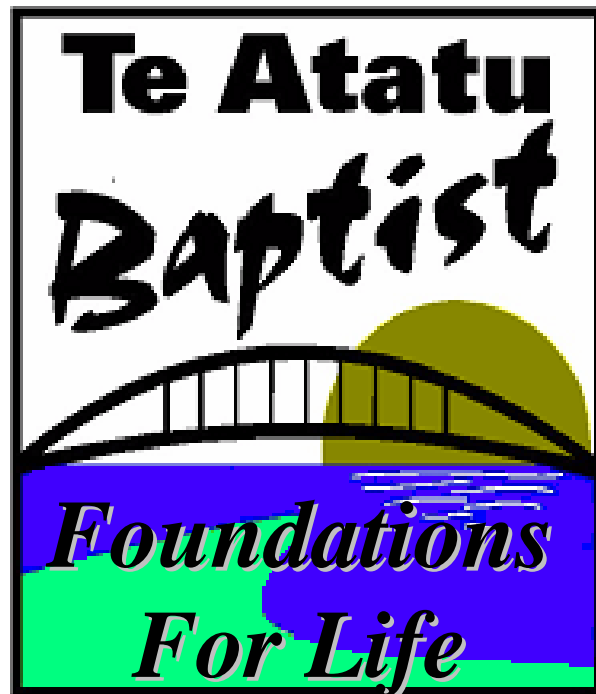


Slide # 1

Even Parents With The Perfect Child Have Problems!

Luke 2:1-7



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Morning Service

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Te Atatu Baptist Church

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© Research, References & Credit to:...

- Dr. Larry L. Thompson (2002)
- NIV Life Application Study Bible – *Selected Scriptures*

Today's sermon is titled:

‘Even Parents With The Perfect Child Have Problems!’

Our focus will be on Mary and Joseph –

...as we see them coming *from* Nazareth on their way to Bethlehem - where Mary would give birth to the Savior, Jesus Christ.

While this story is so well known we must not allow *familiarity to breed a mistaken contempt*.

What I want us to see today is that EVEN Mary and Joseph had *bumps in the road of life* - that they had to deal with.

That - the only couple to actually have *a perfect child* had the ‘curve balls’ thrown at them just as all *couples*, all *families*, and all *people* do today.

We all know full well, life is a journey, an adventure.

Every journey on the road of life can expect to encounter some unexpected curves, a dip, or bump or pot hole that seems to *knock your life out of balance* and causes you to lose direction and focus.

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It could be anything:

- The medical report you never expected
- The accident you didn't see coming
- The job that is terminated
- The loss of a long-time friendship
- A rebellious child
- An adulterous spouse
- Unexpected pregnancy
- Losing a baby
- Divorce
- Depression or mental illness
- The death of someone you love without warning
- Being transferred to a new location
- Unfair accusations
- Financial stress

And this list goes on and on...

In fact, which ones on the list could you put a 'tick' against, that happened to you over the last year!?

Hopefully you're beginning to see the focus of this message.

We all have the unexpected disappointments that come into our lives.

The manner in which we deal with those times determines spiritual *victory* or *defeat*.

Mary and Joseph knew about life's disappointments.

In fact, the Christmas story is a story filled with unexpected events that *could never* be anticipated.

What was supposed to be a ‘bright new future’ of happiness and joy, turned into a disaster!

What about you, and your journey over the last year?

Did it start out full of hope and joyful expectancy – only to be crushed under the weight of setbacks and unanticipated events?

You see, how you handle setbacks and disappointments will determine either your *victory* or *defeat* in life.

Let’s briefly examine this journey in the life of Mary and Joseph as we explore how to deal with the unexpected curves on the road of life.

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Luke 2:1-7:

“In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to his own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.”

Let’s have a look at some of the unexpected events in the lives of Mary and Joseph that very first Christmas 2000 years ago.

And as we discover these events, let us take hope and faith, that just as God was faithful to Mary and Joseph – through some very stressful and painful events – so He will be faithful to each and every one of us here today!

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Our biggest challenge – is this:

DO I SURRENDER TO THE TROUBLE OR STAND IN THE TRUTH?

Look at some of the ‘curve balls’ Mary and Joseph faced!

First, there was:

The Unexpected Pregnancy

Before Mary and Joseph consummated their marriage, she discovered that she was expecting a child.

Talk about an unexpected event in her life!

Can you imagine the emotions that Mary dealt with?

Here was a young lady preparing for her wedding.

