

“Love and Trust”

Matthew 1:18-25 & Romans 1:1-7

Pastor James York

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Compassion trumps rules. Grace trumps being right. Love trumps fear. Trust trumps division. Belonging trumps hurt. Matthew explains. **Matthew 1:18-25 NRSV** “**Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us." When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.**”

Joseph’s regard for the law was balanced by a sense of compassion that exemplified the higher values of God that would be proclaimed by Jesus. Scripture says, “Joseph was a righteous man.” Joseph studied and meditated upon God’s law. Joseph strived to live the law in all aspects of his life. Joseph was so passionate in living God’s law he was known throughout the community as a righteous man. Joseph honored the engagement tradition of that time. Mary and Joseph lived in separate homes, no sex as they prepared their future home.

Mary became pregnant. Joseph believed Mary had committed adultery. Joseph was deeply hurt, confused, and angry. There could be no wedding now, not under such dark scandal. In Joseph’s anger and hurt, he could have lashed out at Mary, tried to make her suffer as he was suffering. No, Joseph loved Mary too much for that. Joseph knew that the law demanded that he bring charges of adultery against Mary in public. The penalty for Mary would be death by stoning.

Compassion trumps rules. Grace trumps being right. Love trumps fear. Trust trumps division. Belonging trumps hurt. Joseph wrestled with the demands of the law verses his love for Mary. What had he done to deserve this? Joseph’s dreams were shattered. His life was now a nightmare. It has been said, that life is what happens when you have made other plans. As the law keeps running through Joseph’s mind, his love for Mary is coursing through his heart. Joseph is in conflict between law and love, head and heart. Joseph finds himself in the grey area of life. Most of life is not black and white. Should Joseph follow the law or be gracious?

Joseph a devout rule-follower colored within the lines. Joseph’s well-ordered life crumbled. Joseph had deep love for Mary. Joseph was compassionate and gracious. Amazingly, before any explanation from Mary, before any dreams from God, before any angel’s visits, scripture says, “Joseph was unwilling to expose Mary to public disgrace, Joseph planned to dismiss Mary quietly.” Then, just when, Joseph was filled with compassion, grace, love, trust and belonging; then, the angel of the Lord appeared and explained what was going on. Now

Joseph needed even more compassion, grace, love, trust and belonging to marry Mary and adopt Jesus.

Joseph had to say goodbye to his carefully planned, neat, tidy life. His and Mary's families would deny them and cut off all support. His friends would mock them. The public would shun him. His carpentry business was finished. Bass Mitchell said, "I tell you this is as remarkable and beautiful example of self-sacrificing love as you will find in the Bible, apart from that of Jesus himself." The law demanded judgment and punishment. Joseph lived a much greater truth, the power of love. Joseph followed the intent of the law, love over the letter of the law. Jesus embodied, taught, and demonstrated love. Jesus always puts love of people over the rules of the law.

Compassion trumps rules. How can you be like Joseph to others? Perhaps you are in a car accident. It clearly is the other person's fault. Can you let go of the rules, the demand for justice, a desire to get even and let them have it, so you can show them compassion? Can you have compassion for yourself letting go of what ifs, guilt, shame, perfectionism, and blame? How can you be a Joseph? A person who knows and respects the law, strives to live the law, encourages others to live the law, yet is forgiving, gracious, compassionate?

Love trumps fear. The angel told Joseph, "Do not be afraid" The psalmist sings. **Psalm 46 NLT "God is our refuge and strength always ready to help in times of trouble. So we will not fear when earthquakes come and the mountains crumble into the sea."** John writes **1 John 4:18 "Love casts out fear."** Joseph had so much to fear. Right after Jesus' birth the angel returned and instructed Joseph to flee with Mary and Jesus to Egypt as King Herod was using all his resources to find and kill them. Most people would have been terrified, paralyzed with fear. Joseph received God's love and loved. Love always triumphs over fear.

Love trumps fear. The earth does change, your life at some point will get shaken, turmoil will visit you, the way will be unclear, fear will grip you. Be like Joseph, disperse your fear with love. Go deeper, discover the power of love, embrace the unexpected. Find the most loving way, love boldly and fear will dissolve.

