

JOY

Pastor Ken

December 21, 2025

It is your choice to rejoice!

Thieves of Christmas Joy: Fear, Hurt and Worry

¹⁸ This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

²⁰ But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." (Matt 1-NIV)

Everyone sitting here this Christmas experience hurts either from life's events or hurt from other people. When hurt metastasizes like cancer it spreads to vital emotional, physical, and spiritual parts of your life and can become bitterness and resentment. Now, listen...

You cannot be resentful and joyful at the same time.

Where does the cancer of resentment come from? You have been **hurt**. You have been **wounded**. You have been **injured**. Everyone in the sanctuary and everyone listening online has been hurt at some time. **Let me ask again:**

Where do resentment and bitterness come from? Being hurt!

Some of you have been wounded by people's words, and maybe you have carried those hurts for years, for some even since childhood.

Some of you have been wounded physically, some of you have been abused sexually.

I am sorry that has happened to you, God knows your hurt.

Some of you have been abused emotionally with words of guilt, anger, and intimidation.

Some of you have been wounded in relationships with mistrust and betrayal.

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Some of you have been wounded maritally by adultery, pornography, iPhone affairs, divorce, workaholism, unfaithfulness. Even sudden death of a spouse can cause deep seeded hurts.

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Some of you have been wounded and hurt deeply through prejudice, racism, bigotry against you.

Some of you have been wounded and hurt through rejection, failure, job firings and mistreatment by work associates and bosses.

I am sorry that has happened to you, God knows your hurt.

Regardless of how you have been hurt, let God help you heal or else! Or else what?

Your hurt will metastasize like cancer and spread into every vital area of your life causing your body, soul and spirit to become crippled, deformed or even shut down all together.

This world is filled with sin, and we all sin as the Bible tells us, *"All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God."* (Romans 3:23)

Because we have sinned against God, this causes us to hurt each other. We hurt each other all the time. Sometimes this happens intentionally and at other times unintentionally.

Now, would you agree with this? You have been hurt by others, and you have hurt others. Agreed? I need a little more consensus in the room, to continue. Ok, there it is, **that honest love for truth.**

Acknowledging truth is what leads to healing, it leads to trust, and it leads to God's blessing and favor. Resentment from hurt, will keep the joy out of your life.

Again, you cannot be resentful and joyful at the same time.

Bitterness and resentment keep billions of people from experiencing joy in life. We all know people who have been hurt, they let it manifest into bitterness and resentment, and some have carried that all their life.

How do I know if a person is ready at death to step into life beyond life? They are either at peace or bitter and angry at life.

Since we are talking about a little married couple in Israel, who suddenly have been selected by God to deliver a child into the world, the savior of the world I want to offer you this question:

Have you ever considered how hurt Joseph was when he found out Mary was pregnant?

Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. (Matt 1:18)

If any part of life has its share of hurt and resentment stealing our joy, it is marriage.

Since I love laughter, and marriage has its share of examples of hurt turning in bitterness, let me give you a few examples before I reveal **how Joseph was hurt** when he found out his soon-to-be wife was pregnant, and he was not the father.

One couple had a blow up, that was over the top. The husband was a contractor. He possessed master-level building skills. Anger and conflict grew. Anger and conflict escalated. Anger and conflict went off the rails.

When it went off the rails, he grabbed for the nails.

As a builder, after they had a fight one day, he nailed his wife into the house. Literally. The builder-husband nailed every door and window tightly shut. He then went to work. The wife could not get out for a long time. You are wondering does this type of stuff really happen in a marriage? Yea, when hurt turns into bitterness.

A man in Texas remains married to his wife but would not speak to her for 40 years. Now that is some hurt that has manifested into resentment for a lot of years.

The fight was over how much money she spent on sugar at the grocery store. One day he took out a lumber saw and sawed the entire house exactly in half. The husband nailed up planks to cover the raw sides of the house. He then moved one side of the house behind some scrawny pine trees on his Texas property.

He moved his portion of the house to where he could not see her half of the house from his window. There the two, husband and wife, lived out the rest of their days in separate houses.

Neither is willing to **break the cycle** of hurt, bitterness and resentment that began 40 years ago. **Neither will forgive. Neither will let go.**

Pride can cause all of us to become unmovable, unforgivable, unyielding, and unrelatable, some would...

... rather live in falsehood, than freedom,

...rather live in torture, than togetherness,

...rather live in unforgiveness, than forgiveness,

...rather be resentful, than joyful.

So, many walk around in life carrying the weight of unresolved hurt. Unresolved bitterness. Unresolved injury. Unresolved unforgiveness. Unresolved anger. Announcing to anyone who will listen, **life is not fair.**

So, the hurt continues to cause pain today. When this happens, we are hindered from experiencing JOY.

When you surrender to a prison of hurt, eventually it becomes bitterness and resentment. Don't you think it is time to stop spraying the icy chills of resentment toward those you love? You cannot be resentful and joyful at the same time.

Again, have you ever considered how hurt Joseph was when he found out Mary was pregnant?

The wife to be, the women he loves, they have never had sex, is pregnant. Imagine this scene:

Hey sweetie, Joseph I have some news. I am pregnant.

How betrayed would you feel if your fiancée' told you she was pregnant, and you were not the father of the child?

How wounded would you be by that announcement? You are planning your wedding, working overtime at the carpentry shop to save some shekels for a little tent on the outskirts of Nazareth.

Your soon-to-be wife is telling you she is pregnant. How would you feel? You would feel just like Joseph did, you would feel betrayed, cheated, he was extremely hurt and disappointed.

How many of you know these feelings from being hurt?

How Quickly Joseph's Life Changed

*One day he was planning for a life with Mary and the next moment her reputation was tarnished with an out-of-wedlock pregnancy.

Is this how you planned to tell your family about being a dad? Are your parents going to understand the supernatural nature of that birth-virgin birth?

*One day he is a carpenter and the next he is a caretaker.

A finished carpenter at that, well respected in the community and now you must think about your reputation, your community standing. What will the guys at the gym think?

*One day he was living in Nazareth and the next he was returning to Bethlehem because of a census.

How quickly Joseph's life changed, one day Joseph has his whole marriage and family mapped out, and the next his fiancée' is blemished and tarnished.

How quickly Joseph's life changes, and yet, he gives up his life for Jesus' life. And isn't that what God asks all of us to do?

How about you? Are you willing to give up your life for Jesus?

You will be frustrated, fretting and fleeing God's purposes until you give up your hurt, bitterness, and resentment. Do you realize God has a plan and purpose, even for our pain? Hurt. Betrayal. Woundedness.

So many of life events seems accidental, incidental, or even coincidental but they are really God-cidental.

Joseph does not know God was at work delivering personally on a plan that was designed to save the world from sin. Years later one of Jesus followers make that idea blindingly clear in John 3:16,

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16-NIV)

Joseph has no idea that God is testing him to see if he will be a loving husband to Mary and a good father to Jesus.

God often allows you to find yourself in impossible situations so God can show you a God-possible solution.

Put yourself in Joseph's shoes.

What if you could live your life with the confidence God is guiding every confusing and hurtful event for his glory and your growth. You can.

What if you could extract the proper meaning from every painful and pleasurable event? You can.

Let me remind you how God does this. *Our God is in the Heaven. He does whatever he pleases. (Psalm 115:3-NET)*

Unless you accept that God either causes or permits everything that happens you will continue to be hurt everyday of your life.

You will continue to become resentful and bitter. And most of all you will miss out on the Joy God wants you to experience.

Are you anxious? *When anxiety was great within me, your consolation **brought me joy.** Psalm 94:19 (NIV)*

Are you hurt and need God's help? For you have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings I will **sing for joy.** My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me. (Psalm 63:7-8-ESV)

Are you facing sadness, loss, and grief? *And do not be grieved, for the **joy of the Lord is your strength.**" (Nehemiah 8:10b-ESV)*

In a few minutes, those who want to give their hurt, bitterness, resentment to God, will be invited to come and stand with me at the altar. For many you will be letting go of some hurt that has been hampering and hurting you for years. So, don't let pride, ego, or embarrassment rob you of the visitation that God wants to offer you this Christmas in the form **joy unspeakable and fully of glory!**

Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, (1 Peter 1:8-ESV)

Look at that verse, God will give you a kind of joy that is fully of his very power, presence, and protection. If our great God is a joy giving God, then why would you not want that? If God already knows your hurts, habits and hang ups and He wants to carry them, cancel them and even redeem them or remove them, then why would you stay in your current state of hurt when you can have healing?

Be ready to move in a few minutes!

Would anybody be interested in returning a little Joy this Christmas to your life?

How to keep joy alive? Place God's plan above yours.

For Joseph the news of Mary's pregnancy was a real burden, it busted up Joseph's plans and left him looking bad in the eyes of the synagogue community.

In Torah school Joseph aced the test that included the 10 commandments **thou shalt not commit adultery.**

In Judaism and the time of the New Testament gospels, a pledge to be married was legally binding. Only divorce could break it. And infidelity at this point was considered adultery.

Mary was pregnant and it should have been good news. But it was news that hurt Joseph. **It drained the life of joy out of Joe!**

You can hardly blame Joseph for considering divorce when he discovered that, to no fault of his own, Mary is pregnant. For a few fleeting minutes, perhaps hours Joseph wanted to quietly divorce Mary.

¹⁹ Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. (Matt 1-NIV)

Who would blame Joseph for not wanting to divorce her?

How to keep joy alive? Choose to please God instead of others.

Joseph is righteous and godly. He lives by the law. The bible text calls him a “just man.” Our story identifies Joseph’s character and competency. Joseph’s character was that he was a “just man.” Joseph is a community spiritual leader. Like a church elder. Like a Timothy to the apostle Paul.

