

Luke 1:26-38; Matt. 1:18-25; Jesus' Earthly Parents I. The Virgin Mary II. The Builder Joseph

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, this evening we come to the earthly parents of Jesus. Now we know that Jesus was born of the virgin Mary- meaning that His flesh was taken from the womb of Mary without the input, will or contribution of a man. By way of the Holy Spirit, this child was woven in the womb of Mary from Mary's flesh. So Jesus does not have a physical, earthly father. However, Mary as well as Joseph are still considered Jesus' earthly parents. Now an old saying goes like this, you can pick your friends but you can't choose your family, right?! Children, did you have an option when it come to your parents- can you choose who will be there to receive you when you are born? Of course not. But what about Jesus? Did God literally and specifically choose both Mary and Joseph to be his earthly parents- to raise this child whose birth we celebrate on Christmas? Yes, He did! So today we consider Jesus' earthly parents and what we learn about them from the Scriptures. We consider this theme: Jesus reveals the character of His earthly parents so that we might marvel at God's gracious choice!

### **I. The Virgin Mary**

We begin by considering the virgin, Mary. What do we know about her? In Luke 1:26 we are introduced to a virgin betrothed to a man. And this virgin's name was Mary. Now it may be interesting to note that her name- Mary- is linked to the OT name Mara- meaning bitter. Remember that when Naomi came back to the land of Israel she said- do not call me Naomi- call me Mara for I am in bitter distress. So Mary's name means bitter or distress, but that does not describe her as a person! She was a young lady- likely in her early teens. Likely around 14 years old, she is called a virgin. That means that not only is she not married- she is a pure and chaste young girl. She is not like the promiscuous women of the world- she was obedient to God's design for young people. Being a Jew, she was olive or light brown in her skin color. Dark eyes and hair- being a little shorter than our Dutch girls. So she was not like our blond hair, blue eyes, six feet tall pictures that we see- but Middle Eastern in her heritage. But more than that- more than just being a Jew- she was from a specific line. She was from the line of David. Her genealogy given in Luke 3. Even the angel says to

Mary in 1:32, that her son would be in the line of his father David. So Mary was likely a distant relative of Joseph- both coming from the line of David. Both being raised in the city of Nazareth- and both being called to Bethlehem the city of David when the census directed them. She is said to be highly favored by God- a young woman of virtue and piety to be sure- but one who greatly blessed by God!

As I said in the theme, one of the reasons we learn about Mary is so that we might marvel at God's gracious choice- that God saw fit to use and bless a maiden as this. There is nothing special about Mary on the service. She was a normal- albeit pious- young girl. And yet the angel comes to her and says- you are the favored one! You have found favor with God as v. 30 says. Notice that she has found favor- or she has received this blessing from God! It was not earned or merited, it is graciously and freely given to her! The word is "charis" or grace! She is the graced one. God has bestowed grace upon her- she is not so holy that she deserves this child- even less that she will be a co-redeemer and partner in saving the lost with this child! All of this is to say that Mary is not the savior- she does not receive the name above every name! Mary will need to be saved by her Son- just as we are! This is the highlight God's grace and kindness shown to Mary- but also to keep our focus on the work of Mary's Son! This child will be great- He will save His people from their sins- He will be called Son of the Most High- He will rule on His father David's throne! Even as Elizabeth will proclaim later in 1:42- blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Mary was blessed because of the child she carried- not because of any work, holiness or merit to be found in Mary herself! Mary would learn- she would ponder these things up in her heart- she would misunderstand and make mistakes. She would rebuke her Son when she shouldn't; ask her son to do something when it was not yet time. She would be offended at the words of her son. All of this goes to prove that Mary was not perfect- but she was the one chosen to carry this child. Now Mary was not alone in this work of raising the Christ child. She was also the virgin who was engaged as v. 27 says. She was betrothed- which means that she was already set apart and spoken for. During this time in history, almost every wedding was arranged. Likely Joseph's father and Mary's father knew each other- living in the same city of Nazareth. Joseph's father would seek a bride for his son, and a meeting would take place between these two fathers as was the

custom. This is not to say that Mary and Joseph had nothing to say in the matter- they could encourage their fathers to pursue this union. But it was arranged by the fathers and it was a communal event. So Mary and Joseph would be spoken for- there was a plan in place and events in motion. The engagement or betrothal would last around a year- and during that time this new couple would get to know each other but they would not live or sleep together. Both the future husband and wife would be committed to each other- but also committed to purity as they waited for their wedding day. That is what makes the scandal of Mary's pregnancy so public- the whole town would know that this maiden was not yet married and should not be with child. It would be shame upon both these families- both Joseph and Mary would be humiliated and their families would be ridiculed. But Mary bears the shame and scorn- through no misdeed or sin of her own- she is the willing servant. "Let it be as you have said" she utters in v. 38. She is willing to be ridiculed if that means obedience- she will do what is asked of her. She would remain a virgin and yet she would have a child. And before we consider her husband, we briefly note that Mary does not remain a virgin forever. She does until the child is born- as we found in Mt. 1:25. Mary and Joseph did not know each other in that way until after Jesus was born. But Mary does end up having more children- as Mt. 13 references both brothers and sisters of Jesus. So she does have more children after Jesus. And Mary will have one other distinction attributed to her. Mary alone was present both at the birth and death of Jesus Christ! Mary alone will see both the beginning and the end of her Son's life on earth. But praise God- her son not only dies- but He also rose again!

