

Joseph: the Servant of God 2 Christmas C

The gospel begins with the wise men leaving after following the star that led them to Bethlehem, and then Joseph is warned in a dream to flee unto Egypt. The gospel ends with Joseph, making a home for his family in Nazareth. So little is known about this quiet man of faith. The spotlight reveals Joseph to be a decisive, responsible protector for Mary and Jesus. It was a vital role for this servant of God. He was willing to respond to the dream from God without hesitation.

How many people do you know willing to trust their dreams? It seems unlikely behavior for a carpenter. Practical, a skilled laborer, living in a climate when building materials would have been scarce, Joseph had to be a resourceful, pragmatic man.

Other scripture describes Joseph as a man who acted contrary to folklore as well. When he learned that Mary was pregnant before they had "lived together", he acted contrary to the usual norm of seeking another wife. He supported her without question, thus protecting Mary from shame and possible village retribution. Joseph was Mary's "knight in shining armor", and he would continue that legacy for his family despite village rumors of Joseph's questionable paternity.

I like this guy -- don't you? Surely his character made an impression on Jesus. What's clear is that Joseph was a believer in the most high God. He took his faith seriously enough that his faith led to action. Joseph acted in good faith using the best knowledge he had in dangerous circumstances. He divined the will of God three different times, but also acted on his human knowledge based on people he could trust. Rather than chance his family's security to yet another Judean despot, he moved them out of harm's way to Galilee. Again, this man of God set the stage for establishing a godly home for his family. Joseph is a model for men willing to take ownership of such responsibilities for their kin. Following his example might mean less discord in families today.

I admire the noble character of another father whose Nigerian son recently made the news on Christmas Day. Alhaji Mutallub, a former bank chairman, obviously loves his 23 year old son and gave him everything he needed to succeed. But there came a moment in time, when this man of character had to act on his personal faith and understanding of right and wrong, just as Joseph did.

Warning US and British officials of his son being radicalized by extremists, he said that his son's behavior was out of character. The warning given, which certainly was the right thing to do, must have been painful for this father and the rest of the family. A statement was made in thanksgiving: "*We, along with the whole world, are thankful to Almighty God that there were no lives lost in the incident. May God continue to protect us all, amen.*" Their hope is for their son's

safe return home --

(<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/nigeria/6900884/Detroit-terror-attack-bombers-family-alerted-security-officials-to-concerns-months-ago.html>).

Fathers like Joseph and Alhaji deserve more thanks than they ever receive. I am grateful for the love of all my children; both by blood and marriage, and I hope that I can be a shining example for them. We fathers need to be men of good character for our children.

Here at Trinity, my hope is that we can restore a men's group that will strengthen the character of our men as well as give mutual support to one another. There are young fathers who need our support. We need each other and the experience of wise men that will proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. Bless our men and our fathers. Thank you and thank God for your faithfulness. Amen.