

Make us One - Part 2 - Christmas Series 2020

"Selflessness"

December 13th, 2020

Intro:

- **Last weekend we began our Christmas Series called, "Make us One!"**
 - **We are talking about Unity! - This year has been So Divisive!**
 - **We are Divided about Everything!!!**
 - **Jesus' Desire was for Us, His Church, to be United!**
 - **In fact, He said that the World will know God's Love by the Unity they see & feel from us!**

John 17:21 "Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me."

- **Last weekend... Humility leads to Unity! - It was a Word for our Church!!!**
 - **This weekend, we are going to look at another Player in the Christmas Story... Joseph.**

Matthew 1:18-19 "This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged in marriage to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and was unwilling to disgrace her publicly, he resolved to divorce her quietly."

v. 20-21 "But after he had pondered these things, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to embrace Mary as your wife, for the One conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a Son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins."

v. 22-23 "All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Behold, the virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call Him Immanuel" (which means, "God with us")."

v. 24-25 "When Joseph woke up, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him, and embraced Mary as his wife. But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a Son. And he gave Him the name Jesus."

- Joseph gets Plunged into this Story... He didn't ask to be in it!
- The Angel speaks to Mary, then comes & speaks to him!!!

- Joseph has a Choice... Remember, God made us to be Free Moral Agents...

- IOW, God gave us the Ability to Choose!!!

- Joseph could have chosen to Take Care of Himself!

- He could have chosen to break it off with Mary & just put all this behind him in the name of a "Bad Chapter" in his story.

- No one would have Blamed him!!!

- But he didn't!!! Joseph chose to Stay. - Joseph chose the Harder thing!

- Joseph Chose Selflessness & that made a way for God's Love, through Jesus, to Change the World!!!

- And that's what I want to talk about today...

- The 2nd Key to Unity is: Selflessness!

- ? What will Unite our Broken & Divided world... Selflessness!!!

PRAY

3 Characteristics of Joseph's Selflessness:

1. He Sacrificed.

A. Joseph understood, "I don't get to go my own way!"

- I've made a commitment to the Lord & I'm not backing out now!

- What a Price he paid!!!

- Humiliation - Rumors - Loss of Ego - Pain & Heartache

- Why? B/c he chose to stay & support Mary & their new baby!!!

v. 24 "When Joseph woke up, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him, and embraced Mary as his wife."

B. THIS YEAR HAS TEMPTED US ALL TO RUN IN SOME WAY hasn't it?

- Run from our Marriage - Run back to an Addiction

- Run from our Commitments - Run from a Relationship
- Run from our Church or Small Group or Ministry

C. God hasn't called us to Run from Hard things, He's called us to Sacrifice b/c we know it's God's Will & He is working in it!

D. Selflessness Sacrifices for others.

- HFTH Offering - Church, you are so Generous!!!
 - I just want to commend each & every one of you for the way you have stayed Faithful to God's Word this year!
 - 1st w/ the Tithe!
 - 2nd w/ your Above & Beyond Generosity!
- Your "Sacrifice" this Christmas will mean Eternal Impact for Literally 1000's of Lives in SWFL, our Nation & the World!!!

2. He Risked being Misunderstood.

A. Staying with Mary would mean a Loss of Reputation & Respect.

- After all, the claim was Outrageous: *"God got her pregnant!!!"*
- Seriously??? Who in their right mind would believe that???

B. ? Ever been Misunderstood?

- MWK/SJK - WHAT WE DO IS PEOPLE!!!
 - We don't make widgets or sell stuff, we Lead People!
- Inevitably in Ministry, there are decisions that have to be made that the details cannot be discussed publicly!
 - It's painful, but we know that's just part of Ministry L-ship!
 - We aren't complaining about it, b/c we know that's what we signed up for... it's selfless, but seeing Lives changed makes it all worth it.

C. MIP: ? When was the Last time God asked you to be Misunderstood?

- Maybe w/ your Friends, Co-Workers, or Family & your faith???
- Maybe as a Leader - Some Decision you had to make!
- Maybe Financial - You gave up something to help someone else.

- People looked on & said, "Why are you selling your car? Why are you downsizing? Why are you giving up your Disney Passes???"

- B/c God told us to be more Generous & Live More w/ Eternity in Mind!

- Being Misunderstood is Painful & it is Selflessness.

D. But can I encourage you today: Your Heavenly Father sees you & He is so Pleased with you!

Matthew 6:3-4 "But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."

"What Made Joseph's Selflessness so powerful?"

3. He Put God's Plan Ahead of his Own.

Matthew 1:22-23 "All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Behold, the virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call Him Immanuel" (which means, "God with us").

A. Joseph saw the Greater thing God was doing & willingly embraced selflessness in order to be a part of it.

B. Our world is so Now-Focused!!!

- Get it now, Have it now, Don't worry about tomorrow, do what you need to do to get what you need... NOW!

- Stuff, Money, Sexual Fulfillment, Emotionally!

C. But God's Ways are not like the World's Ways, are they?

- The World says, "Being Selfish is the way!"

- God's Word says, "Being Selfless is the way!"

Matthew 25:14-15 "Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. To one he gave five bags of

gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey.

v. 16-18 "The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money."

- After a long time, the Master comes back & says, "What did you do w/ what I gave you?"

- Man w/ 5: Invested in & Gained 5 more!

- Man w/ 2: Invested in & Gained 2 more!

- To both of these guys he says the same thing..

v. 23 "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'"

- But then He asks the Man w/ 1...

v. 24-25 "Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.'"

- I blew it... I buried it... I didn't invest it in things that would make an impact beyond me! - I got self-focused

- So I don't have much to show for what You gave me!

- The Master says, "You knew I would come back & ask you for a return!!!"

- The least you could have done was put it on deposit at the bank!

- He took his one bag & gave it to the guy w/ 5!!!

D. God is Looking for some People who will not just keep what they've been given for themselves, but will Put God's Plan Ahead of their Own!

E. SARAH & I ILL - 8 years ago, God challenged us to be Hugely Sacrificial in our Generosity toward what He is doing through NLC!

- We had been incrementally making our way UP.

- 3 years ago, God said, "Stop praying about it & just do it!"
- We cut & downsized & sacrificed & made changes to our lifestyle, & said, "Okay God, we are ALL IN!"
- Then God said, "This is the New Standard of Generosity I want you to live by for the rest of your life!"
 - By God's Grace we have done it every year since!
- Can I tell you... It's no Sacrifice at all!
 - B/c we, like Joseph, are so grateful to get to be in on God's Plan on the Earth!
 - Every month we give Above & Beyond!
 - & then at the end of the year, however far below that Threshold we are, we write a check for the difference!!!
 - It is a JOY!!!

Proverbs 11:24-25 " One person gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed."

- Joseph was Selfless & his Selflessness led to Kingdom Impact!
 - I believe the same is true of us today as well!
- Thank you in advance for your generosity to the Lord!
 - Just do what He tells you to do!

TIME OF PRAYER