## **II. The Builder Joseph**

Next, we consider her husband Joseph. Now Joseph was likely older than Mary- perhaps 18 or so- as was the common age for getting married for men back then. And his occupation was one of "a builder." Now we know that Joseph was a trained builder from reading Mt. 13:55 where Jesus is called the carpenter's son. Interestingly, the word for carpenter here is "tekton" in the Greek. To be a "tekton" means that you are a craftsman- a builder or a construction worker. So we do not read what kind of building material that Joseph

used. It could have been wood- but it could also be stone. So although most people think of Joseph working with wood and having sawdust in his beard- it was very possible that he worked with stone and mortar instead or in addition to wood. But whatever material he used, he was known as a builder or tradesmen of Nazareth. Now the name- Nazareth- means- the “town of the branch.” Which is interesting because the branch of the tribe of Judah will be raised here- in fulfillment of Isaiah 11:1 which states that a branch from the stump of Jesse will bear fruit. And it is very clear that Joseph came from the tribe of Judah and the line of David as Mt. 1:20 says. The angel calls him the son of David. But being a young man- newly engaged- engaging in the trade of building- was not always the easiest line of work. Joseph did not come from money- and he surely was not rich by the time he gets married. This is clear from the offering this couple made in Luke 2:24. In keeping with the Lev. 12 law, when the baby Jesus was presented at the temple at 8 days, a pair of birds were offered. Not the more expensive year-old lamb, but the minimum requirement of a pair of turtledoves. This goes to prove that finances were tight for this young couple. But although he was not rich, he is a righteous and pious young man. He cares deeply for Mary- and even when it appears that Mary has been unfaithful, he still tries to shield and protect her. During this year long engagement, Mary has become pregnant and Joseph knows that he is not the father. As we read in Mt. 1:19- he was a just man and did not want to expose Mary to any more public shame. Wanting to spare Mary from further scandal and even possible stoning, Joseph was going to annul the engagement quietly. Joseph was simply planning on calling off the wedding because of Mary’s infidelity, but an angel met with him as well. In Mt. 1:20 an angel assured Joseph that Mary had not been unfaithful- that he had no reason to avoid marriage to her- because this child was conceived by the Holy Spirit. So although Mary was the first to receive an angel visitor concerning her child, Joseph also receives confirmation concerning the child’s identity and origin as well. And although Joseph would not be the biological father of Jesus, he would still be considered the legal father. And as read in the Genealogy of Mt. 1, this Joseph is also from the line of David, being the husband of Mary of whom Jesus was born. And although more focus is normally given to Mary, we have to remember that Joseph was a pious man who also obeyed the voice of the LORD delivered to him by the angels. He obeyed the LORD and

took Mary to be his wife- even though she was with child. And Joseph will obey the warning he receives later on as well. In fact, it will be Joseph's obedience to the angel's word that will end up sparing the babies life when Herod is looking to kill him in Mt. 2. So Joseph will obey the warning as he takes Mary and Jesus to Egypt to flee Herod's sword which would strike down all the little boys in Bethlehem. But unlike Mary, Joseph does not endure to the end of his son's life. We do not read anything about him after Jesus was 10 or so. So it is likely that Joseph died before Jesus began his earthly ministry, but his place in history as the adopted father of Jesus will not be forgotten. He has the privilege and task of raising a son- who was also thee Son of the Father most high!

As we conclude, we wonder what place this couple should occupy? Should they be worshipped and revered- called saints who have a direct and better access to Jesus their son? Or should they be forgotten and passed over as relics of history? Well, with both Mary and Joseph we find examples of godliness, piety and obedience. They both took on the heavy burden of raising a child that was not all their own. A child born with the stigma of scandal- and yet they both took up the task and cared for this child given to them. They both submitted to the word of the LORD- they both obeyed and cared for this unexpected little one. They may not have always understood His identity and work as their actions at the temple when Jesus was 10 proves. But they did obey! As our theme states, Jesus reveals the character of His earthly parents so that we might marvel at God's gracious choice! Mary and Joseph did not deserve this gift- but when He was given- they rejoiced in His arrival! So for us- our salvation is not earned but we too must rejoice when we receive Him as well! But we also learn something very important about Jesus in these chapters! We can wonder at His humility and His humanity! Jesus had a real- biological mother! He has real parents that cared for him- that raised him and supported him as a child! Jesus submitted to and obeyed real, earthly parent! All to fulfill righteousness- to make Him our compassionate, understanding and merciful High Priest! Such is the glory of the incarnation! Although we can't choose our family, here God does choose both Mary and Joseph to be the legal parents of this the Christ child! So rejoice in the grace of God shown to them and us!