

Pastor's Message – 12/18/2022

Matthew 1:18-25

I don't hear much about it down here in the balmy southern part of the state, but when I was up north in Shell Lake, it was a much-anticipated day of excitement – when it was finally cold enough and the ice was thick enough for ice fishing. Some ice fishers will walk out as soon as they can, but depending on who you talk to and their level of risk aversion, maybe should not be out on the ice quite yet. There are always stories of how those who go out a little too soon, have the ice break beneath their feet and end up in the water – perhaps not over their head, but definitely in cold water.

Today we heard the story in Matthew's gospel, during our Lighting of the Advent Wreath candles, of a man who was in over his head: Joseph. Marriages in 1st century Jewish culture were usually arranged and in the first year, a year of engagement, the couple was already considered married though they were really only betrothed, i.e., engaged, but not living together. However, breaking that engagement, even in the first year, required a divorce. After the first year, the bride came to live with her husband.

So, Joseph now finds himself with a wife who seems to have been unfaithful. What is he going to do? He has options: none of them positive. Being a just and a fair man, he realizes he is in over his head and is looking for help. God hears his dilemma and sends a message via an angel in a dream.

How could it be?
 This baby in my arms sleeping now so peacefully
 "The Son of God" the angel said
 How could it be?

LORD, I know he's not my own
 Not of flesh, not of my bone
 Still Father let this baby be the son of my love

Father, show me where I fit into this plan of yours
 How can a man be father to the Son of God?
 LORD, for all my life I've been a simple carpenter
 How can I raise a king?
 How can I raise a king?

He looks so small, his face hands so fair
 And when he cries the sun just seems to disappear
 But when he laughs it shines again

How could it be?

Father show me where I fit into this plan of yours
 How can a man be father to the Son of God?
 LORD, for all my life I've been a simple carpenter
 How can I raise a king?
 How can I raise a king?

How could it be,
 this baby in my arms sleeping now so peacefully?
 "The Son of God" the angel said, how could it be?
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 How could it be?

- Michael Card

Perhaps at some point in your life, you have been in over your head: not sure what to do and uncertain of your next step. Perhaps you have been faced with a challenge that seemed beyond you. That challenge may be yet to come. It is in those situations when, like Joseph, God hears and sends a message, perhaps not by angel messenger, perhaps not in a dream, but in some way, God offers His wisdom, care, and love. God offers the way out and the way forward.

Each of us carries a treasure in our hands and holds a baby in our arms. Each day, God entrusts His Son for us, like Joseph, to carry to others. We may not feel up to the challenge; you may not feel as if you can carry this Child and speak the good news that He brings and that He represents, but God gives us the words to speak and the strength to offer a word of hope to those who need to see and experience and touch the hope of Jesus born again.

How could it be? How could it be?

It is by God's grace, in God's power and by God's love that the world can be saved and can be transformed. It is by God's love that lives can be changed. You fit into God's plan. God has something wonderful for you to do. You are not in over your head for God lifts you up and makes the way clear. God makes the impossible possible. Carry the child; hold the child from this day forward everywhere you go.