Of all the people in the Christmas story, Joseph may be one of the most misunderstood. People often assume Joseph became angry when he found out Mary was pregnant and hurried to end the relationship to spare himself embarrassment.

Joseph wanted no part in this. He decided instead to “divorce her quietly” and spare Mary the public spectacle. As a righteous man, he would have been compelled to pursue this public action. And yet, Matthew 1:19 tells us Joseph did not want to expose Mary to this public trial. **Compassion wins out over the letter of the law.**

Joseph was a righteous man. And Mary was “the Lord’s servant” (Luke 1:38). Both are great examples for us today.

Of course, they were not imperfect humans, just as we are not. But they were faithful. And because of their faithfulness, God chose Joseph and Mary to play a role in His glorious story of salvation.

God's choice of you, follows the same pattern 4 God's choice of Joseph.

Matthew gospel also, highlights **Joseph's competency**, Jesus earthly father was a craftsman. He was a small-town carpenter from a 1-hump camel town on the edge of boredom called Nazareth. Years later a sharpened tongue disciple would eat those words, as he spouted off about the place of Jesus birth, "can anything good come from Nazareth." *"Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip. (John 1:46-ESV)*

I can imagine when the disciples got bored while waiting in the upper for the Holy Spirit's arrival, they would exchange stories of their years with Jesus. The disciples would often chide Philip, as they reminded him how he stuck his foot in his mouth about the **birthplace of Jesus**.

How to keep joy alive? Don't let unresolved hurt rob you of joy.

Is Joseph the right choice? Doesn't God have some options?

What about a lawyer from the Sanhedrin? Why not a high priest that has stood in the presence of God in the temple offering sacrifices?

Why Joseph? The answer lies in part because of what Joseph was willing to give up for Jesus. Joseph would not let his hurt keep him from winning the **baby Jesus dad** contest.

Joseph chooses love over the law.

Joseph chooses responsibility over reputation.

Joseph chose fatherhood over fleeing.

The law says stone her, love says forgive her. Joseph is caught in the middle and uncertain what to do. Joseph can control his future, or he can let God control his future. The only thing he lacks is an answer from heaven as to what to do. Suddenly, God shows up. Joseph has been schooled on prayer. He knew where to turn.

²⁰ But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. (Matt 1-NIV)

Joseph response to the angel, well that makes sense. I knew all along the Holy Spirit had something to do with this. Joseph is a bundle of nerves trying to solve this dilemma. Joseph is stuck between a rock and hard spot. Clearly Joseph is conflicted. He is perplexed.

Who would Joseph not be frustrated as to what to do, when there is no light from above?

No revelation to the heart.

When God is silent, and you are anxious. Even fearful

The more Joseph thinks about how impossible the situation is, how unfair the situation is, how he has no control over his future, how hurt he is. It would be easy to become anxious. Bitter. Resentful. To become depressed. And rehearsing the dilemma over-and-over never helps.

The meaning of the words, “**Joseph had considered this,**” tells us that Joseph had been at this for some time, his mind was made up, and he was ready to go through with the plan to divorce Mary.

Suddenly. Shockingly. Surprisingly.

God arrives on the scene in the form of a heavenly visitation.

*...behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear **to take Mary** as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. (Matt 1-NIV)*

Joseph, you have been troubled long enough. You have agonized over this enough. It is time to STOP. Do not be afraid another moment. Some of you are afraid to move ahead with God because of fear. God’s word to you today is to STOP. Do not be afraid. Move ahead with God’s plan.

Joseph do not be afraid to “para-lambano” (to take Mary) as your wife. To take her to yourself. To lead her home. Take her into your life and love.

Mary's belling is growing. Do not let that be a concern to you. It is time for your love for her to start growing. **Joseph, you have reason to rejoice beyond your personal inconvenience.**

God clears his throat and announces; Joseph the whole world has reason to rejoice. Don't make it about you. Mary carries the Savior of the world. She carries God's son in her womb, the angel announces.

²¹ She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." (Matt 1-ESV)

How to keep joy alive? Choose to offer grace and let it go.

A bead of sweat forms below Joseph's beard. It is time for Joseph to make a decision. Preserve his reputation in the community or kiss his reputation good-bye. The decision is made. And verse 24-25 tells us of Joseph's history making decisions.

²⁴ When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, ²⁵ but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus. (Matt 1-ESV)

Joseph swapped his Torah studies for a pregnant fiancée' and an illegitimate child in the eyes of the world and made the biggest decision of his life.

Joseph placed God's plan ahead of his.

Don't make the mistake another minute of trying to control what God is already in control of. You are fighting a losing battle to wrestle with God about control of your life. Since God's plans will always prevail, you will just get a black eye, bruised arm or a headache trying to stop God's plans from becoming a reality.

Joseph swapped his reputation for a rattle.

Joseph heads over to Mary's house, he has good news to tell her. He understands. He accepts. He is excited about the future together.

He is ready to do this. Because, he believes down to his toes, God's Got This. Joseph arrives at Mary's and tells her...

The child is God's. The plan is God's. The idea is God's. Forgive me for doubting you Mary, even for a minute.

The questions that people will ask about the pregnancy - I can handle. The snickers and the gossip - I can handle.

And if our future is still hard, and if God calls us to more difficulties (late term pregnancy travels or lack of adequate accommodations or even a humble stable, I am ready to walk this road)

I will be at your side when Jesus is born. Not only a child, but birth to the Messiah. Not just an infant, but God himself.

...Who has come to take away the sins of the world.

Sin put you in prison. Sin has locked you behind bars of guilt, shame, deception, and fear. You are shackled to the wall of misery and pain.

Then Jesus came and paid your bail. He served your time. He satisfied the penalty with his death as a payment to set you free.

Jesus died for you and when you cast your lot with him, your old nature dies too.

One day you will die. If a heaven-sent substitute has died for you and you have trusted Jesus Christ, your death will really mean your resurrection.

Jesus death on the cross, means the claim that sin has on your life is broken. You are free.

⁵ For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶ We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. (Rom 6-ESV)

Surrender your life today to the only God-Man Jesus Christ that can keep from an eternity of torment away from Christ and receive his forgiveness of sins and eternal life. God offers this warning!

⁹ They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might. (2 Thess 1:9-NIV)

Come and stand before Him in prayer this Christmas 2025 and receive God's grace and let it go. He is welcoming you. Your hurt. Your bitterness. Your resentment. Bring it to Him.

And in exchange, receive Christmas JOY. Christ's Joy. Salvation Joy!

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In Judaism and the time of the New Testament gospels, a pledge to be married was legally binding. Only divorce could break it. And infidelity at this point was considered adultery.

Mary was pregnant and it should have been good news. But it was news that hurt Joseph. **It drained the life of joy out of Joe!**

You can hardly blame Joseph for considering divorce when he discovered that, to no fault of his own, Mary is pregnant. For a few fleeting minutes, perhaps hours Joseph wanted to quietly divorce Mary.

¹⁹ Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. (Matt 1-NIV)

Who would blame Joseph for not wanting to divorce her?

How to keep joy alive? Choose to please God instead of others.

Joseph is righteous and godly. He lives by the law. The bible text calls him a “just man.” Our story identifies Joseph’s character and competency. Joseph’s character was that he was a “just man.” Joseph is a community spiritual leader. Like a church elder. Like a Timothy to the apostle Paul.

Of all the people in the Christmas story, Joseph may be one of the most misunderstood. People often assume Joseph became angry when he found out Mary was pregnant and hurried to end the relationship to spare himself embarrassment.

Joseph wanted no part in this. He decided instead to “divorce her quietly” and spare Mary the public spectacle. As a righteous man, he would have been compelled to pursue this public action. And yet, Matthew 1:19 tells us Joseph did not want to expose Mary to this public trial. **Compassion wins out over the letter of the law.**

Joseph was a righteous man. And Mary was “the Lord’s servant” (Luke 1:38). Both are great examples for us today.

Of course, they were not imperfect humans, just as we are not. But they were faithful. And because of their faithfulness, God chose Joseph and Mary to play a role in His glorious story of salvation.

God's choice of you, follows the same pattern 4 God's choice of Joseph.

Matthew gospel also, highlights **Joseph's competency**, Jesus earthly father was a craftsman. He was a small-town carpenter from a 1-hump camel town on the edge of boredom called Nazareth. Years later a sharpened tongue disciple would eat those words, as he spouted off about the place of Jesus birth, "can anything good come from Nazareth." *"Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip. (John 1:46-ESV)*

I can imagine when the disciples got bored while waiting in the upper for the Holy Spirit's arrival, they would exchange stories of their years with Jesus. The disciples would often chide Philip, as they reminded him how he stuck his foot in his mouth about the **birthplace of Jesus**.

How to keep joy alive? Don't let unresolved hurt rob you of joy.

Is Joseph the right choice? Doesn't God have some options?

What about a lawyer from the Sanhedrin? Why not a high priest that has stood in the presence of God in the temple offering sacrifices?

Why Joseph? The answer lies in part because of what Joseph was willing to give up for Jesus. Joseph would not let his hurt keep him from winning the **baby Jesus dad** contest.

Joseph chooses love over the law.

Joseph chooses responsibility over reputation.

Joseph chose fatherhood over fleeing.

The law says stone her, love says forgive her. Joseph is caught in the middle and uncertain what to do. Joseph can control his future, or he can let God control his future. The only thing he lacks is an answer from heaven as to what to do. Suddenly, God shows up. Joseph has been schooled on prayer. He knew where to turn.

²⁰ But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. (Matt 1-NIV)

Joseph response to the angel, well that makes sense. I knew all along the Holy Spirit had something to do with this. Joseph is a bundle of nerves trying to solve this dilemma. Joseph is stuck between a rock and hard spot. Clearly Joseph is conflicted. He is perplexed.

