**That Which Is Conceived Is from the Holy Spirit**

**The Word**

Read together Matthew 1:18-25 and Matthew 2:13-23

**The Big Idea**

The coming of Immanuel into Joseph’s life meant all sorts of disruptions in which he was forced to rely on God and act obediently in the moment. Making room for God often involves being open to his Spirit being at work in the challenges and disruptions of life and seeking to obey him faithfully through those seasons.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. As you try to put yourself in Joseph’s shoes, what part of his story or experience struck you most this week?

2. Consider the message to Joseph: “That which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.” Share a time when something painful, unwanted, or disruptive came into your life, but, looking back, you can absolutely see the work of the Holy Spirit through that experience.

3. Joseph is an example of quiet obedience, and obedience is a theme that runs through Matthew’s gospel. Consider Jesus’ words in the Sermon on the Mount: “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who *does the will of my Father* who is in heaven (Mt 7:21),” and, “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine *and puts them into practice* is like a wise man who built his house on the rock (Mt 7:24).” How do we square these words about obedience with the gospel of grace? How do those fit together?

4. As you consider your life in this season, where might God be calling you (or forcing you) into disruption and difficulty, and what’s your sense of what he is up/teaching you to in that?

**Sermon Outline**

I. Our Advent theme is “prepare him room”

 A. The Laodicean church

1. In their wealth and resources, they had a profound sense of self sufficiency (See Revelation 3:17)

2. But their self-sufficiency was actually an illusion and Jesus saw their true spiritual condition which was one of poverty.

B. The story of Joseph is a story of a man who was stripped of self-sufficiency and forced to rely on God and simply obey

II. The Passage

A. Dream #1

1. The first thing Jesus’ presence meant in Joseph’s life was a sense of betrayal, loss, and upending of his plans and expectations (1:18)

2. Joseph’s initial response is a quiet divorce to not subject Mary to unnecessary public shame (1:19)

3. Through a dream he learns that something that felt so disruptive was actually the work of the Holy Spirit (1:20-21)

4. In taking Mary into his home as his wife, he takes on himself the public shame and protects her from that at the cost of his own reputation (1:24)

B. Dream #2

1. He is asked to leave everything familiar and comfortable and be uprooted and sent to a foreign land for an unknown amount of time (2:13)

2. Imagine having to leave at night and cross over the southern border to Mexico to settle in there for an unknown amount of time. He would have to provide for his family in a completely new situation.

C. Dream #3: He leaves the life he has carved out in Egypt to return to Israel

D. Dream #4: He discovers that Judea is still a dangerous place for him, so he settles his family in the north in Nazareth.

III. Reflecting on Joseph’s experience of Immanuel

A. For Joseph, Immanuel meant disruption

1. His plans were turned upside down, and he was thrown into situations where he was way in over his head, where any illusion of self-sufficiency was stripped away from him and he was forced to rely on God.

2. The angel was often very direct (“Get up”) and gave him the information he needed only when he needed it and never before that.

B. Joseph is a model of obedience

1. With each dream, there is a perfect correspondence between what the angel asked him to do and what he did

2. Joseph never speaks: “In every scene Joseph simply acts without speaking. His speech is to do the will of God. His hallmark is obedience—prompt, simple, and unspectacular obedience.”

IV. Making room for Immanuel in our own lives

A. We are called to make room for a God who might disrupt our lives; a God who isn’t beholden to our plans and comforts but has his own plans in this world and simply asks us to obey.

B. Some of us are in seasons of disruption where our plans, desires, and comforts have been pulled out from under us and we are being called into dependence, trust and obedience

C. Others of us have loved ones who are experiencing disruption, and we are being called in to help and support

D. God often uses those seasons of disruption to do a new work in us and create a new space in us where we experience his presence, grace, and encouragement.