

# “Why Following Jesus is Difficult: The Story of Joseph” // Matthew 1:18–25 // *Upside Down Christmas #2*

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## First big give:

Last week we took up what we called our “**first big give**” as a way of kicking off all-in.

*We wanted to be able to jump-start some things we’re doing. Expanding the North Raleigh campus; finishing up the parking lot at Brier Creek; launching the Chapel Hill campus.*

So we wanted to have the largest single offering we’ve ever had at the church. I am pleased to tell you THAT happened. Last week our offering was **\$1,266,347.43**. Our normal offering is about 180K per week, if that gives you any comparison.

Our commitments and projected giving right now stand at the astounding 36.7 million for the next 2 years.

I was hoping we’d meet our goal; in my wildest dreams I speculated we might even exceed it; but the fact that we have gone nearly 11 million over it absolutely blew me away.

- **Frightens me:** this is like a purpose statement about God’s plans that make me realize what he wants to do, and we need him more than ever to guide us. God alone builds his church. Ps. 127:1.
- **Excites me:** What does God have planned for us? Could it be that with over 7000 here, 7 campuses, more than 10 churches planted, and 175 members on one of our church planting teams overseas, we’ve just scratched the surface?

- TEN years ago when he reached our first audacious goal of having 1000 at Easter, if you’d told me ‘you’re just scratching the surface,’ I wouldn’t have believed you.
- All I can say is, “Who are we?”

Let me tell you one other really exciting thing, as your pastor—what all-in represented for our church:

- We had 2110 households commit to be a part of this, which included 810 new families
- Our covenant member class, known as starting point, has had the largest attendance, and we’ve had a bunch of people join small groups and nearly 300 more get engaged in our community.

**Which brings me to the one thing about all this that makes me sad:** this whole process has highlighted a number of you who are not all-in—forget the church—just all-in with God and his mission. God wants to use your life for so much more: he wants to use your life eternally to bless others in his kingdom; not these piddly dreams you are so consumed with.

Which is a nice segue into the message this morning.

## Intro:

There are a lot of people who simply lack the resolve to genuinely follow Jesus. They’d like to... but to really go all-in requires a motivation beyond what they have.

I think I’ve been surrounded by those kinds of people all my life. They follow Jesus when it’s easy—when they are a part of a **group of friends** who are all doing it; when it fits **naturally within their lifestyle**; but they **lack the verve** to do it when it’s hard—but to *stand alone*; to *swim upstream*; to keep going when there is nobody standing behind them going “come on!”—that’s when they putter out and fall behind.

To actually follow Jesus is difficult. There is a great irony in the Christian life: following Jesus ushers you into a life that is simultaneously the most joyful and the most difficult on earth.

- **John 10:10** tells us that Jesus gives us life, and life more abundantly. **Psalm 16:11** says that in God's presence is the fullness of joy and **Psalm 84:10** tell us better is one day in God's presence than 10,000 anywhere else.
- But **Matthew 16** tells us that if we're going to follow Jesus we must take up our cross and follow him.
  - I don't know what kind of image that gives to you, but in the ancient world it was not a pleasant one.
  - Today we wear crosses made out of diamonds around our necks as **pieces of jewelry**. Back then it was a symbol of **oppression, torture, and death** that caused horror in people who saw it.
  - In those days **normal, nice people** didn't get a cross tattooed onto them.
  - Imagine you went over to someone's house today and above their baby's crib they had a little **hangman's noose**. Above their kitchen table they had a **picture of an electric chair** and in their family room one of a **firing squad**. You don't stay for dinner and you don't let your kids go for a play-date there. That's the image.
- Paul says in **1 Cor 15** that if the resurrection is not true then followers of Jesus are people that ought to be the most pitied in the whole world, because their lives are characterized by a cross!
  - For Paul following Jesus meant suffering, sacrifice, and persecution. It meant living with unanswered questions; dying in many ways as a loser.
  - And Paul said if I get to the end of my life and it's all a hoax I'm not going to say, *"Oh, well, it was still a great, abundant life! Oh, glorious delusion!"* He says, *"No, if this is all a delusion then I am the most pathetic person in the world!"*
  - *That's a question I've asked you before: DOES THE RESURRECTION HAVE TO BE TRUE FOR YOU TO*

CONSIDER YOUR LIFE 'GOOD'? If not, you're not living a life of sacrifice.