Who would Joseph not be frustrated as to what to do, when there is no light from above?

No revelation to the heart.

When God is silent, and you are anxious. Even fearful

The more Joseph thinks about how impossible the situation is, how unfair the situation is, how he has no control over his future, how hurt he is. It would be easy to become anxious. Bitter. Resentful. To become depressed. And rehearsing the dilemma over-and-over never helps.

The meaning of the words, “**Joseph had considered this,**” tells us that Joseph had been at this for some time, his mind was made up, and he was ready to go through with the plan to divorce Mary.

Suddenly. Shockingly. Surprisingly.

God arrives on the scene in the form of a heavenly visitation.

*...behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear **to take Mary** as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. (Matt 1-NIV)*

Joseph, you have been troubled long enough. You have agonized over this enough. It is time to STOP. Do not be afraid another moment. Some of you are afraid to move ahead with God because of fear. God’s word to you today is to STOP. Do not be afraid. Move ahead with God’s plan.

Joseph do not be afraid to “para-lambano” (to take Mary) as your wife. To take her to yourself. To lead her home. Take her into your life and love.

Mary's belling is growing. Do not let that be a concern to you. It is time for your love for her to start growing. **Joseph, you have reason to rejoice beyond your personal inconvenience.**

God clears his throat and announces; Joseph the whole world has reason to rejoice. Don't make it about you. Mary carries the Savior of the world. She carries God's son in her womb, the angel announces.

²¹ She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." (Matt 1-ESV)

How to keep joy alive? Choose to offer grace and let it go.

A bead of sweat forms below Joseph's beard. It is time for Joseph to make a decision. Preserve his reputation in the community or kiss his reputation good-bye. The decision is made. And verse 24-25 tells us of Joseph's history making decisions.

²⁴ When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, ²⁵ but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus. (Matt 1-ESV)

Joseph swapped his Torah studies for a pregnant fiancée' and an illegitimate child in the eyes of the world and made the biggest decision of his life.

Joseph placed God's plan ahead of his.

Don't make the mistake another minute of trying to control what God is already in control of. You are fighting a losing battle to wrestle with God about control of your life. Since God's plans will always prevail, you will just get a black eye, bruised arm or a headache trying to stop God's plans from becoming a reality.

Joseph swapped his reputation for a rattle.

Joseph heads over to Mary's house, he has good news to tell her. He understands. He accepts. He is excited about the future together.

He is ready to do this. Because, he believes down to his toes, God's Got This. Joseph arrives at Mary's and tells her...

The child is God's. The plan is God's. The idea is God's. Forgive me for doubting you Mary, even for a minute.

The questions that people will ask about the pregnancy - I can handle. The snickers and the gossip - I can handle.

And if our future is still hard, and if God calls us to more difficulties (late term pregnancy travels or lack of adequate accommodations or even a humble stable, I am ready to walk this road)

I will be at your side when Jesus is born. Not only a child, but birth to the Messiah. Not just an infant, but God himself.

...Who has come to take away the sins of the world.

Sin put you in prison. Sin has locked you behind bars of guilt, shame, deception, and fear. You are shackled to the wall of misery and pain.

Then Jesus came and paid your bail. He served your time. He satisfied the penalty with his death as a payment to set you free.

Jesus died for you and when you cast your lot with him, your old nature dies too.

One day you will die. If a heaven-sent substitute has died for you and you have trusted Jesus Christ, your death will really mean your resurrection.

Jesus death on the cross, means the claim that sin has on your life is broken. You are free.

⁵ For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶ We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. (Rom 6-ESV)

Surrender your life today to the only God-Man Jesus Christ that can keep from an eternity of torment away from Christ and receive his forgiveness of sins and eternal life. God offers this warning!

⁹ They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might. (2 Thess 1:9-NIV)

Come and stand before Him in prayer this Christmas 2025 and receive God's grace and let it go. He is welcoming you. Your hurt. Your bitterness. Your resentment. Bring it to Him.

And in exchange, receive Christmas JOY. Christ's Joy. Salvation Joy!

JOY

Pastor Ken

December 21, 2025

It is your choice to rejoice!

Thieves of Christmas Joy: Fear, Hurt and Worry

¹⁸ This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

²⁰ But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." (Matt 1-NIV)

Everyone sitting here this Christmas experience hurts either from life's events or hurt from other people. When hurt metastasizes like cancer it spreads to vital emotional, physical, and spiritual parts of your life and can become bitterness and resentment. Now, listen...

You cannot be resentful and joyful at the same time.

Where does the cancer of resentment come from? You have been **hurt**. You have been **wounded**. You have been **injured**. Everyone in the sanctuary and everyone listening online has been hurt at some time. **Let me ask again:**

Where do resentment and bitterness come from? Being hurt!

Some of you have been wounded by people's words, and maybe you have carried those hurts for years, for some even since childhood.

Some of you have been wounded physically, some of you have been abused sexually.

I am sorry that has happened to you, God knows your hurt.

Some of you have been abused emotionally with words of guilt, anger, and intimidation.

Some of you have been wounded in relationships with mistrust and betrayal.

I am sorry that has happened to you, God knows your hurt.

Some of you have been wounded maritally by adultery, pornography, iPhone affairs, divorce, workaholism, unfaithfulness. Even sudden death of a spouse can cause deep seeded hurts.

Some of you have been wounded and hurt financially when a spouse mismanaged money, foreclosures stole your family home, bankruptcy, gambling addictions, overspending addictions.

I am sorry that has happened to you, God knows your hurt.

Some of you have been wounded and hurt deeply through prejudice, racism, bigotry against you.

Some of you have been wounded and hurt through rejection, failure, job firings and mistreatment by work associates and bosses.

I am sorry that has happened to you, God knows your hurt.

Regardless of how you have been hurt, let God help you heal or else! Or else what?

Your hurt will metastasize like cancer and spread into every vital area of your life causing your body, soul and spirit to become crippled, deformed or even shut down all together.

This world is filled with sin, and we all sin as the Bible tells us, *"All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God."* (Romans 3:23)

Because we have sinned against God, this causes us to hurt each other. We hurt each other all the time. Sometimes this happens intentionally and at other times unintentionally.

Now, would you agree with this? You have been hurt by others, and you have hurt others. Agreed? I need a little more consensus in the room, to continue. Ok, there it is, **that honest love for truth.**

Acknowledging truth is what leads to healing, it leads to trust, and it leads to God's blessing and favor. Resentment from hurt, will keep the joy out of your life.

Again, you cannot be resentful and joyful at the same time.

Bitterness and resentment keep billions of people from experiencing joy in life. We all know people who have been hurt, they let it manifest into bitterness and resentment, and some have carried that all their life.

How do I know if a person is ready at death to step into life beyond life? They are either at peace or bitter and angry at life.

Since we are talking about a little married couple in Israel, who suddenly have been selected by God to deliver a child into the world, the savior of the world I want to offer you this question:

Have you ever considered how hurt Joseph was when he found out Mary was pregnant?

Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. (Matt 1:18)

If any part of life has its share of hurt and resentment stealing our joy, it is marriage.

Since I love laughter, and marriage has its share of examples of hurt turning in bitterness, let me give you a few examples before I reveal **how Joseph was hurt** when he found out his soon-to-be wife was pregnant, and he was not the father.

One couple had a blow up, that was over the top. The husband was a contractor. He possessed master-level building skills. Anger and conflict grew. Anger and conflict escalated. Anger and conflict went off the rails.

When it went off the rails, he grabbed for the nails.

As a builder, after they had a fight one day, he nailed his wife into the house. Literally. The builder-husband nailed every door and window tightly shut. He then went to work. The wife could not get out for a long time. You are wondering does this type of stuff really happen in a marriage? Yea, when hurt turns into bitterness.

A man in Texas remains married to his wife but would not speak to her for 40 years. Now that is some hurt that has manifested into resentment for a lot of years.

The fight was over how much money she spent on sugar at the grocery store. One day he took out a lumber saw and sawed the entire house exactly in half. The husband nailed up planks to cover the raw sides of the house. He then moved one side of the house behind some scrawny pine trees on his Texas property.

He moved his portion of the house to where he could not see her half of the house from his window. There the two, husband and wife, lived out the rest of their days in separate houses.

Neither is willing to **break the cycle** of hurt, bitterness and resentment that began 40 years ago. **Neither will forgive. Neither will let go.**

Pride can cause all of us to become unmovable, unforgivable, unyielding, and unrelatable, some would...

... rather live in falsehood, than freedom,

...rather live in torture, than togetherness,

...rather live in unforgiveness, than forgiveness,

...rather be resentful, than joyful.

So, many walk around in life carrying the weight of unresolved hurt. Unresolved bitterness. Unresolved injury. Unresolved unforgiveness. Unresolved anger. Announcing to anyone who will listen, **life is not fair.**

So, the hurt continues to cause pain today. When this happens, we are hindered from experiencing JOY.

When you surrender to a prison of hurt, eventually it becomes bitterness and resentment. Don't you think it is time to stop spraying the icy chills of resentment toward those you love? You cannot be resentful and joyful at the same time.

Again, have you ever considered how hurt Joseph was when he found out Mary was pregnant?

The wife to be, the women he loves, they have never had sex, is pregnant. Imagine this scene:

Hey sweetie, Joseph I have some news. I am pregnant.

How betrayed would you feel if your fiancée' told you she was pregnant, and you were not the father of the child?

How wounded would you be by that announcement? You are planning your wedding, working overtime at the carpentry shop to save some shekels for a little tent on the outskirts of Nazareth.

Your soon-to-be wife is telling you she is pregnant. How would you feel? You would feel just like Joseph did, you would feel betrayed, cheated, he was extremely hurt and disappointed.

