

**Title:** When Unexpected Things Happen

**Text:** Matthew 1:18-25

**Date:** December 23, 2018 at FBCW

Andy Williams' song is famous this time of year, "It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year"  
*It's the most wonderful time of the year...with the kids jingle belling...and everyone telling you  
be of good cheer...it's the most wonderful time of the year!*

But is it? Is it the most wonderful time of the year for \_\_\_\_\_? Divorce? Death? Jobless? Sick?  
Alone?

**INTRO.** I can promise you two things:

- If you knew everything about my family – I would be embarrassed.
- If I knew everything about your family – you would be embarrassed.

**Background.** Matthew, ironically, begins his gospel with an ancestry list because he wants you to know everything about the backdrop of Jesus Christ's family.

**Matt 1:1-17.** It's all here. These are Christ's people. This is the Lord's ancestral, family tree → liars, adulterers, murderers, cheats, idolaters, incest, unbelief, and lots of hypocrites.

And Matthew, the author of this Gospel, was a former tax collector himself – one of the most hated men in Galilee, seemed highly unlikely to ever join Jesus's team of disciples.

No wonder Matthew was the one who recorded Matt 9:12-13, *It is not those who are well who need a doctor, but those who are sick. For I didn't come to call the righteous, but sinners.*

- Matthew sure knew lots of sick people!
- Matthew knew that he himself was sick!
- Thankfully, Jesus was really good with sick people!

Just about every type of foolishness and failure you can imagine happening in one family tree – it's all contained right here in Jesus' ancestry.

**ILLUS:** I was at a senior adult event and I had to speak after a guy led the music. He sang, "I'm my own grandpa."

- I don't remember much about the night, but I vividly remember this song.
- Can you imagine having to be the speaker after this...

*Now, many many years ago  
When I was twenty-three  
I was married to a widow  
Who was pretty as could be*

*This widow had a grown-up daughter  
Who Had hair of red  
My father fell in love with her  
And soon the two were wed*

*This made my dad my son-in-law  
And changed my very life  
My daughter was my mother  
'Cause she was my father's wife*

*To complicate the matters  
Even though it brought me joy  
I soon became the father  
Of a bouncing baby boy*

*My little baby then became  
A brother-in-law to dad  
And so became my uncle  
Though it made me very sad*

*For if he was my uncle  
That also made him the brother  
Of the widow's grown-up daughter  
Who, of course, was my step-mother*

Main line I remember him singing, "*I'm my own grandpa...*"

So here is Matthew → These are Christ's people... (Tamar...incest/scandal; Rahab...shame of prostitution, living alone; Ahaz...disgrace of pagan child sacrifice; etc.)

- *To* people like this, Jesus Christ came!
- *For* people like this, Jesus Christ came!

**READ the text of Matthew 1:18-25 aloud.**

**Matthew tells us that Jesus Christ was truly born (1:18).** *The birth of Jesus Christ came about this way.*

Just as everything prior to 1:18 (the ancestry list) really happened...Matthew is now telling us that the ultimate event – Jesus birth – really did happen. This is history giving way to history.

The birth of Jesus Christ is a real, factual, living story.

**\*\*It really happened.\*\***

It was an actual, historical event.

**\*\*It really happened!\*\***

**Important lesson!** We shouldn't miss this – in all of the trees, lights, songs, candles, presents, food, parties, football, and family gatherings – hear me when I say this → it really happened... “*The birth of Jesus Christ came about...Jesus really was born!*”

Christmas is the story of God's Word coming true → Jesus Christ was born.

*Go, tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere;  
Go, tell it on the mountain That Jesus Christ is born!*

**Matthew tells us precisely how the birth of Jesus Christ took place – the Holy Spirit did it (1:18).**

And it happened this way (1:18):

- A young Jewish couple – Joseph and Mary – are engaged.
- Though they are dating, Joseph and Mary have remained sexually pure.
- However, one interesting turn – Mary is pregnant.
- And even more interesting, Mary is reportedly pregnant because of the specific work of the Holy Spirit.

Imagine this playing out in Joseph's mind as he considers damage control of his own reputation:

- Joseph – *Dad, I'm telling you, I have not been intimate with her.*
- Dad – *Is she pregnant? How'd it happen? Don't you lie to me boy. You better not lie.*
- Joseph – *Honest, Dad, the Holy Spirit did it.*
- Dad – *Boy, don't even waste my time I ought to...*

Imagine Joseph telling his buddies.

- *Hey bro, you're the man...No, it's not like that...*

Imagine Joseph having to face Mary's parents.

- *Sir, I give you my word, I've not laid a hand on Mary...*

Imagine poor Mary...a virgin...and the embarrassing scandal of unwed pregnancy?

- Talk about a walk of shame? An unprecedented season of shame/suspicion.

**Important lesson!** Jesus, from the very beginning chooses to affiliate with people loaded with shame/grief.

**1:19. Joseph is a righteous/just person. He does not want to disgrace or embarrass Mary.**

- Note, it's a major disgrace in this culture for childbirth to precede marriage!