- *I say this because a lot of Christians say, 'Oh, even if it's not true it was still a great life!' Paul would never say that.*

**To actually go all the way with Jesus you have to have a strong grasp on why he's worth it.**

This is what you see in Matthew 1–2. Matthew shows you, right out of the gate, how difficult it is to follow Jesus and how Jesus' first followers found the motivation to do so. (BTW, if I asked you to name Jesus' first followers, you'd probably get it wrong—you'd say Peter, James, John, etc, but Matthew starts much earlier than that).

### Matthew 1:18–25

*[18] "Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit.*

*[19] And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.*

OK, first, let's talk about **betrothal**. It was the Jewish custom called *kiddushin*. A young man and his fiancée would get legally married,<sup>1</sup> but they had to wait a year before they were allowed to live or sleep together. Which has to be the dumbest tradition ever invented.

One of the reasons was to make sure the girl was pure.

- (You see, in those days marriages were arranged; your parents got to choose—which is another reason #412 that I'm glad I didn't live back then because I'd have been afraid of who they would have chosen)

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<sup>1</sup> Note that she was already called his wife in vs. 24

- Well, when you chose a wife for your son you'd pay this huge bride price to the bride's family (*this part would actually be awesome for me because as you know I have 3 daughters and somehow I don't think their 3 weddings are going to be cash-positive events for me.*)
- Anyway, the parents paying the price wanted to make sure that the girl was pure, so they required a year of waiting before you could live or sleep together to make sure she wasn't pre-pregnated or whatever. After a year that was clear, so then you could live together and have sex.

But in every other way, during the betrothal, you were considered married. To get out of it you had to get an official divorce.

Well, during this betrothal period Mary shows up pregnant.

- Can you **imagine for a minute** how painful and humiliating this was for Joseph? What would it have been like to hear this from the girl you just married but haven't been allowed to sleep with yet? Joseph, of course, **doesn't believe her**. He's like, "*Oh, right, the Holy Ghost got you pregnant. And gave you a pet unicorn, too.*"
- But Joseph was, for whatever it was worth, a good guy, and kind, so he arranged to break the betrothal quietly. Legally, he could have had her stoned.

*[20] But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. [21] She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."*

*[22] All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: [23] "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us).*

*[24] When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, [25] but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus."*

### Do you ever wonder: *Why did God do it this way?*

- I mean, it **ruined both** their reputations. The **angel didn't show up** and explain the situation to everybody else. He didn't send out a **news bulletin**.
  - Everyone else from that point on thought of Mary, as an impure girl. When they looked through **the yearbook** pictures later, they always pointed to her and said, "Oh, you remember what happened to her? Yeah, what a shame. Who knew she had a dark-side?" As far as we know, there was never any clarification or vindication (until the NT was written 30–40 years later which by that point it was kind of irrelevant).
- And **when Joseph** married her it seemed like he was confessing that the baby was actually his.
- This pregnancy ruined both of their reputations in the community.
- Mary didn't get the **storybook wedding** she'd always dreamed about with her dad walking her down the aisle and all her friends and family present.
  - I know that for many women, your wedding day is the most highly anticipated, expensive, planned-for day of your life. My **daughter Allie** has been practicing walking down the aisle since the day she could take her first steps. I kid you not. She's 7 and she is constantly like, "*Dad, in my wedding I want...*" **My response** is always, "Save your money." Your mom and I gave all our money to All-In.
  - **Just because Mary** lived 2000 years ago don't assume that she was vastly different. Her dreams for her own beautiful wedding day were shattered. Ruined—not by an angry mother in law, but by Jesus himself.
- Not only that, eventually they would have to flee their homeland—because of Jesus.
- **Is this the abundant life?**

Why did God do it this way? I think the Holy Spirit is laying out the pattern, from Jesus' birth, for how people will have to follow him.

So let me give you 4 elements from Joseph's life about following Jesus, and then show you where Joseph got the strength to do them:

- Joseph is not just an inspiring figure from the past, but a compelling example for the present.