How many of you know these feelings from being hurt?

How Quickly Joseph's Life Changed

*One day he was planning for a life with Mary and the next moment her reputation was tarnished with an out-of-wedlock pregnancy.

Is this how you planned to tell your family about being a dad? Are your parents going to understand the supernatural nature of that birth-virgin birth?

*One day he is a carpenter and the next he is a caretaker.

A finished carpenter at that, well respected in the community and now you must think about your reputation, your community standing. What will the guys at the gym think?

*One day he was living in Nazareth and the next he was returning to Bethlehem because of a census.

How quickly Joseph's life changed, one day Joseph has his whole marriage and family mapped out, and the next his fiancée' is blemished and tarnished.

How quickly Joseph's life changes, and yet, he gives up his life for Jesus' life. And isn't that what God asks all of us to do?

How about you? Are you willing to give up your life for Jesus?

You will be frustrated, fretting and fleeing God's purposes until you give up your hurt, bitterness, and resentment. Do you realize God has a plan and purpose, even for our pain? Hurt. Betrayal. Woundedness.

So many of life events seems accidental, incidental, or even coincidental but they are really God-cidental.

Joseph does not know God was at work delivering personally on a plan that was designed to save the world from sin. Years later one of Jesus followers make that idea blindingly clear in John 3:16,

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16-NIV)

Joseph has no idea that God is testing him to see if he will be a loving husband to Mary and a good father to Jesus.

God often allows you to find yourself in impossible situations so God can show you a God-possible solution.

Put yourself in Joseph's shoes.

What if you could live your life with the confidence God is guiding every confusing and hurtful event for his glory and your growth. You can.

What if you could extract the proper meaning from every painful and pleasurable event? You can.

Let me remind you how God does this. *Our God is in the Heaven. He does whatever he pleases. (Psalm 115:3-NET)*

Unless you accept that God either causes or permits everything that happens you will continue to be hurt everyday of your life.

You will continue to become resentful and bitter. And most of all you will miss out on the Joy God wants you to experience.

Are you anxious? *When anxiety was great within me, your consolation **brought me joy.** Psalm 94:19 (NIV)*

Are you hurt and need God's help? For you have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings I will **sing for joy.** My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me. (Psalm 63:7-8-ESV)

Are you facing sadness, loss, and grief? *And do not be grieved, for the **joy of the Lord is your strength.**" (Nehemiah 8:10b-ESV)*

In a few minutes, those who want to give their hurt, bitterness, resentment to God, will be invited to come and stand with me at the altar. For many you will be letting go of some hurt that has been hampering and hurting you for years. So, don't let pride, ego, or embarrassment rob you of the visitation that God wants to offer you this Christmas in the form **joy unspeakable and fully of glory!**

Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, (1 Peter 1:8-ESV)

Look at that verse, God will give you a kind of joy that is fully of his very power, presence, and protection. If our great God is a joy giving God, then why would you not want that? If God already knows your hurts, habits and hang ups and He wants to carry them, cancel them and even redeem them or remove them, then why would you stay in your current state of hurt when you can have healing?

Be ready to move in a few minutes!

Would anybody be interested in returning a little Joy this Christmas to your life?

How to keep joy alive? Place God's plan above yours.

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Some of you have been wounded and hurt deeply through prejudice, racism, bigotry against you.

Some of you have been wounded and hurt through rejection, failure, job firings and mistreatment by work associates and bosses.

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Regardless of how you have been hurt, let God help you heal or else! Or else what?

Your hurt will metastasize like cancer and spread into every vital area of your life causing your body, soul and spirit to become crippled, deformed or even shut down all together.

This world is filled with sin, and we all sin as the Bible tells us, *"All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God."* (Romans 3:23)

Because we have sinned against God, this causes us to hurt each other. We hurt each other all the time. Sometimes this happens intentionally and at other times unintentionally.

Now, would you agree with this? You have been hurt by others, and you have hurt others. Agreed? I need a little more consensus in the room, to continue. Ok, there it is, **that honest love for truth.**

Acknowledging truth is what leads to healing, it leads to trust, and it leads to God's blessing and favor. Resentment from hurt, will keep the joy out of your life.

Again, you cannot be resentful and joyful at the same time.

Bitterness and resentment keep billions of people from experiencing joy in life. We all know people who have been hurt, they let it manifest into bitterness and resentment, and some have carried that all their life.

How do I know if a person is ready at death to step into life beyond life? They are either at peace or bitter and angry at life.

Since we are talking about a little married couple in Israel, who suddenly have been selected by God to deliver a child into the world, the savior of the world I want to offer you this question:

Have you ever considered how hurt Joseph was when he found out Mary was pregnant?

Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. (Matt 1:18)

If any part of life has its share of hurt and resentment stealing our joy, it is marriage.

Since I love laughter, and marriage has its share of examples of hurt turning in bitterness, let me give you a few examples before I reveal **how Joseph was hurt** when he found out his soon-to-be wife was pregnant, and he was not the father.

One couple had a blow up, that was over the top. The husband was a contractor. He possessed master-level building skills. Anger and conflict grew. Anger and conflict escalated. Anger and conflict went off the rails.

When it went off the rails, he grabbed for the nails.

As a builder, after they had a fight one day, he nailed his wife into the house. Literally. The builder-husband nailed every door and window tightly shut. He then went to work. The wife could not get out for a long time. You are wondering does this type of stuff really happen in a marriage? Yea, when hurt turns into bitterness.

A man in Texas remains married to his wife but would not speak to her for 40 years. Now that is some hurt that has manifested into resentment for a lot of years.

The fight was over how much money she spent on sugar at the grocery store. One day he took out a lumber saw and sawed the entire house exactly in half. The husband nailed up planks to cover the raw sides of the house. He then moved one side of the house behind some scrawny pine trees on his Texas property.

He moved his portion of the house to where he could not see her half of the house from his window. There the two, husband and wife, lived out the rest of their days in separate houses.

Neither is willing to **break the cycle** of hurt, bitterness and resentment that began 40 years ago. **Neither will forgive. Neither will let go.**

Pride can cause all of us to become unmovable, unforgivable, unyielding, and unrelatable, some would...

... rather live in falsehood, than freedom,

...rather live in torture, than togetherness,

...rather live in unforgiveness, than forgiveness,

...rather be resentful, than joyful.

So, many walk around in life carrying the weight of unresolved hurt. Unresolved bitterness. Unresolved injury. Unresolved unforgiveness. Unresolved anger. Announcing to anyone who will listen, **life is not fair.**

So, the hurt continues to cause pain today. When this happens, we are hindered from experiencing JOY.

When you surrender to a prison of hurt, eventually it becomes bitterness and resentment. Don't you think it is time to stop spraying the icy chills of resentment toward those you love? You cannot be resentful and joyful at the same time.

Again, have you ever considered how hurt Joseph was when he found out Mary was pregnant?

The wife to be, the women he loves, they have never had sex, is pregnant. Imagine this scene:

Hey sweetie, Joseph I have some news. I am pregnant.

How betrayed would you feel if your fiancée' told you she was pregnant, and you were not the father of the child?

How wounded would you be by that announcement? You are planning your wedding, working overtime at the carpentry shop to save some shekels for a little tent on the outskirts of Nazareth.

Your soon-to-be wife is telling you she is pregnant. How would you feel? You would feel just like Joseph did, you would feel betrayed, cheated, he was extremely hurt and disappointed.

How many of you know these feelings from being hurt?

How Quickly Joseph's Life Changed

*One day he was planning for a life with Mary and the next moment her reputation was tarnished with an out-of-wedlock pregnancy.

Is this how you planned to tell your family about being a dad? Are your parents going to understand the supernatural nature of that birth-virgin birth?

*One day he is a carpenter and the next he is a caretaker.

A finished carpenter at that, well respected in the community and now you must think about your reputation, your community standing. What will the guys at the gym think?

*One day he was living in Nazareth and the next he was returning to Bethlehem because of a census.

How quickly Joseph's life changed, one day Joseph has his whole marriage and family mapped out, and the next his fiancée' is blemished and tarnished.

How quickly Joseph's life changes, and yet, he gives up his life for Jesus' life. And isn't that what God asks all of us to do?

How about you? Are you willing to give up your life for Jesus?

You will be frustrated, fretting and fleeing God's purposes until you give up your hurt, bitterness, and resentment. Do you realize God has a plan and purpose, even for our pain? Hurt. Betrayal. Woundedness.

So many of life events seems accidental, incidental, or even coincidental but they are really God-cidental.

Joseph does not know God was at work delivering personally on a plan that was designed to save the world from sin. Years later one of Jesus followers make that idea blindingly clear in John 3:16,

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16-NIV)

Joseph has no idea that God is testing him to see if he will be a loving husband to Mary and a good father to Jesus.

God often allows you to find yourself in impossible situations so God can show you a God-possible solution.

Put yourself in Joseph's shoes.

What if you could live your life with the confidence God is guiding every confusing and hurtful event for his glory and your growth. You can.

What if you could extract the proper meaning from every painful and pleasurable event? You can.

Let me remind you how God does this. *Our God is in the Heaven. He does whatever he pleases. (Psalm 115:3-NET)*

Unless you accept that God either causes or permits everything that happens you will continue to be hurt everyday of your life.

You will continue to become resentful and bitter. And most of all you will miss out on the Joy God wants you to experience.

