English word for "compassion" means to "feel with" another person. According to Henri Nouwen, Donald McNeill, and Douglas Morrison, "Compassion requires us to be weak with the weak, vulnerable with the vulnerable, and powerless with the

¹Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (InterVarsity Press, 2014), p. 48.

²D. McKim, *The Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), p. 32

powerless. Compassion means full immersion into the condition of being human.”³
Why do you think this is so hard for people?

- Humble decision-making means making our decisions with an open mind and open heart. What do you think Joseph was thinking when he obeyed the angel of the Lord to take Mary as his wife and raise Jesus as his own son? What did this decision cost him personally?

PUTTING IT TO WORK

- What is your current practice with Bible reading? What might God be leading you to do in 2023 to immerse yourself more fully in God’s word?
- Who is God leading you to show compassion to this week? Ask your group or a friend to pray for you as you do.
- What’s a big decision you’re facing right now? Spend time asking God to guide you and to help you be a humble decision-maker in this situation.

PRAYER REQUESTS

³Henri Nouwen, Donald McNeill, and Douglas Morrison, *Compassion: A Reflection on the Christian Life* (Doubleday, 1983), p. 4.