Caryll Houselander wrote, "Joseph had a vision, but no explanation. Mary had an angelic conversation and was overshadowed by the power of the Most High, but she didn't have an instruction manual or theological essay to increase her understanding. Still, Mary and Joseph shared two things: love and trust. They loved and trusted God and one another. They had hearts and lives that were open to mysterious visitors and poetic ambiguity. Mary heard the announcement of God's high favor, and heard God's invitation to have an especially abundant share of God's grace. Astonished and surprised, without reading any of the small print, Our Lady answered in faith: "Here am I, the servant of the Lord." Joseph, visited by a somewhat ambiguous angel in the mists of a dream, trusted and believed. No proofs, lawyers, or guarantees, just love and trust shared in silence. Could that ever be enough for us?"

Grace trumps being right. In the midst of Joseph's shock, pain, grief, inner turmoil, nightmares and sleepless nights grace was at work. Joseph was in the right. Joseph did nothing wrong. The law was clear, leave Mary. Grace enabled Joseph to see the situation from a whole new way, from God's perspective, instead of remaining mired in a human perspective. In Joseph, grace supplanted judgment as he married Mary and adopted Jesus. Our salvation was born in part because of Joseph's grace. The gospel of Matthew reveals our gracious God who is calling us to be gracious.

Grace trumps being right. Be like Joseph, open yourself to grace, let grace lift you above your pain and confusion, let grace lift you above your plans, let grace lift you above your desire

to prove that you are in the right. When you are in an argument and you know you are right, can you let it go, stop arguing and love that person? Can you smile and give a friendly wave to the person who cuts you off in traffic? Can you set aside what society, or even the church tells you is the right thing to do so that you can be gracious to another? Can you embrace those in whom the world tells you to shun? Can you humble yourself, to love another through a difficult time? Can you repair a person's house and see them as equal? Can you respect and honor them? Can you hug the outcast of your family, bite your tongue about how they are messing up their life, and instead praise them for what they are doing right? David Whyte wrote, "The call will not come so grandly, so biblically, but intimately, in the face of the one you know you have to love." Grace trumps being right.

Trust trumps division. Joseph's trusted in God, trusted in Mary, trusted in the goodness of humanity. His trust enabled him to listen to God, carry out God's plans and unite with Jesus. Ultimately Joseph's trust will unite all of humanity in Jesus. Joseph does what God asks of him. Joseph protected and raised Jesus all with little recognition.

Trust trumps division. Can you be like Joseph, trusting God when hurt and brokenness is driving a wedge between your relationships? Can you perceive God in your dreams, trusting that God is behind them guiding you to a better life in a better world? Can you trust others enough to reveal your true self, to listen to them, to love them, to be united with them in harmony? Can you trust that God is working in you, interrupting your life for the better? Each of us is cherished by God. Each of us has a role to fulfill in redeeming the world. Please God give each of us trust to fulfill our role in your glorious redemption of the cosmos. Nelson Mandela said. "Behind every seemingly ordinary person lay the potential of greatness."

Belonging trumps hurt. The Apostle Paul often wrote about the power of God's grace to overcome all the hurts of the world. Each of us belongs to Jesus therefore we belong to each other. **Romans 1:1-7 NRSV "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which God promised beforehand through God's prophets in the holy scriptures, the gospel concerning God's Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for the sake of God's name, including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.** We are called to belong to Jesus. Belonging to Jesus heals our hurts, invigorates our love, and unites us. Joseph was hurt by Mary, by his family and friends, by those who shunned, mocked and ridiculed him. Because Joseph belonged to God, his heart was filled with peace and grace enabling him to love those who hurt him, enabling him to belong to others.

Belonging trumps hurt. All of us are imperfect people. We hurt each other. Can you be like Joseph, handing over your hurt to God so you can love and belong to others? When someone hurts you do you bring it to their attention and then let that hurt go? Belonging is eroded when we remember and let our hurts snowball. Belonging is nurtured when we remember and celebrate the love another shares with us.

Compassion trumps rules. Grace trumps being right. Love trumps fear. Trust trumps division. Belonging trumps hurt. Like Joseph let us strive to live these truths. Amen.

Aaron

- Personnel decide to hire Chase
- Hopefully effective January 1
- Invite Chase to Youth Band Dec. 18 7:30
- How do you see helping Chase in transition

Chase

- Offer position start Jan. 1 (\$9500??)
- Renee paperwork and payroll
- Youth Band Dec. 18 7:30
- Karen and I 6:30 Dec. 18

Karen

- Meet Chase Dec. 18 6:30
- Help Chase with songs

Peter

- Choose another person

Karen/Chase/Myself Mtg.

- Rehearsal time
- Pick January songs
- Expectations
- Ask people to stand or be seated
- Expectations for organized, efficient rehearsals
- Expectations for youth band