Are you anxious? *When anxiety was great within me, your consolation **brought me joy.** Psalm 94:19 (NIV)*

Are you hurt and need God's help? For you have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings I will **sing for joy.** My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me. (Psalm 63:7-8-ESV)

Are you facing sadness, loss, and grief? *And do not be grieved, for the **joy of the Lord is your strength.**" (Nehemiah 8:10b-ESV)*

In a few minutes, those who want to give their hurt, bitterness, resentment to God, will be invited to come and stand with me at the altar. For many you will be letting go of some hurt that has been hampering and hurting you for years. So, don't let pride, ego, or embarrassment rob you of the visitation that God wants to offer you this Christmas in the form **joy unspeakable and fully of glory!**

Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, (1 Peter 1:8-ESV)

Look at that verse, God will give you a kind of joy that is fully of his very power, presence, and protection. If our great God is a joy giving God, then why would you not want that? If God already knows your hurts, habits and hang ups and He wants to carry them, cancel them and even redeem them or remove them, then why would you stay in your current state of hurt when you can have healing?

Be ready to move in a few minutes!

Would anybody be interested in returning a little Joy this Christmas to your life?

How to keep joy alive? Place God's plan above yours.

For Joseph the news of Mary's pregnancy was a real burden, it busted up Joseph's plans and left him looking bad in the eyes of the synagogue community.

In Torah school Joseph aced the test that included the 10 commandments **thou shalt not commit adultery.**

In Judaism and the time of the New Testament gospels, a pledge to be married was legally binding. Only divorce could break it. And infidelity at this point was considered adultery.

Mary was pregnant and it should have been good news. But it was news that hurt Joseph. **It drained the life of joy out of Joe!**

You can hardly blame Joseph for considering divorce when he discovered that, to no fault of his own, Mary is pregnant. For a few fleeting minutes, perhaps hours Joseph wanted to quietly divorce Mary.

¹⁹ Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. (Matt 1-NIV)

Who would blame Joseph for not wanting to divorce her?

How to keep joy alive? Choose to please God instead of others.

Joseph is righteous and godly. He lives by the law. The bible text calls him a “just man.” Our story identifies Joseph’s character and competency. Joseph’s character was that he was a “just man.” Joseph is a community spiritual leader. Like a church elder. Like a Timothy to the apostle Paul.

Of all the people in the Christmas story, Joseph may be one of the most misunderstood. People often assume Joseph became angry when he found out Mary was pregnant and hurried to end the relationship to spare himself embarrassment.

Joseph wanted no part in this. He decided instead to “divorce her quietly” and spare Mary the public spectacle. As a righteous man, he would have been compelled to pursue this public action. And yet, Matthew 1:19 tells us Joseph did not want to expose Mary to this public trial. **Compassion wins out over the letter of the law.**

Joseph was a righteous man. And Mary was “the Lord’s servant” (Luke 1:38). Both are great examples for us today.

Of course, they were not imperfect humans, just as we are not. But they were faithful. And because of their faithfulness, God chose Joseph and Mary to play a role in His glorious story of salvation.

God's choice of you, follows the same pattern 4 God's choice of Joseph.

Matthew gospel also, highlights **Joseph's competency**, Jesus earthly father was a craftsman. He was a small-town carpenter from a 1-hump camel town on the edge of boredom called Nazareth. Years later a sharpened tongue disciple would eat those words, as he spouted off about the place of Jesus birth, "can anything good come from Nazareth." *"Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip. (John 1:46-ESV)*

I can imagine when the disciples got bored while waiting in the upper for the Holy Spirit's arrival, they would exchange stories of their years with Jesus. The disciples would often chide Philip, as they reminded him how he stuck his foot in his mouth about the **birthplace of Jesus**.

How to keep joy alive? Don't let unresolved hurt rob you of joy.

Is Joseph the right choice? Doesn't God have some options?

What about a lawyer from the Sanhedrin? Why not a high priest that has stood in the presence of God in the temple offering sacrifices?

Why Joseph? The answer lies in part because of what Joseph was willing to give up for Jesus. Joseph would not let his hurt keep him from winning the **baby Jesus dad** contest.

Joseph chooses love over the law.

Joseph chooses responsibility over reputation.

Joseph chose fatherhood over fleeing.

The law says stone her, love says forgive her. Joseph is caught in the middle and uncertain what to do. Joseph can control his future, or he can let God control his future. The only thing he lacks is an answer from heaven as to what to do. Suddenly, God shows up. Joseph has been schooled on prayer. He knew where to turn.

²⁰ But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. (Matt 1-NIV)

Joseph response to the angel, well that makes sense. I knew all along the Holy Spirit had something to do with this. Joseph is a bundle of nerves trying to solve this dilemma. Joseph is stuck between a rock and hard spot. Clearly Joseph is conflicted. He is perplexed.

Who would Joseph not be frustrated as to what to do, when there is no light from above?

No revelation to the heart.

When God is silent, and you are anxious. Even fearful

The more Joseph thinks about how impossible the situation is, how unfair the situation is, how he has no control over his future, how hurt he is. It would be easy to become anxious. Bitter. Resentful. To become depressed. And rehearsing the dilemma over-and-over never helps.

The meaning of the words, “**Joseph had considered this,**” tells us that Joseph had been at this for some time, his mind was made up, and he was ready to go through with the plan to divorce Mary.

Suddenly. Shockingly. Surprisingly.

God arrives on the scene in the form of a heavenly visitation.

*...behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear **to take Mary** as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. (Matt 1-NIV)*

Joseph, you have been troubled long enough. You have agonized over this enough. It is time to STOP. Do not be afraid another moment. Some of you are afraid to move ahead with God because of fear. God’s word to you today is to STOP. Do not be afraid. Move ahead with God’s plan.

Joseph do not be afraid to “para-lambano” (to take Mary) as your wife. To take her to yourself. To lead her home. Take her into your life and love.

Mary's belling is growing. Do not let that be a concern to you. It is time for your love for her to start growing. **Joseph, you have reason to rejoice beyond your personal inconvenience.**

God clears his throat and announces; Joseph the whole world has reason to rejoice. Don't make it about you. Mary carries the Savior of the world. She carries God's son in her womb, the angel announces.

²¹ She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." (Matt 1-ESV)

How to keep joy alive? Choose to offer grace and let it go.

A bead of sweat forms below Joseph's beard. It is time for Joseph to make a decision. Preserve his reputation in the community or kiss his reputation good-bye. The decision is made. And verse 24-25 tells us of Joseph's history making decisions.

²⁴ When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, ²⁵ but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus. (Matt 1-ESV)

Joseph swapped his Torah studies for a pregnant fiancée' and an illegitimate child in the eyes of the world and made the biggest decision of his life.

Joseph placed God's plan ahead of his.

Don't make the mistake another minute of trying to control what God is already in control of. You are fighting a losing battle to wrestle with God about control of your life. Since God's plans will always prevail, you will just get a black eye, bruised arm or a headache trying to stop God's plans from becoming a reality.

Joseph swapped his reputation for a rattle.

Joseph heads over to Mary's house, he has good news to tell her. He understands. He accepts. He is excited about the future together.

He is ready to do this. Because, he believes down to his toes, God's Got This. Joseph arrives at Mary's and tells her...

The child is God's. The plan is God's. The idea is God's. Forgive me for doubting you Mary, even for a minute.

The questions that people will ask about the pregnancy - I can handle. The snickers and the gossip - I can handle.

And if our future is still hard, and if God calls us to more difficulties (late term pregnancy travels or lack of adequate accommodations or even a humble stable, I am ready to walk this road)

I will be at your side when Jesus is born. Not only a child, but birth to the Messiah. Not just an infant, but God himself.

...Who has come to take away the sins of the world.

Sin put you in prison. Sin has locked you behind bars of guilt, shame, deception, and fear. You are shackled to the wall of misery and pain.

Then Jesus came and paid your bail. He served your time. He satisfied the penalty with his death as a payment to set you free.

Jesus died for you and when you cast your lot with him, your old nature dies too.

One day you will die. If a heaven-sent substitute has died for you and you have trusted Jesus Christ, your death will really mean your resurrection.

Jesus death on the cross, means the claim that sin has on your life is broken. You are free.

⁵ For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶ We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. (Rom 6-ESV)

Surrender your life today to the only God-Man Jesus Christ that can keep from an eternity of torment away from Christ and receive his forgiveness of sins and eternal life. God offers this warning!

⁹ They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might. (2 Thess 1:9-NIV)

Come and stand before Him in prayer this Christmas 2025 and receive God's grace and let it go. He is welcoming you. Your hurt. Your bitterness. Your resentment. Bring it to Him.

And in exchange, receive Christmas JOY. Christ's Joy. Salvation Joy!

JOY

Pastor Ken

December 21, 2025

It is your choice to rejoice!

Thieves of Christmas Joy: Fear, Hurt and Worry

¹⁸ This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

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Everyone sitting here this Christmas experience hurts either from life's events or hurt from other people. When hurt metastasizes like cancer it spreads to vital emotional, physical, and spiritual parts of your life and can become bitterness and resentment. Now, listen...

You cannot be resentful and joyful at the same time.

Where does the cancer of resentment come from? You have been **hurt**. You have been **wounded**. You have been **injured**. Everyone in the sanctuary and everyone listening online has been hurt at some time. **Let me ask again:**

Where do resentment and bitterness come from? Being hurt!

Some of you have been wounded by people's words, and maybe you have carried those hurts for years, for some even since childhood.

Some of you have been wounded physically, some of you have been abused sexually.

I am sorry that has happened to you, God knows your hurt.

Some of you have been abused emotionally with words of guilt, anger, and intimidation.

Some of you have been wounded in relationships with mistrust and betrayal.

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Some of you have been wounded maritally by adultery, pornography, iPhone affairs, divorce, workaholism, unfaithfulness. Even sudden death of a spouse can cause deep seeded hurts.