Gen 2:24, God's plan for marriage and childbirth and multiplication –

- *Leave your parents...cleave to your spouse...conceive your children* (God's plan).
- Ironically, the world's plan is so backwards and messed up! → conceive freely...never cleave...leave when you want...

**1:19.** Joseph is considering a private break with the engagement. Wouldn't you?

**1:20.** *Joseph has been thinking about these things...*

**1:21.** *Joseph is asleep...the Lord appears to Joseph in a dream...the angel speaks and says:*

- Don't be afraid.
- I want you to marry, Mary.
- What's going on in her is of the Holy Spirit.
- She's going to have a son.
- You're going to name him Jesus.
- Jesus is going to save His people from their sins.

**Important Lesson:** Don't be afraid...believe...obey...joyfully participate as God does in your life what you could never do alone!

**Matt 1:22-23 is a brief aside/vignette describing why this story would unfold like it did → Why did this happen? To fulfill the Lord's Word!**

- We are looking into a major transition in the Scriptures here:
  - OT: *He's coming, He's coming, He's coming...*
  - Gospels: *Here he is, Here he is, Here he is...*
  - NT: *He's coming back...He's coming back...He's coming back!*

The key theme in the OT is Messianic hope, or Messianic expectation. In every generation since Eden, they wondered, when will the Messiah come?

**Q:** Where's the offspring of the woman that will rise to crush the serpent's head? (Gen 3:15)

Will he be a father like Abraham?

Will he be a deliverer like Moses?

Will he be a king like David?

Will he be a prophet like Elijah?

Will he be a priest like Samuel?

Will he be a strong judge like Samson?

But since Malachi – not a word! 400 years of darkness and nothingness!

The heavens were silent! Where is God? Has God forgotten us?

**1:23. But the angel refers back to the prophesy of Isaiah to assure the audience that God is right on time!**

Isaiah 7:14, *Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign: See, the virgin will conceive, have a son, and name him Immanuel.*

*Isaiah 9:6-7, For a child will be born for us, a son will be given to us, and the government will be on his shoulders. He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. His dominion will be vast...his prosperity will never end...*

*Micah 5:3-5, When she who is in labor has given birth...He will stand and shepherd them in the strength of the Lord, in the majestic name of the Lord his God...his greatness will extend to the ends of the earth...he will be his people's peace.*

Here's the three things the Angel promises:

- A virgin will become pregnant.
- She will give birth to a son.
- The son will be called Immanuel (God is with us).

This is wonderful news! God is with us! God has not forgotten us!

**Important Lesson!** No wonder Luke 2 describes the heavenly, angelic host bursting on the scene and praising God with a loud chorus of verses!

- Angels had been watching this unfold for thousands of years!
- Angels knew that there had been many years of silence.
- Now...here comes Jesus...it's time to sing/shout!

**God's pattern:**

- God often shows up in the biggest, best, and most beautiful ways when we least expect it!
- In a dark time...a hard time...at an unexpected time...God shows up!

**1:24-25. Listen to what Joseph does: he wakes...he obeys...he marries...he remains pure...he named the child.**

Joseph → He heard; he believed; he obeyed!

FACT – when you know God is with you – you can wake up and do anything!

**Big Idea.** Unexpected things will happen in our lives, but God is faithful, and so we trust in His Word!

- This is the Christmas Message: Joseph, Mary, Shepherds, Magi...
- Unexpected things...but God is faithful and trustworthy.

When life seems confusing and impossible, we need clarity and truth: God is with us! We can trust Him!

The message of Matthew 1:18-25 is that God is with us, and we can trust Him!

- This message is for all of us!

Carrie and I don't know what to expect – We didn't plan last Christmas to be here this Christmas.

- A different home...a different job/church...a different set of friends...
- But we are here...
- **God is with us. We will trust Him.**

I could tell you about my dear friends down the street in Cartersville.

- Young couple, newlyweds.
- Pregnant with their first child → received alarming news from Doctor about their baby.
- **God is with them. I pray they trust Him.**

I could tell you about my friend Gregg. Pastored for 30 years...but last couple of years have been difficult...unable to find consistent work.

- Not as young as he once was...but too young to retire.
- What's he going to do?
- **God is with him. I pray he trusts in Him.**

Maybe you are young and going to a brand-new school.

Maybe you've just gotten out of rehab or some other program...freedom scares you to death...

Maybe this is your first Christmas after A) Death B) Divorce?

Maybe you are in that tough spot of life where you have aging parents, but you also still have kids and grandkids that need you?

## CONCL:

Do you believe God is with you?

- 1) If you've never trusted Christ → please come and be saved today!
- 2) If you've drifted far from Christ, or grown cold → Christmas is a time of new beginnings!
  - a. Come and pray today.

God is with you! He is as close as your humble prayer of faith!

- Please help me.
- I need you.
- Come and make my life new.

Stop attempting to explain/understand your circumstances – just let God join you in your circumstances.