

Just A Man Or A Just Man? – Matthew 1:19

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *Protection*

1. The *Protection Industry* has become big business.
2. It seems everywhere you turn, there's some new protection *device, scheme* or *legislation*.
 - a. Sacramento and Washington DC are pumping out law after law aimed at making it safer for the public.
 - 1) whether it's licensing a new prescription drug, highway safety, or pollution controls,
 - 2) there's a constant stream of legislation seeking to regulate just about every dimension of our lives.
 - b. in an attempt to avoid lawsuits, manufacturers are adding all kinds of new safety features to their products.
 - 1) so we have medicine bottles with child-proof tops
 - 2) trigger guards, seat belts, airbags, and crumple zones
 - c. you can't ride a bike without a helmet.
 - d. you can't smoke in public
 - e. they're erecting massive posts in front of stores so that some lunatic can't drive his explosives-laden van into the front door and blow himself & everyone else up.
3. We're security and protection conscious around here.
 - a. we've got security cameras on the roof,
 - b. security patrols walking the parking lot,
 - c. we put all those who want to work with the children and youth through an extensive screening process.
 - d. we rehearse evacuation drills with the children.
4. With each year that passes, it seems there's a greater and greater need for protection because morality and virtue are in decline.
5. The values that once marked *polite* society have all but disappeared.
6. The increasing amount of home invasions has moved many to buy elaborate security systems and guns – all with the thought that this will provide more protection for their home and family.
7. But while security systems and bars on the windows may deter a burglar or invader, there's a far more important level of protection many of us have neglected.

B. *Today's Message*

1. It's about that I want to talk today. The setting for our text today is Matthew 1 and the birth of Jesus Christ.
2. There's a statement made about Joseph here that stands out as something every man, and in particular, every *husband*, needs to take serious thought toward.

II. TEXT

A. *Matthew 1:18-20*

¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. ²⁰ But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.

1. The phrase I want to focus on today is found in v. 19 where it says that *Joseph* was a *just man*.

2. But we can only properly grasp it if we understand the cultural setting in which we find it & him.
3. Among the Jews of that day – marriages were usually arranged either by the parents or a professional match-maker.
 - a. often, parents would agree even before children were born that if they had a boy or girl, they would be wed to another.
 - b. but usually, these arrangements were made when the children were just a few years old.
 - c. this period was known as the *engagement* or *promise*.
 - d. then, when as the girl approached her 13th birthday, her fiancé, who she may have never met before, and who was usually between 17 and 23, would present himself to her with a gift and ask her if she would consent to be his wife.
 - e. if she accepted, and she usually did, they would recite a vow over a cup of wine and the betrothal would commence.
 - f. now, the betrothal lasted one year, during which time they were referred to as *husband* and *wife*; and so Joseph & Mary are called as much in vs. 19 & 20.
 - g. the only thing that needed to be done to enter into the fullness of marriage was to have the ceremony and consummate the union.
 - h. but prior to the wedding night, they had no physical contact with each other.
 - i. the husband would spend the year of betrothal preparing their new home by adding a room on to his father's house.
 - j. the wife would spend the year preparing her wedding dress.
 - k. betrothal was far more binding than *our* idea of *engagement*; betrothal was legally binding and the only way to end it was by a *formal act of divorce*.
 - 1) if a man discovered that his betrothed wife had been unfaithful, then he could divorce her *publicly* and recover the full value of the bride price he'd paid, which was usually a pretty hefty sum of money.
 - 2) if he decided he just didn't want to marry her but she'd done nothing wrong, he could quietly give her a writ of divorce before as few as two witnesses; but by doing so, he'd *forfeit* the bride price and had to return any dowry she'd given him.
4. This is the course Joseph took with Mary: Though he had more than sufficient justification for putting her to *public shame* and recovering the bride price he'd paid for her, he chose to keep the whole thing quiet and accept his losses; socially, emotionally, *and* economically.

B. A Just Man

1. Let's look at v. 19 again –
Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly.
2. Let's try to get in to Joseph's head & heart for a moment; what might he be thinking and feeling when he discovered Mary was pregnant?
3. First off – he knew the child wasn't his because as v. 18 says, they'd not come together in that way yet.
4. Second – Mary's pregnancy was a *shocker* because Mary didn't seem like that kind of a woman and Joseph had no idea she was interested in another man.
5. Third – all his hopes and expectations about the glorious day of his wedding and then life together with Mary were dashed to smithereens!
 - a. you see, Joseph *couldn't* wed Mary. It wasn't just that he felt betrayed and wanted nothing to do with her – no, it was far more *serious* than that.
 - b. the child Mary bore was not *his*, and as much as he may have liked to forgive and overlook the infidelity in his deep love for her, the fact the child was not his was an absolute deal-breaker!
 - c. as a Jew, and as a member of the tribe of Judah, Joseph's family name was tied to a plot of land given to him by God!
 - 1) his firstborn son would be the one to whom the land and family name would be given.