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Matthew gospel also, highlights **Joseph's competency**, Jesus earthly father was a craftsman. He was a small-town carpenter from a 1-hump camel town on the edge of boredom called Nazareth. Years later a sharpened tongue disciple would eat those words, as he spouted off about the place of Jesus birth, "can anything good come from Nazareth." *"Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip. (John 1:46-ESV)*

I can imagine when the disciples got bored while waiting in the upper for the Holy Spirit's arrival, they would exchange stories of their years with Jesus. The disciples would often chide Philip, as they reminded him how he stuck his foot in his mouth about the **birthplace of Jesus**.

How to keep joy alive? Don't let unresolved hurt rob you of joy.

Is Joseph the right choice? Doesn't God have some options?

What about a lawyer from the Sanhedrin? Why not a high priest that has stood in the presence of God in the temple offering sacrifices?

Why Joseph? The answer lies in part because of what Joseph was willing to give up for Jesus. Joseph would not let his hurt keep him from winning the **baby Jesus dad** contest.

Joseph chooses love over the law.

Joseph chooses responsibility over reputation.

Joseph chose fatherhood over fleeing.

The law says stone her, love says forgive her. Joseph is caught in the middle and uncertain what to do. Joseph can control his future, or he can let God control his future. The only thing he lacks is an answer from heaven as to what to do. Suddenly, God shows up. Joseph has been schooled on prayer. He knew where to turn.

²⁰ But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. (Matt 1-NIV)

Joseph response to the angel, well that makes sense. I knew all along the Holy Spirit had something to do with this. Joseph is a bundle of nerves trying to solve this dilemma. Joseph is stuck between a rock and hard spot. Clearly Joseph is conflicted. He is perplexed.

Who would Joseph not be frustrated as to what to do, when there is no light from above?

No revelation to the heart.

When God is silent, and you are anxious. Even fearful

The more Joseph thinks about how impossible the situation is, how unfair the situation is, how he has no control over his future, how hurt he is. It would be easy to become anxious. Bitter. Resentful. To become depressed. And rehearsing the dilemma over-and-over never helps.

The meaning of the words, “**Joseph had considered this,**” tells us that Joseph had been at this for some time, his mind was made up, and he was ready to go through with the plan to divorce Mary.

Suddenly. Shockingly. Surprisingly.

God arrives on the scene in the form of a heavenly visitation.

*...behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear **to take Mary** as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. (Matt 1-NIV)*

Joseph, you have been troubled long enough. You have agonized over this enough. It is time to STOP. Do not be afraid another moment. Some of you are afraid to move ahead with God because of fear. God’s word to you today is to STOP. Do not be afraid. Move ahead with God’s plan.

Joseph do not be afraid to “para-lambano” (to take Mary) as your wife. To take her to yourself. To lead her home. Take her into your life and love.

Mary's belling is growing. Do not let that be a concern to you. It is time for your love for her to start growing. **Joseph, you have reason to rejoice beyond your personal inconvenience.**

God clears his throat and announces; Joseph the whole world has reason to rejoice. Don't make it about you. Mary carries the Savior of the world. She carries God's son in her womb, the angel announces.

²¹ She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." (Matt 1-ESV)

How to keep joy alive? Choose to offer grace and let it go.

A bead of sweat forms below Joseph's beard. It is time for Joseph to make a decision. Preserve his reputation in the community or kiss his reputation good-bye. The decision is made. And verse 24-25 tells us of Joseph's history making decisions.

²⁴ When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, ²⁵ but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus. (Matt 1-ESV)

Joseph swapped his Torah studies for a pregnant fiancée' and an illegitimate child in the eyes of the world and made the biggest decision of his life.

Joseph placed God's plan ahead of his.

Don't make the mistake another minute of trying to control what God is already in control of. You are fighting a losing battle to wrestle with God about control of your life. Since God's plans will always prevail, you will just get a black eye, bruised arm or a headache trying to stop God's plans from becoming a reality.

Joseph swapped his reputation for a rattle.

Joseph heads over to Mary's house, he has good news to tell her. He understands. He accepts. He is excited about the future together.

He is ready to do this. Because, he believes down to his toes, God's Got This. Joseph arrives at Mary's and tells her...

The child is God's. The plan is God's. The idea is God's. Forgive me for doubting you Mary, even for a minute.

The questions that people will ask about the pregnancy - I can handle. The snickers and the gossip - I can handle.

And if our future is still hard, and if God calls us to more difficulties (late term pregnancy travels or lack of adequate accommodations or even a humble stable, I am ready to walk this road)

I will be at your side when Jesus is born. Not only a child, but birth to the Messiah. Not just an infant, but God himself.

...Who has come to take away the sins of the world.

Sin put you in prison. Sin has locked you behind bars of guilt, shame, deception, and fear. You are shackled to the wall of misery and pain.

Then Jesus came and paid your bail. He served your time. He satisfied the penalty with his death as a payment to set you free.

Jesus died for you and when you cast your lot with him, your old nature dies too.

One day you will die. If a heaven-sent substitute has died for you and you have trusted Jesus Christ, your death will really mean your resurrection.

Jesus death on the cross, means the claim that sin has on your life is broken. You are free.

⁵ For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶ We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. (Rom 6-ESV)

Surrender your life today to the only God-Man Jesus Christ that can keep from an eternity of torment away from Christ and receive his forgiveness of sins and eternal life. God offers this warning!

⁹ They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might. (2 Thess 1:9-NIV)

Come and stand before Him in prayer this Christmas 2025 and receive God's grace and let it go. He is welcoming you. Your hurt. Your bitterness. Your resentment. Bring it to Him.

And in exchange, receive Christmas JOY. Christ's Joy. Salvation Joy!

JOY

Pastor Ken

December 21, 2025

It is your choice to rejoice!

Thieves of Christmas Joy: Fear, Hurt and Worry

¹⁸ This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

²⁰ But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." (Matt 1-NIV)

Everyone sitting here this Christmas experience hurts either from life's events or hurt from other people. When hurt metastasizes like cancer it spreads to vital emotional, physical, and spiritual parts of your life and can become bitterness and resentment. Now, listen...

You cannot be resentful and joyful at the same time.

Where does the cancer of resentment come from? You have been **hurt**. You have been **wounded**. You have been **injured**. Everyone in the sanctuary and everyone listening online has been hurt at some time. **Let me ask again:**

Where do resentment and bitterness come from? Being hurt!

Some of you have been wounded by people's words, and maybe you have carried those hurts for years, for some even since childhood.

Some of you have been wounded physically, some of you have been abused sexually.

I am sorry that has happened to you, God knows your hurt.

Some of you have been abused emotionally with words of guilt, anger, and intimidation.

Some of you have been wounded in relationships with mistrust and betrayal.

I am sorry that has happened to you, God knows your hurt.

Some of you have been wounded maritally by adultery, pornography, iPhone affairs, divorce, workaholism, unfaithfulness. Even sudden death of a spouse can cause deep seeded hurts.

Some of you have been wounded and hurt financially when a spouse mismanaged money, foreclosures stole your family home, bankruptcy, gambling addictions, overspending addictions.

I am sorry that has happened to you, God knows your hurt.

Some of you have been wounded and hurt deeply through prejudice, racism, bigotry against you.

Some of you have been wounded and hurt through rejection, failure, job firings and mistreatment by work associates and bosses.

I am sorry that has happened to you, God knows your hurt.

Regardless of how you have been hurt, let God help you heal or else! Or else what?

Your hurt will metastasize like cancer and spread into every vital area of your life causing your body, soul and spirit to become crippled, deformed or even shut down all together.

This world is filled with sin, and we all sin as the Bible tells us, *"All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God."* (Romans 3:23)

Because we have sinned against God, this causes us to hurt each other. We hurt each other all the time. Sometimes this happens intentionally and at other times unintentionally.

Now, would you agree with this? You have been hurt by others, and you have hurt others. Agreed? I need a little more consensus in the room, to continue. Ok, there it is, **that honest love for truth.**

Acknowledging truth is what leads to healing, it leads to trust, and it leads to God's blessing and favor. Resentment from hurt, will keep the joy out of your life.

Again, you cannot be resentful and joyful at the same time.

Bitterness and resentment keep billions of people from experiencing joy in life. We all know people who have been hurt, they let it manifest into bitterness and resentment, and some have carried that all their life.

How do I know if a person is ready at death to step into life beyond life? They are either at peace or bitter and angry at life.

Since we are talking about a little married couple in Israel, who suddenly have been selected by God to deliver a child into the world, the savior of the world I want to offer you this question:

Have you ever considered how hurt Joseph was when he found out Mary was pregnant?

Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. (Matt 1:18)

If any part of life has its share of hurt and resentment stealing our joy, it is marriage.

Since I love laughter, and marriage has its share of examples of hurt turning in bitterness, let me give you a few examples before I reveal **how Joseph was hurt** when he found out his soon-to-be wife was pregnant, and he was not the father.

One couple had a blow up, that was over the top. The husband was a contractor. He possessed master-level building skills. Anger and conflict grew. Anger and conflict escalated. Anger and conflict went off the rails.

When it went off the rails, he grabbed for the nails.

As a builder, after they had a fight one day, he nailed his wife into the house. Literally. The builder-husband nailed every door and window tightly shut. He then went to work. The wife could not get out for a long time. You are wondering does this type of stuff really happen in a marriage? Yea, when hurt turns into bitterness.

A man in Texas remains married to his wife but would not speak to her for 40 years. Now that is some hurt that has manifested into resentment for a lot of years.

The fight was over how much money she spent on sugar at the grocery store. One day he took out a lumber saw and sawed the entire house exactly in half. The husband nailed up planks to cover the raw sides of the house. He then moved one side of the house behind some scrawny pine trees on his Texas property.

He moved his portion of the house to where he could not see her half of the house from his window. There the two, husband and wife, lived out the rest of their days in separate houses.