## I. What following Jesus looks like (I see 4 elements)

### A. Trust and absolute obedience

- Joseph had to believe the impossible and risk everything on it.
- "Timothy" in Egypt
  - You don't do that because Jesus is your preference, but because you believe he rose from the dead
- There was also the church planter who left his homeland and his dreams of a prosperous career to carry the gospel to Egypt. You don't go there because you love foreign cultures, but because you believe Acts 4:12
- Last week we commissioned a couple: Tim and Jody: why would they do that? Not because they like to travel. But because you are convinced that Jesus is Lord, his kingdom is worth it, and they are surrendered to follow him.
- A lot of you just made **huge sacrifices** to go all-in financially with the kingdom of God. The only reason you will do that is because you believe that Jesus was raised from the dead, his promises are true, and his kingdom is eternal.
  - In fact, *if you struggle being sacrificial, let me tell you why: it's because you lack confidence in the promises of the unseen God.*
  - People who lack confidence in God's promises will throw some guilt money in the plate from time to time, but they'll never give in a sustained, sacrificial way.
- To **forgive a father** who has sexually abused you takes a bold confidence in God's forgiveness and his ability to work all things for good. Without that you'll never have the strength to forgive. **Oprah** is not going to give you the resources to forgive a father who abused you. That comes only from seeing God's forgiveness is bigger than yours and God's ability to work all

things for good is greater than other's abilities to inflict evil upon you.

- *Following Jesus—really following him, not just playing religious games—meant absolute trust in the unseen God.*

### B. Acceptance of a sentence of death

- Mary's out-of-wedlock pregnancy put her under a literal death sentence in Jewish law.
- Beyond that, Mary and Joseph had to die to their good name, their cherished dreams; their families and their homelands.
- God is going to **direct some of you to go overseas** and your parents will not understand. They will tell you that you are crazy and forbid you. And you are going to have to choose. Do I obey God or please them? And it's going to feel like a death.
- **John Bunyan—wrote Pilgrim's Progress.** Spent many years in prison for preaching the gospel in his own country: *"The parting with my wife and poor children hath oft been to me in this place as the pulling the flesh from my bones... I have often brought to my mind the many hardships, miseries and wants that my poor family has had to meet with... especially my poor blind child, who lay nearer my heart than all I had besides."*<sup>2</sup>

*"If ever I would suffer rightly I must first pass a sentence of death upon everything that can properly be called a thing of this life, even to reckon myself, my wife, my children, my health, my enjoyments, and all as dead to me and myself as dead to them."*

- Sound harsh? Luke 14:26
- I'm not talking about delinquency in being a father, husband (or actual feelings of hate). God makes you a better one of those and gives you greater love.
- This doesn't grow a church—talking about the abundant life does.

### C. Self-Denial

- Vs. 25 tells you that Joseph didn't "know" Mary (or have sex with her) until after the birth of Jesus. Not only did he have to

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<sup>2</sup> Faith Cook, *Fearless Pilgrim: The Life and times of John Bunyan*, 183, 188–189.

wait a year in betrothal; he waited another year. **That's significant, I think.**

- Following Jesus means denying yourself some things you might otherwise enjoy.
- We have singles that aren't willing to wait to have sex and they are not even married. Joseph was married and waited to have sex because it was the will of God.
- If you are going to follow Jesus you have to consent to do things his way even if it means denying yourself some things you might otherwise have.
- We have couples listening to me right now that are not married but you're living together. If you're going to have Jesus in your family you're going to have to do things his way.

#### D. Willingness to embrace inconvenience

- Do you realize how much Jesus' birth complicated Joseph's life? Messed up his his relationships with his family; his friends; his job. Eventually he had to move and start over.
- *Serving Jesus is rarely convenient.*
- Many of you don't **volunteer at this church** because it's not convenient. *"Well, I work hard all week and I got kids."* Yeah, I look forward to hearing you explain that to Mary in heaven. *"My church had the audacity to ask me to help take care of my own kids once a month."* Mary is like, *"Yeah, I had to bear a son for 9 months who wasn't even mine and eventually had to flee the country because of him."* But tell me about your story, o great man of faith."
- The people in our church who **serve our community** don't do so because it is convenient, but because they are committed to Jesus.
  - Just about every one of our public school programs needs mentors. You don't do it because it's convenient; you do it because Jesus has told us to serve the least of these.
  - *I know not every ministry is for every person, but do you have a ministry that is inconvenient for you?* If not, I'd say there is a really good chance you're not following Jesus.