- 2) Mary's son, was not *his* son, and *could* not fill the role that would be assigned to him.
- 3) but even more importantly, Joseph was in the royal line of David and his son would carry on that line in promise of the coming Messiah!
- d. when we read the story of the nativity, we often think about how hard it must have been for young *Mary* to have to bear the stigma of her pregnancy.
- e. let's not forget how hard it was for *Joseph*. Indeed, he was caught in one of the hardest spots anyone has *ever* faced.
 - 1) on one had was his deep & devoted love for Mary --
 - 2) but on the other was his sense of responsibility to generations of his ancestors and descendants – and to the prophetic plans & purposes of God.
- f. what was he to do?
- 6. What guided him was his sense of *justice*. As v. 19 says, he was a just, a *righteous* man.
- 7. Really, he was a truly *godly* man! We can say that with all confidence because of what it says he *did*.

Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly.

- a. Joseph wasn't all cold, calculating *justice*;
- b. he was concerned with doing the *right* thing, and not just as his emotions demanded, but with an eye to what God would have him do.
- c. his sense of justice was shaped by a healthy dose of *mercy* – and in this he shows the character of the Lord.
- 8. Joseph was well within *his rights* to distance himself from Mary.
 - a. after all, it wouldn't be long before her pregnancy would become the talk of the small village of Nazareth where they lived.
 - b. if he didn't take a public stand, denouncing her and breaking off the betrothal in a *open* way, then there would always be suspicion attached to him as well.
 - c. his divorce of her would leave all kinds of nasty questions in people's minds about *his* credibility.
- 9. But Joseph knew if he took the route of public exposure of her, it would doom her and her child to a terrible fate.
 - a. under the law – she could be stoned to death as an adulteress. ^[1]
 - b. if her punishment was not *that* severe, it would at the *least* mean exile from Nazareth and from all polite company in any village or city she moved to.
- 10. So while the safest course *for Joseph* would be public exposure of Mary's pregnancy, he could not do it because of the life and fate it would doom her to.
- 11. He would rather leave her to the Lord's hand than to man's.
- 12. He was a just yet *merciful* man. As hurt as he had to have been at her *seeming disloyalty* to him, he thought only of what was best in the situation for *her*.
- 13. If Joseph had been "*just a man*" he would have looked out only for his own interests, and Mary be damned!
- 14. But Joseph wasn't *just a man*, he was a *just man*, a godly man – a man who understood that it was his duty to protect his wife, even as he moved to end their betrothal.

C. Protect Your Wife

- 1. There's a profound and important lesson for us to learn from Joseph's example.
- 2. When considering the story of the Nativity of Jesus, we tend to focus a lot on Mary and Joseph is mentioned only in passing.
- 3. He seems to kind of hover on the sidelines, a supporting actor, but not really crucial to the story.
- 4. This passage shows us that just as God selected *Mary* to be the vessel of the Messiah, he picked Joseph to be her mate, her husband, her *protector*!
- 5. You see, once Joseph embraced his role as husband and so protector, *that's* when God brought him in to the circle of confidence on what was going on with Mary and the Child in her womb.

6. Joseph was a just man, a godly man, but God waited for those traits to find **active expression** before He moved to include Joseph in the great drama of redemption that was taking place in his own home and family.
7. My message today is aimed specifically at the men & husbands here today.
8. God has called you, as a husband, to provide **protection** to and for your wife.
9. Men, if you don't already know it, then let me tell you something about what a woman needs, about what a wife looks for in her husband;
 - a. she looks to you for a large measure of her **security**.
 - b. she needs to know that you're concerned with her **safety**.
 - c. she needs to see you making wise choices in every area of your lives together.
 - d. and this is why she **longs** for you, even **aches** for you to have a solid, intimate relationship with the Lord –
 - e. because she knows that the safety and security she needs from you, *you* can only get from God.
10. A wife needs her husband to protect her in three main areas: **physically, socially, & spiritually**.
11. First of all, a wife looks to her husband to protect her from **physical harm**.
 - a. this means a husband will do his best to ensure she's not placed in dangerous settings that could result in **violence** to her.
 - b. he's not going to take her into situations reason says could lead to her hurt.
 - c. he's going to take measures to make sure she's safe when he's not around.
 - 1) he'll make sure the car is safe and in good repair.
 - 2) he'll take care of those little things around the house that could pose a risk.
 - d. he's also going to take thought to the fact that a wife also looks to their financial standing as a large part her sense of security, so he'll endeavor to be a good steward and make wise choices regarding their finances.
12. Second, a wife looks to her husband to protect her from **social harm**.
 - a. this is what Joseph was concerned with for Mary, that she would be *shamed* and bear the brunt of **social disgrace** the rest of her life.
 - b. a husband needs to defend his wife when she's attacked by the *malice* of others.
 - c. he needs to protect her from situations where petty or evil people are coming against her.
 - d. he needs to shield her from public scrutiny that would jump to ill-founded conclusions and make unjust judgments.
 - e. he needs to defend her and her reputation.
 - f. really, he's to not only honor her **himself**, as Peter says in 1 Peter 3:7, but he's to endeavor to **see her honored** by others.