Neither is willing to **break the cycle** of hurt, bitterness and resentment that began 40 years ago. **Neither will forgive. Neither will let go.**

Pride can cause all of us to become unmovable, unforgivable, unyielding, and unrelatable, some would...

... rather live in falsehood, than freedom,

...rather live in torture, than togetherness,

...rather live in unforgiveness, than forgiveness,

...rather be resentful, than joyful.

So, many walk around in life carrying the weight of unresolved hurt. Unresolved bitterness. Unresolved injury. Unresolved unforgiveness. Unresolved anger. Announcing to anyone who will listen, **life is not fair.**

So, the hurt continues to cause pain today. When this happens, we are hindered from experiencing JOY.

When you surrender to a prison of hurt, eventually it becomes bitterness and resentment. Don't you think it is time to stop spraying the icy chills of resentment toward those you love? You cannot be resentful and joyful at the same time.

Again, have you ever considered how hurt Joseph was when he found out Mary was pregnant?

The wife to be, the women he loves, they have never had sex, is pregnant. Imagine this scene:

Hey sweetie, Joseph I have some news. I am pregnant.

How betrayed would you feel if your fiancée' told you she was pregnant, and you were not the father of the child?

How wounded would you be by that announcement? You are planning your wedding, working overtime at the carpentry shop to save some shekels for a little tent on the outskirts of Nazareth.

Your soon-to-be wife is telling you she is pregnant. How would you feel? You would feel just like Joseph did, you would feel betrayed, cheated, he was extremely hurt and disappointed.

How many of you know these feelings from being hurt?

How Quickly Joseph's Life Changed

*One day he was planning for a life with Mary and the next moment her reputation was tarnished with an out-of-wedlock pregnancy.

Is this how you planned to tell your family about being a dad? Are your parents going to understand the supernatural nature of that birth-virgin birth?

*One day he is a carpenter and the next he is a caretaker.

A finished carpenter at that, well respected in the community and now you must think about your reputation, your community standing. What will the guys at the gym think?

*One day he was living in Nazareth and the next he was returning to Bethlehem because of a census.

How quickly Joseph's life changed, one day Joseph has his whole marriage and family mapped out, and the next his fiancée' is blemished and tarnished.

How quickly Joseph's life changes, and yet, he gives up his life for Jesus' life. And isn't that what God asks all of us to do?

How about you? Are you willing to give up your life for Jesus?

You will be frustrated, fretting and fleeing God's purposes until you give up your hurt, bitterness, and resentment. Do you realize God has a plan and purpose, even for our pain? Hurt. Betrayal. Woundedness.

So many of life events seems accidental, incidental, or even coincidental but they are really God-cidental.

Joseph does not know God was at work delivering personally on a plan that was designed to save the world from sin. Years later one of Jesus followers make that idea blindingly clear in John 3:16,

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16-NIV)

Joseph has no idea that God is testing him to see if he will be a loving husband to Mary and a good father to Jesus.

God often allows you to find yourself in impossible situations so God can show you a God-possible solution.

Put yourself in Joseph's shoes.

What if you could live your life with the confidence God is guiding every confusing and hurtful event for his glory and your growth. You can.

What if you could extract the proper meaning from every painful and pleasurable event? You can.

Let me remind you how God does this. *Our God is in the Heaven. He does whatever he pleases. (Psalm 115:3-NET)*

Unless you accept that God either causes or permits everything that happens you will continue to be hurt everyday of your life.

You will continue to become resentful and bitter. And most of all you will miss out on the Joy God wants you to experience.

Are you anxious? *When anxiety was great within me, your consolation **brought me joy.** Psalm 94:19 (NIV)*

Are you hurt and need God's help? For you have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings I will **sing for joy.** My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me. (Psalm 63:7-8-ESV)

Are you facing sadness, loss, and grief? *And do not be grieved, for the **joy of the Lord is your strength.**" (Nehemiah 8:10b-ESV)*

In a few minutes, those who want to give their hurt, bitterness, resentment to God, will be invited to come and stand with me at the altar. For many you will be letting go of some hurt that has been hampering and hurting you for years. So, don't let pride, ego, or embarrassment rob you of the visitation that God wants to offer you this Christmas in the form **joy unspeakable and fully of glory!**

Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, (1 Peter 1:8-ESV)

Look at that verse, God will give you a kind of joy that is fully of his very power, presence, and protection. If our great God is a joy giving God, then why would you not want that? If God already knows your hurts, habits and hang ups and He wants to carry them, cancel them and even redeem them or remove them, then why would you stay in your current state of hurt when you can have healing?

Be ready to move in a few minutes!

Would anybody be interested in returning a little Joy this Christmas to your life?

How to keep joy alive? Place God's plan above yours.

For Joseph the news of Mary's pregnancy was a real burden, it busted up Joseph's plans and left him looking bad in the eyes of the synagogue community.

In Torah school Joseph aced the test that included the 10 commandments **thou shalt not commit adultery.**

In Judaism and the time of the New Testament gospels, a pledge to be married was legally binding. Only divorce could break it. And infidelity at this point was considered adultery.

Mary was pregnant and it should have been good news. But it was news that hurt Joseph. **It drained the life of joy out of Joe!**

You can hardly blame Joseph for considering divorce when he discovered that, to no fault of his own, Mary is pregnant. For a few fleeting minutes, perhaps hours Joseph wanted to quietly divorce Mary.

¹⁹ Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. (Matt 1-NIV)

Who would blame Joseph for not wanting to divorce her?

How to keep joy alive? Choose to please God instead of others.

Joseph is righteous and godly. He lives by the law. The bible text calls him a “just man.” Our story identifies Joseph’s character and competency. Joseph’s character was that he was a “just man.” Joseph is a community spiritual leader. Like a church elder. Like a Timothy to the apostle Paul.

Of all the people in the Christmas story, Joseph may be one of the most misunderstood. People often assume Joseph became angry when he found out Mary was pregnant and hurried to end the relationship to spare himself embarrassment.

Joseph wanted no part in this. He decided instead to “divorce her quietly” and spare Mary the public spectacle. As a righteous man, he would have been compelled to pursue this public action. And yet, Matthew 1:19 tells us Joseph did not want to expose Mary to this public trial. **Compassion wins out over the letter of the law.**

Joseph was a righteous man. And Mary was “the Lord’s servant” (Luke 1:38). Both are great examples for us today.

Of course, they were not imperfect humans, just as we are not. But they were faithful. And because of their faithfulness, God chose Joseph and Mary to play a role in His glorious story of salvation.

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If any part of life has its share of hurt and resentment stealing our joy, it is marriage.

Since I love laughter, and marriage has its share of examples of hurt turning in bitterness, let me give you a few examples before I reveal **how Joseph was hurt** when he found out his soon-to-be wife was pregnant, and he was not the father.

One couple had a blow up, that was over the top. The husband was a contractor. He possessed master-level building skills. Anger and conflict grew. Anger and conflict escalated. Anger and conflict went off the rails.

When it went off the rails, he grabbed for the nails.

As a builder, after they had a fight one day, he nailed his wife into the house. Literally. The builder-husband nailed every door and window tightly shut. He then went to work. The wife could not get out for a long time. You are wondering does this type of stuff really happen in a marriage? Yea, when hurt turns into bitterness.

A man in Texas remains married to his wife but would not speak to her for 40 years. Now that is some hurt that has manifested into resentment for a lot of years.

The fight was over how much money she spent on sugar at the grocery store. One day he took out a lumber saw and sawed the entire house exactly in half. The husband nailed up planks to cover the raw sides of the house. He then moved one side of the house behind some scrawny pine trees on his Texas property.

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Neither is willing to **break the cycle** of hurt, bitterness and resentment that began 40 years ago. **Neither will forgive. Neither will let go.**

Pride can cause all of us to become unmovable, unforgivable, unyielding, and unrelatable, some would...

... rather live in falsehood, than freedom,

...rather live in torture, than togetherness,

...rather live in unforgiveness, than forgiveness,

...rather be resentful, than joyful.

So, many walk around in life carrying the weight of unresolved hurt. Unresolved bitterness. Unresolved injury. Unresolved unforgiveness. Unresolved anger. Announcing to anyone who will listen, **life is not fair.**

So, the hurt continues to cause pain today. When this happens, we are hindered from experiencing JOY.

When you surrender to a prison of hurt, eventually it becomes bitterness and resentment. Don't you think it is time to stop spraying the icy chills of resentment toward those you love? You cannot be resentful and joyful at the same time.

Again, have you ever considered how hurt Joseph was when he found out Mary was pregnant?

The wife to be, the women he loves, they have never had sex, is pregnant. Imagine this scene:

Hey sweetie, Joseph I have some news. I am pregnant.

How betrayed would you feel if your fiancée' told you she was pregnant, and you were not the father of the child?

How wounded would you be by that announcement? You are planning your wedding, working overtime at the carpentry shop to save some shekels for a little tent on the outskirts of Nazareth.

Your soon-to-be wife is telling you she is pregnant. How would you feel? You would feel just like Joseph did, you would feel betrayed, cheated, he was extremely hurt and disappointed.

How many of you know these feelings from being hurt?

How Quickly Joseph's Life Changed

*One day he was planning for a life with Mary and the next moment her reputation was tarnished with an out-of-wedlock pregnancy.

Is this how you planned to tell your family about being a dad? Are your parents going to understand the supernatural nature of that birth-virgin birth?

*One day he is a carpenter and the next he is a caretaker.

A finished carpenter at that, well respected in the community and now you must think about your reputation, your community standing. What will the guys at the gym think?

*One day he was living in Nazareth and the next he was returning to Bethlehem because of a census.