- **Adoption and fostering children** (is) never "convenient." Just talk to someone who has done it.
  - If you start doing it because it's a preference or fad or because you think it will look cool on your Christmas card, that will wear off.
  - You do it for one reason: God told us to care for the ones everyone else has forgotten about.
- **Sharing Christ** is rarely is that convenient for me, whether that's reaching out to a neighbor or striking up a conversation with the guy next to me on the plane.
  - There have been times when I didn't want to reach out to my neighbors. I'd rather just hang out with my friends." I feel like I'm walking across the street going, *"Hey, I got too many friends already. What is your name?"*
  - (Thankfully I like all my neighbors now so it's not a problem. ☺)
  - I was sitting next to a guy on a plane this week and I thought, *"I am tired and would SO much rather just read my book."* But I say to the Holy Spirit, "OK, I'm yours. I'm at least going to knock on this door and start the conversation just to see if you take it anywhere."
    - You think I do this stuff because I'm a pastor and an extrovert and I get my jollies from starting convos with complete strangers and tell them they are going to hell. Not true.
- If we are going to **racially diversify** this church it's not going to be convenient. Getting to know people who are not like you and don't share all your background takes intentionality.
  - We're going to have **worship music here** that it is not your favorite. But it's someone else's favorite, and you put up with it because you are willing to embrace inconvenience to follow Jesus.
- If the defining characteristic you are looking for in a church is convenience, this is not the church for you.
  - To become the people of God that God wants us to be takes willingness to embrace inconvenience for the sake of the mission.



- Our priority is not your convenience but the mission of God.
- **Here's one other:** it is inconvenient for me to take a stand on what the Bible teaches about the sin of **homosexuality**. Folks, I am scared of where this is headed in our society, and it would be so much easier to say, 'You know, it's not a big deal. It's just a personal preference.' It is convenient to teach what the Bible says about these things but if you're going to walk with God in a world allied against him, we should get used to it. We will be misunderstood, mistreated, maligned, and ultimately persecuted for it. You can already see it happening.

Four things you see in Joseph: *trust and absolute obedience; acceptance of a sentence of death; self-denial and willingness to embrace inconvenience.*

So where does the strength come from, church, to do these things?

Joseph didn't have an emotional moment of surrender. This was the beginning of a lifestyle of those 4 things. This is really important because unless you get this you'll never make it.

- Say that right before you boarded a plane for a long flight to Europe someone handed you a one of those **backpack parachutes** and told you to wear it...
- Or, if I told one of you girls that over the next year your waistline was going to increase 6 inches and you were going to gain 10 pounds, there's no way you'd be excited. Yet, there are some of you who get news that that very thing is going to happen and you rejoice, because it means your pregnant! You put up with your lost figure and the extra weight gladly because of the joy of what you have.
- You say, "Well, it's a lot more than 6 inches or 10 pounds."
  - I don't know. My wife said she gained some weight but I didn't even notice. She was glowing and beautiful. (You buy that?)
- **All of you have the capacity of sacrifice. It has to do with your perception of, or awareness of, the reward.**

## II. Where the strength to follow Jesus comes from (I see 2 of them: a kept promise and a remarkable name):

First of all, *do you see the word "behold" in vs. 23?* ([23] "**Behold,**") "Behold" in Greek is *idou*, and it is an extremely strong word. It's like saying, "*Look at this.*" Because when you see this, you'll have the strength to do what God is asking you to do.

What is he telling him to look at?

[23] "**Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel**" (which means, God with us).