Husbands, likewise, dwell with [your wife] with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.

- 1) Peter paints a word-picture here that is precious and poignant.
- 2) he speaks of the wife as a costly and fragile "vahz" [not 'vase'; vahz!]
- 3) by weaker, he doesn't mean that in a negative or critical way; he's not demeaning the wife – the word refers to the need for tenderness and care – **PROTECTION**, really!
- 4) Peter pictures the husband carefully lifting this precious 'vahz' and placing it on a pedestal so that it is out of danger and in a place where its beauty can be admired and honored.
 - a) tools
- g. ladies, if that's the way your husband not only **treated** you, but you had the confidence of knowing he **thought of you that way** even when he wasn't physically present with you, how different would your marriage be?
13. Third, a wife needs her husband to protect her **spiritually**.
 - a. she needs to know that he's pursuing the Lord and seeking His will in all things.
 - b. she needs him to take the lead in spiritual things;
 - 1) in prayer; in leading the family in spiritual devotions

- 2) in making sure the family is plugged in to a healthy spiritual environment at church and that they attend consistently, not just in the off-season.
- 3) a wife needs her husband to be committed to a life of holiness because she knows that if he isn't, if he's giving some corner of his life to sin, it endangers her and her family!
- c. listen – I have to say something now that is not the usually *sermon fare*.
 - 1) it's in this realm of spiritual protection that a wife finds *pornography & sexual sin* to be such a threat and danger, and why so many wives *loathe* it so intensely.
 - 2) you see, they see it as *spiritual*; a wife knows that when her husband gets involved in such stuff, he's opening the door to the demonic realm and subjecting not only himself, but her and her children to great danger.
 - 3) because God ordains the husband to be the spiritual leader of his marriage and home, when he, *as the leader*, makes a choice to invest himself in moral darkness, he's not just making that choice *for himself*, he's dragging his wife and kids *along with him*.
 - 4) he's not the only one who'll have to eat the bitter fruit of sin's consequences; he's serving up a plate for them too.

III. CONCLUSION

A. *Jesus, Our Protector-Groom*

- 1. God intends marriage to be a picture of the relationship between Christ and the Church.
- 2. We are the Bride of Christ and He is our Heavenly Groom.
- 3. Jesus has betrothed us to Himself, having paid the bride price for us in His own blood on the cross.
- 4. We've entered into the betrothal with Him through the New Covenant, which is ratified by the cup of the Lord's Table.
- 5. Do you know what Jesus is doing right now during this time of betrothal?
 - a. He's gone to His Father's house to make room for us!
 - b. what are we to be doing while we wait for Him to come and get us to take us to the wedding feast?
 - c. we're to be getting our wedding garment ready!
- 6. But you know what else Jesus is doing as our Heavenly Husband?
 - a. He's *protecting & preserving* us. ^[2]
 - b. He's praying for us right now! Hebrews 7:25 says -
[Jesus] is able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.
 - c. He's the Good Shepherd who stands between us and the wolf. [John 10]
 - d. He's our defense attorney Who sits at the right hand of the Judge, and when the accuser comes and seeks to shame and discredit us before the Father, just leans over and says, "I died for this one too."
- 7. Psalm 3:3 = "The Lord, is a shield for me, He's my glory and the One who lifts up my head."
[elab.]

B. *Dealing It Out*

- 1. If you're a husband and a Christian – heed the lesson Joseph teaches and embrace your calling to be the protector of your wife and family.
- 2. If you're a single man – recognize how the same principle applies to you; that you are called upon by the Lord to be a part of the Body of Christ and your walk is going to affect the overall health of the Church.
- 3. Ladies, if you're single or married to an unbeliever, then the Lord wants you to know He's made special provision for your protection in your looking to *Him* for security.
- 4. But I want to end this with a solemn and urgent call to the men of this church to take hold of their holy occupation of being the husband-protectors of their wives, their families, and so, of this

church.

5. I truly believe that the health and success of Calvary Chapel of Oxnard in it's God ordained vision rests in the hands and hearts of us men.

[1] Deut. 22:23-24

[2] 1 Peter 1:5 Jude 24 1 Thess 5:23-24 2 Thess 3:3