She was busy making sure everything was in order and right in the middle of all of this an angel appears with some very astounding news.

The angel says, “Greetings...the Lord is with you...you have found favor with Him...**YOU ARE GOING TO HAVE A BABY!**”

Mary's first thought is, "If this is favor with God, I would hate to be at war with Him!"

In one moment, this brief encounter, her hopes and dreams of the perfect life are, at least in her estimation, shattered!

Most marriage relationships begin with dreams of a perfect life together.

As I'm sure yours did!

It seems apparent, comparing the Luke narrative with the text from Matthew - that Mary then went to visit Elizabeth immediately after the 'conception' announcement from Gabriel.

How Joseph discovers Mary's pregnancy we cannot be sure; however, she would be at the end of her first trimester when she returned from her visit with Elizabeth.

Joseph's love for Mary is such that though he believes her to have been unfaithful to him; he does not seek any type of financial or punitive retribution which would have been his right under the Mosaic Law.

Neighbors in the small town of Nazareth may have assumed that Joseph was the father.

Then we have:

The Appearance of Angels

Talk about another curve ball!

First we have the angel Gabriel in the Temple informing the priest Zacharias that his prayers had been answered and his wife was going to have a child.

Not just any child, but a prophet *the likes of none other*.

Then the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary and told her what else was happening.

In the meantime, when Joseph discovers that Mary is pregnant, he decides to treat her fairly by not exposing her to public disgrace or even death.

He would simply divorce her quietly.

But an angel appeared to him in a dream and explained the situation to him.

After the revelation Joseph immediately takes Mary into his home as his wife.

Mary is in a most vulnerable position with respect to the rest of the village.

The villagers no doubt considered Joseph the father of Jesus!

While it was wrong to have sexual relations during the betrothal period, there was no formal punishment for it except to advance the marriage date.

By taking Mary into his home Joseph removes the social stigma that would have been associated with Mary.

He took on the role of protector and provided Godly leadership in their relationship.

He is clearly a man of faith and strength.

His willingness to obey God demonstrates that he, like Mary, has a servant's heart toward God and is fully obedient to the call of God on his life.

Then we have:

The Journey to Bethlehem

Then the event of *apparent bad timing* occurred – they had to go from Nazareth to Bethlehem to register for a census and taxation.

It was too close to the time of the birth of Jesus.

Talk about another curve ball!

Mary and Joseph went together to Bethlehem in obedience to the Roman and Jewish governmental authorities, *although Joseph could have probably have registered for both of them.*

They went together because Mary was in her final three weeks of pregnancy, and Joseph didn't want to leave her alone with the possibility that the baby might come while he was gone.

Now however, he must take his pregnant wife on a very difficult journey of about 150 kilometers to honor the order to register for taxation.

Then we have:

The Inability to Find Lodging

After arriving in Bethlehem from the tiresome journey, there was no place to stay, no place to sleep, no room.

Following on from this, we have the situation where:

No One Else Is Present for the Birth of Jesus

They were directed to a cave/stable of some sort.

And there, in a humble stable – not in splendour – but away from anyone familiar – not in the comfort of home – God entered the world as a dependent infant.

Talk about an unexpected turn of events!

Surely this can't be the will of God!

Look at all of the events that follow:

- The Shepherds' Story
- Simeon's Prophecy
- Anna's Words about Jesus
- The visit of the Magi
- The Angel's visit warning Joseph of the need to escape to Egypt
- The slaughter of innocent babies on account of a king's jealousy over the baby Jesus!

Talk about a curve ball!

Everywhere you look at this story you see the situation appearing to get worse and worse and *without* an eternal perspective!

Surely God didn't intend this.

Did they make the wrong decision?

What About The Death Of All Those Other Babies?

Imagine how Mary and Joseph felt when they learnt their actions of giving birth to Jesus has caused so many families to suffer pain and death!

*Sometimes pain and hardship are the consequences of following
God's will for your life!*

Joseph and Mary must have *second guessed* this entire situation many times during this period of their life.

Their dreams of happiness and security had been shattered into a thousand little pieces!

They were faced with a choice in the midst of these curves:

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**DO I SURRENDER TO THE TROUBLE
BEFORE ME OR DO I STAND ON THE
TRUTH WITHIN ME?**

Or, if we put it another way:

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**DO I REACT BY *FEELINGS* OR DO I
RESPOND BY *FAITH***

Often unexpected events produce immediate tension and stress in our lives.

At those times we find ourselves reacting in emotions – often either anger or rage.