### 1. A kept promise

- This is a quote from a prophecy given in Isaiah 7:14, and it's actually kind of a strange one. So let me unpack it for you.
- Originally, it was given to King Ahaz in Judah in 700 B.C. when the armies of Syria were about to attack and destroy his kingdom. Well, because Ahaz was so wicked, and he knew it, he didn't feel like he could ask God for help, so he despaired.
- Word came through the prophet Isaiah, however, that God was not going to allow the kingdom to be destroyed because God wanted to keep his promise to Abraham. And Isaiah tells Ahaz that God is going to give him a sign of it.
- Well, unbelievably, Ahaz doesn't want a word from God, because then he'll be obligated to do it. So he says, "*Nope; don't give me a sign.*" And Isaiah says, "*You don't get to make the rules. Here's your sign.*" God is going to accomplish his purposes whether you want him to or not.
- "*Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel*" (which means, God with us). (**Isa 7:14**)
  - Now, **the word "virgin" in Hebrew** can mean one of two things: it could mean a girl whose never had sex; or it could just mean a girl of marriageable age.
  - In this context everyone would have **assumed it meant** just a girl of marriageable age. And they would have been like, "*A young woman shall conceive? Big deal.*" Young women conceive all the time. That's like saying,

“The proof of this prophecy is that the birds will chirp and the dogs will bark.”

- And, it happened. Someone in Ahaz’ household had a baby and that was the sign. But it didn’t seem that impressive.
- And for 700 years, this prophecy was kind of a mystery in Scripture because it just seemed kind of out of place.
- But now, through the angel, God says, **“This is actually what I was talking about.”** It’s not just that a young woman will conceive, but a virgin (the other meaning of that word); a girl who has never been with a man; will conceive. That is a little more impressive. And in that miraculous birth I will deliver Israel from all their fears and fulfill my promise to Abraham.
- Ahaz was thinking deliverance from one invading army. God was promising ultimate deliverance from all enemies.
- **In that moment Joseph saw that God was faithful to keep to the fullest all the promises he had made.** The times looked dark; it looked like Israel had been over-run by her enemies; but God took an obscure prophecy and brought ultimate fulfillment through it.
- *Here’s what you should see from that. God kept all his promises then; he’ll keep all his promises now.*
  - A lot of you ask, *“Is God really active in the world? How could what is going on in the world be anything but random? If God is really involved in this, why is it all such a mess?”*
  - Or you are asking about your life: *“Where is God in my life? Is God really out there? Is he really active?”* (I think that sometimes, too—where was God between 1999 and 2003)?
  - Here’s the sign: *“Behold, a virgin conceived.”* And not just that—the virgin born baby grew up to die on a cross, be placed in a grave, and then rise again.
  - (Some of you doubt God’s existence based on the fact that he hasn’t done what you wanted. If you asked my kids to build a case that I exist based on the fact that I always do what they want, that might make a pretty weak case. I don’t always do what they want because I

know more than they do. *Your trust in God should not be based on how well he has fulfilled your expectations, but based on the signs that he has left for you.* Behold, a virgin has conceived!)

- (BTW, could I just say this? Joseph was able to have that kind of faith because he knew the word of God. Many of you waver in faith because you don’t really know the word of God.)
- **The strength of your faith cannot exceed your knowledge of the promises of God.)**

## 2. A remarkable name

- This baby is given two names in these verses: “Jesus” and “Immanuel.” That **always confused me** as a kid because I wanted to know, *“Well, which one was his name? Was one of them like a nickname?”* “What’s your name?” “Jesus. My middle name is Christ. But my friends call me Immanuel.” You can call me Lord.
- No. The first name, Jesus, indicates what he does; the second, Immanuel, who he was.
  - “Jesus” means, in Hebrew, “God saves.”
  - “Immanuel” means “God with us.”
- In those two names Joseph got a picture of the glory of God.
- **The most foundational doctrine of Christianity is that Jesus was 100% man and 100% God: born of a human, Mary, so he was fully man. But he was virgin-born, she was impregnated by the Holy Spirit, so fully God.** (BTW, this doesn’t mean God came down to have sex with her)
  - He was born **as a man** because he had to a man to be our **true representative** on the cross.
    - He **lived the life** we were supposed to live (He had to face everything we faced and pass every test we had failed) and **died the death** we were condemned to die. He took our place on the cross as our representative; and he could only do that if he was fully man.
  - He had **to be God** for two reasons: **1. The only one capable** to save like this and that was God. Message of OT: Salvation belongs to God! God doesn’t contract

salvation out to some lesser being. The Mormons and JW's are dead wrong here! **2. The whole point in God's creation of us** was to have a relationship with us.

