

A Most Wonderful Dad

Wayne Waibel – 12/21/2025

We're up to our eyeballs in it now, folks. The Christmas season is not just upon us, it surrounds us. For some – they are actually drowning in Christmas entanglements. Many places to be – itineraries to iron out – that last perfect gift purchase – Oh my, I almost forgot I need to bake a hundred and fifty cupcakes for the hockey team! Only a few precious days left until we can collapse and rest from our toils.

This is probably a good time to reflect, take stock of our dwindling sanity, and fiercely guard it from the onslaught of holiday eccentricities. We are a complicated and diverse people with our family traditions and wild expectations. It may be argued – the madness we experience is of our own creation.

And yet – we live and move and have our being in a Christ centered life that defies modern conventions and rests instead on a simpler, time honored focus of peace, and on earth – good will toward all.

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Speaking of simpler, let's spend a few moments with Joseph, who was a carpenter by trade. Here was a man who upon discovering his betrothed was pregnant, planned a very quiet divorce rather than making a public spectacle of her assumed adultery which was the custom.

When you were engaged in the ancient world – you were married. But Matthew tells us Joseph was a righteous man, so he set aside tradition and elected instead to adhere to the law in a very private way.

When he was visited in a dream to go ahead and take Mary as his wife owing to the divine nature of her pregnancy – he awoke and did just that.

Now, Joseph did not have the voice of God beckoning to him from a burning bush. The heavens did not open and declare his directive. He simply went to sleep – had a dream – awoke and put that dream into action. Here is the result of that adherence to a simple dream:

When Christ was born – Joseph named the Child Jesus. Naming a child was equivalent to an act of adoption, and that act bestowed upon his infant son all of the genealogy belonging to Joseph, who was – as we all know – of the house of David. This fulfilled the prophecy that the Messiah would come from the lineage of king David.

He taught Jesus the skills associated with carpentry. It's what he knew. But he raised Jesus as though He were the Son of God. I'm quite certain Joseph was to the young Jesus – a most wonderful dad.

Jesus was surrounded by a loving family who deeply understood His significance in the world as they knew it, and remember – this world included the tyranny of a ruler who so feared the coming of the Messiah that he had all of the male babies in his kingdom slaughtered. Then there's the matter of Imperial Rome.

It begs the question alluded to in Isaiah. How do we respond with trust to the gracious and unexpected presence of the living God? It's a powerful question.

If we lead our lives based on the way the world would have us live – we are certainly doomed. I know it's difficult to ponder the majesty, splendor, and glory of Immanuel – God with us – while our senses are assaulted regularly with the illusions of a twisted-world view, but ponder we must.

The carpenter, Joseph, taught us that the faithful thing to do and the faithful way to be - are sometimes at odds with social convention. So we're in good company.

We live in an age of promiscuous communication – more messages with less meaning. And we certainly have lost the art of salutation. One need only read Paul’s greeting to the church in Rome as an example of what a real salutation looks and sounds like.

As with most texts from antiquity, there is a flavor and genuine grace in the Bible that supersedes the postmodern dribble that passes for insight. Taking a few minutes each week to immerse ourselves in Scripture is more than simply good for the soul – it serves as a reminder to fully illiterate a thought or a concept.

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So here we are on the cusp of another Christmas awaiting the celebration of our Savior’s birth. Depending on your age – there’s a lot riding on this. Dreams and hopes – desires and wonderments.

My favorite part has always been watching others open their gifts. It’s a shared joy I wouldn’t trade for anything. That’s probably why it seems perfectly natural to infuse the joy of Christmas giving with the reverence that Christmas occupies in the western world.

The ancient world gave us so much. The way they expressed themselves has given us an endless supply of creed-worthy insights. And a creed is nothing less than a template for a way of living.

We make vows and take oaths in an effort to define and enliven the very best qualities within us. We do this because there was once a manger, and a little child born into poverty to become the Light of men.

As we celebrate the birth of Jesus, let us be mindful also of His desire for us to love His Father and each other in a way that transcends time and distance, and the brokenness of an imperfect world. Amen.