We are directed by our *feelings* and controlled by sinful or selfish actions *instead* of responding with understanding and patience - equipped and controlled by the Holy Spirit.

The measure of how a person handles
disappointments is a key indicator of their
emotional maturity and trust in God.

Dream vs. Reality:

- The dream of a perfect wedding vs. the situation of pregnancy under a cloud of suspicion.

Talk about tension and stress!

The question would constantly be before them, “What are the people saying?”

How do you react or respond when you know that you have done nothing wrong but the appearance of a situation lends itself to allowing others to draw a conclusion that would allow ridicule or feed their criticism?

- What about the legal responsibility of registering and the personal situation of your wife expecting a baby.

You know the story, the whispers, the questions:

‘Oh, and when did you get married?’

And then the second question:

‘Tell me again how old your elders child is again?’

Talk about hassles and anxiety!

- Lodging and Birth of Child – No room for your pregnant wife.

Talk about tension and stress!

- Decisions:

Do I react and make an expedient decision or do I respond and make the expected decision– What should they do?

Do they travel to Bethlehem, away from home, away from the crib Joseph so carefully constructed, away from family and friends?

Or do they follow the law *away* from the security of the midwives they know - or *anyone* to provide the personal assistance?

So – where on earth does *joy* and *peace* enter the whole picture!!!

In each of our lives, families, marriages, places of employment and churches, there are unexpected curves in the road –

...situations we never saw coming – a crisis we never planned for – apparent devastation that we never dreamed would touch our lives.

It seems as though every curve produces tension and stress in our lives.

- What should we do?
- What is the right decision?
- What is the easiest choice?
- Do I respond with my feelings or with faith? (How do I know the difference???)
- What is the best option before us?
- What does the Father expect of us?

Our Possible Choices to Make When We face the Unexpected, are...

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1. THE LOGICAL CHOICE:

This is an intellectual decision.

That's what Joseph had decided until the angel came to him in a dream.

Isn't that what we often do – reason it all out before we pray?

Weigh out all the options and make a business decision before we seek the will of God or the mind of Christ?

A choice made by our logic is not necessarily a bad thing.

But if we neglect seeking the Lord, then we can become our own worst enemy.

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2. THE LOVING CHOICE:

This is an emotional choice.

This is the choice we make based solely on those we love and what we think is best for them.

Joseph and Mary could have made an emotional choice by not going to Bethlehem.

They could have loved one another so much and loved the child that was to be born that they could have chosen to simply stay in Nazareth.

However, prophecy would not be fulfilled.

Prophecy that clearly states the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem.

This often seems like the noblest choice to make.

But again, if we don't seek the will of God, then our emotional choice can become our own worst enemy.

Finally, notice the choices Mary and Joseph made as they met their curves in life. They followed...

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3. THE CHOICE OF THE LORD'S CALL:

At every curve they chose to trust God.

They chose to express faith in God.

They chose to honor God and to obey His word they had received.

They answered His Call to do the right thing, the ethical thing of following the law, no matter how difficult it might be.

They chose to trust God for guidance and provision.

Joseph and Mary chose to express their faith by obeying the Lord's Call.

- Mary obeyed - Joseph obeyed - Jesus was born into a godly home.

God continued to lead them on their journey in life.

He protected their individual lives, He protected their family and He protected their marriage.

Have there been any unexpected curves in your life lately?

Is there tension and stress because of these unexpected events?

Will you choose to make the RIGHT choice, to answer the Lord's Call?

Or will you simply make a logical choice that seems best by the reason of your own mind?

Or even maybe, will you make the loving choice; you choose to make the choice based on your love for those closest to you?

Or, will you choose to seek God, to answer the LORD'S CALL through His word and by the leadership of His Spirit and walk by faith to trust Him?

Here's the interesting observation:

By answering the Lord's Call on your life you can absolutely depend on the fact that God will always do what is best for you and for those closest to you.

So, if you really want what's best for all concerned, then there is only one choice, answer the Lord's call and by faith trust God.

Trust God enough to express it in your public obedience.

God will continue to lead you on your journey of life.

Yes, there will be more curves.

But by responding in faith to this curve, you are now prepared for the unexpected that may be at the next turn.

Think for a moment about the curves that have come your way in the past week, month, year or lifetime.

Have those curves caught you unaware and caused a crash in your spiritual life? Your emotional life? Your family life?

What does God want to do now in your life?

Seek direction from God concerning His will for you.

Don't act outside of His direction, His word and the leadership of His Spirit.

Let's Pray Together!