- In the **Garden of Eden** God walked with Adam and Eve every night. Adam and Eve said, "God walks with us."
- When God led the **children of Israel** out of slavery in Egypt he did so with a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night and the children of Israel said, "*The Lord is before and behind us.*" (Ex 14:19)
- God had them **build a tabernacle** where his glory came to dwell and they said, "God is in the midst of us." (Ex 25:8)
- Jesus is born and the angel says, "Call him **Immanuel**; God is with us."
- When Jesus left the Holy Spirit came on the first disciples and they said, "**God is in us.**"
- You weren't created to serve a **distant God who watched over you like a Judge**. You were created to **love a Father and walk with him like a friend**.

*Do you know God that way?*

- Listen: Seeing God as Jesus and Immanuel gave Joseph the strength to follow Jesus.
- Listen to this: The secret is that **everything that God is asking Joseph and Mary to do he will do, in a much greater sense, for them.**
  - Like Mary and Joseph, Jesus (God in the flesh) would be **misunderstood and falsely accused**.
  - The **religious establishment** would despise and condemn him.
  - Like Mary, Jesus would carry about in his body a **death sentence** from being falsely accused, except he actually would die in shame, bearing the curse for someone else.
  - And **self-denial**—he would take upon his back a bloody cross and open up his hands to have nails driven into them so that we could be saved.

- He took our sin; bore our shame. *Surely he has borne our grief and carried our sorrows; yet we considered him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.*

Essentially Joseph is being invited to share in the sufferings of Jesus.

Everything that Jesus experienced on earth you have to be willing to experience if you are to be his follower and *the only way to have the strength to do that is to see that Jesus did it for you and now you can do with him.*

**The Great Commission at the end of Matthew's Gospel** (Matthew 28:18) begins with "*Behold, I am with you...*" I.e. Immanuel. Matthew book ends his Gospel with "Immanuel."

**You have to see what Joseph saw.** This promise and name silenced the voices of doubt in Joseph's spirit. The dark voices. (I have them, too!) Have these two things silenced the doubts in you:

- **Matthew 13:44: Jesus brings both of these themes—the pain of sacrifice and the joy of Christianity, together:** treasure hidden in a field.
  - Box filled with the last shipment of Twinkies
  - Jesus' stories filled with shady characters?
- The only thing that will give you the power to forsake it all is to see that the joy of the treasure is worth more than the pain of sacrifice.
- And the way to see that is to see that he gave it all up for you. He was God coming in the flesh to save you; enduring unbelievable pain and shame to rescue you. I.E. See God as JESUS AND IMMANUEL
- If you lack the motivation to really follow Jesus—to go all the way—good news—you don't need to strengthen your resolve; you need to deepen your joy. When your joy in him is strong, so will be your ability to forsake it all.

Well, we don't know much more about Joseph. That's the last time he appears in the Gospel of Matthew and by the time Jesus is an



adult he's no longer around which means he most likely died. But he passed on to us a legacy for how we could gain the strength to follow Jesus.

***One last question: (music starts here)***

What would have happened had Joseph not chosen this route? If he'd chosen the easy route—not believed the angel; divorced Mary and cast her aside; married a different girl. Guess what? **He might have gotten that storybook wedding**; had a nice little carpentry business. But he would have missed out on Jesus.

Guess what happens if you choose the easy life?

- You choose not to forgive.
- You choose not to sacrifice. You miss out on Jesus and his plan!
- *Maybe you're actually pregnant out of wedlock, like Mary was, and the easy thing for you to do is to get an abortion.* What if Mary had done that? I know it's an unfortunate situation; maybe it's not even your fault. ***But God has a plan in it. And you'll only experience God's best if you do it God's way. Carry the baby to term. Give birth to it. And see what God does.***

Joseph's life tells you, "It's worth it. God keeps his promises. Jesus is worth the pain and the shame and the shattered dreams and even death if it comes." And I can only say, "Amen."

COMMUNION: Jesus went all-in for us. What he calls to endure for him he has endured, to a much greater extent, for us.