How quickly Joseph's life changed, one day Joseph has his whole marriage and family mapped out, and the next his fiancée' is blemished and tarnished.

How quickly Joseph's life changes, and yet, he gives up his life for Jesus' life. And isn't that what God asks all of us to do?

How about you? Are you willing to give up your life for Jesus?

You will be frustrated, fretting and fleeing God's purposes until you give up your hurt, bitterness, and resentment. Do you realize God has a plan and purpose, even for our pain? Hurt. Betrayal. Woundedness.

So many of life events seems accidental, incidental, or even coincidental but they are really God-cidental.

Joseph does not know God was at work delivering personally on a plan that was designed to save the world from sin. Years later one of Jesus followers make that idea blindingly clear in John 3:16,

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16-NIV)

Joseph has no idea that God is testing him to see if he will be a loving husband to Mary and a good father to Jesus.

God often allows you to find yourself in impossible situations so God can show you a God-possible solution.

Put yourself in Joseph's shoes.

What if you could live your life with the confidence God is guiding every confusing and hurtful event for his glory and your growth. You can.

What if you could extract the proper meaning from every painful and pleasurable event? You can.

Let me remind you how God does this. *Our God is in the Heaven. He does whatever he pleases. (Psalm 115:3-NET)*

Unless you accept that God either causes or permits everything that happens you will continue to be hurt everyday of your life.

You will continue to become resentful and bitter. And most of all you will miss out on the Joy God wants you to experience.

Are you anxious? *When anxiety was great within me, your consolation **brought me joy.** Psalm 94:19 (NIV)*

Are you hurt and need God's help? For you have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings I will **sing for joy.** My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me. (Psalm 63:7-8-ESV)

Are you facing sadness, loss, and grief? *And do not be grieved, for the **joy of the Lord is your strength.**" (Nehemiah 8:10b-ESV)*

In a few minutes, those who want to give their hurt, bitterness, resentment to God, will be invited to come and stand with me at the altar. For many you will be letting go of some hurt that has been hampering and hurting you for years. So, don't let pride, ego, or embarrassment rob you of the visitation that God wants to offer you this Christmas in the form **joy unspeakable and fully of glory!**

Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, (1 Peter 1:8-ESV)

Look at that verse, God will give you a kind of joy that is fully of his very power, presence, and protection. If our great God is a joy giving God, then why would you not want that? If God already knows your hurts, habits and hang ups and He wants to carry them, cancel them and even redeem them or remove them, then why would you stay in your current state of hurt when you can have healing?

Be ready to move in a few minutes!

Would anybody be interested in returning a little Joy this Christmas to your life?

How to keep joy alive? Place God's plan above yours.

For Joseph the news of Mary's pregnancy was a real burden, it busted up Joseph's plans and left him looking bad in the eyes of the synagogue community.

In Torah school Joseph aced the test that included the 10 commandments **thou shalt not commit adultery.**

In Judaism and the time of the New Testament gospels, a pledge to be married was legally binding. Only divorce could break it. And infidelity at this point was considered adultery.

Mary was pregnant and it should have been good news. But it was news that hurt Joseph. **It drained the life of joy out of Joe!**

You can hardly blame Joseph for considering divorce when he discovered that, to no fault of his own, Mary is pregnant. For a few fleeting minutes, perhaps hours Joseph wanted to quietly divorce Mary.

¹⁹ Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. (Matt 1-NIV)

Who would blame Joseph for not wanting to divorce her?

How to keep joy alive? Choose to please God instead of others.

Joseph is righteous and godly. He lives by the law. The bible text calls him a “just man.” Our story identifies Joseph’s character and competency. Joseph’s character was that he was a “just man.” Joseph is a community spiritual leader. Like a church elder. Like a Timothy to the apostle Paul.

Of all the people in the Christmas story, Joseph may be one of the most misunderstood. People often assume Joseph became angry when he found out Mary was pregnant and hurried to end the relationship to spare himself embarrassment.

Joseph wanted no part in this. He decided instead to “divorce her quietly” and spare Mary the public spectacle. As a righteous man, he would have been compelled to pursue this public action. And yet, Matthew 1:19 tells us Joseph did not want to expose Mary to this public trial. **Compassion wins out over the letter of the law.**

Joseph was a righteous man. And Mary was “the Lord’s servant” (Luke 1:38). Both are great examples for us today.

Of course, they were not imperfect humans, just as we are not. But they were faithful. And because of their faithfulness, God chose Joseph and Mary to play a role in His glorious story of salvation.

God's choice of you, follows the same pattern 4 God's choice of Joseph.

Matthew gospel also, highlights **Joseph's competency**, Jesus earthly father was a craftsman. He was a small-town carpenter from a 1-hump camel town on the edge of boredom called Nazareth. Years later a sharpened tongue disciple would eat those words, as he spouted off about the place of Jesus birth, "can anything good come from Nazareth." *"Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip. (John 1:46-ESV)*

I can imagine when the disciples got bored while waiting in the upper for the Holy Spirit's arrival, they would exchange stories of their years with Jesus. The disciples would often chide Philip, as they reminded him how he stuck his foot in his mouth about the **birthplace of Jesus**.

How to keep joy alive? Don't let unresolved hurt rob you of joy.

Is Joseph the right choice? Doesn't God have some options?

What about a lawyer from the Sanhedrin? Why not a high priest that has stood in the presence of God in the temple offering sacrifices?

Why Joseph? The answer lies in part because of what Joseph was willing to give up for Jesus. Joseph would not let his hurt keep him from winning the **baby Jesus dad** contest.

Joseph chooses love over the law.

Joseph chooses responsibility over reputation.

Joseph chose fatherhood over fleeing.

The law says stone her, love says forgive her. Joseph is caught in the middle and uncertain what to do. Joseph can control his future, or he can let God control his future. The only thing he lacks is an answer from heaven as to what to do. Suddenly, God shows up. Joseph has been schooled on prayer. He knew where to turn.

²⁰ But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. (Matt 1-NIV)

Joseph response to the angel, well that makes sense. I knew all along the Holy Spirit had something to do with this. Joseph is a bundle of nerves trying to solve this dilemma. Joseph is stuck between a rock and hard spot. Clearly Joseph is conflicted. He is perplexed.

Who would Joseph not be frustrated as to what to do, when there is no light from above?

No revelation to the heart.

When God is silent, and you are anxious. Even fearful

The more Joseph thinks about how impossible the situation is, how unfair the situation is, how he has no control over his future, how hurt he is. It would be easy to become anxious. Bitter. Resentful. To become depressed. And rehearsing the dilemma over-and-over never helps.

The meaning of the words, “**Joseph had considered this,**” tells us that Joseph had been at this for some time, his mind was made up, and he was ready to go through with the plan to divorce Mary.

Suddenly. Shockingly. Surprisingly.

God arrives on the scene in the form of a heavenly visitation.

*...behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear **to take Mary** as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. (Matt 1-NIV)*

Joseph, you have been troubled long enough. You have agonized over this enough. It is time to STOP. Do not be afraid another moment. Some of you are afraid to move ahead with God because of fear. God’s word to you today is to STOP. Do not be afraid. Move ahead with God’s plan.

Joseph do not be afraid to “para-lambano” (to take Mary) as your wife. To take her to yourself. To lead her home. Take her into your life and love.

Mary's belling is growing. Do not let that be a concern to you. It is time for your love for her to start growing. **Joseph, you have reason to rejoice beyond your personal inconvenience.**

God clears his throat and announces; Joseph the whole world has reason to rejoice. Don't make it about you. Mary carries the Savior of the world. She carries God's son in her womb, the angel announces.

²¹ She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." (Matt 1-ESV)

How to keep joy alive? Choose to offer grace and let it go.

A bead of sweat forms below Joseph's beard. It is time for Joseph to make a decision. Preserve his reputation in the community or kiss his reputation good-bye. The decision is made. And verse 24-25 tells us of Joseph's history making decisions.

²⁴ When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, ²⁵ but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus. (Matt 1-ESV)

Joseph swapped his Torah studies for a pregnant fiancée' and an illegitimate child in the eyes of the world and made the biggest decision of his life.

Joseph placed God's plan ahead of his.

Don't make the mistake another minute of trying to control what God is already in control of. You are fighting a losing battle to wrestle with God about control of your life. Since God's plans will always prevail, you will just get a black eye, bruised arm or a headache trying to stop God's plans from becoming a reality.

Joseph swapped his reputation for a rattle.

Joseph heads over to Mary's house, he has good news to tell her. He understands. He accepts. He is excited about the future together.

He is ready to do this. Because, he believes down to his toes, God's Got This. Joseph arrives at Mary's and tells her...

The child is God's. The plan is God's. The idea is God's. Forgive me for doubting you Mary, even for a minute.

The questions that people will ask about the pregnancy - I can handle. The snickers and the gossip - I can handle.

And if our future is still hard, and if God calls us to more difficulties (late term pregnancy travels or lack of adequate accommodations or even a humble stable, I am ready to walk this road)

I will be at your side when Jesus is born. Not only a child, but birth to the Messiah. Not just an infant, but God himself.

...Who has come to take away the sins of the world.

Sin put you in prison. Sin has locked you behind bars of guilt, shame, deception, and fear. You are shackled to the wall of misery and pain.

Then Jesus came and paid your bail. He served your time. He satisfied the penalty with his death as a payment to set you free.

Jesus died for you and when you cast your lot with him, your old nature dies too.

One day you will die. If a heaven-sent substitute has died for you and you have trusted Jesus Christ, your death will really mean your resurrection.

Jesus death on the cross, means the claim that sin has on your life is broken. You are free.

⁵ For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶ We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. (Rom 6-ESV)

Surrender your life today to the only God-Man Jesus Christ that can keep from an eternity of torment away from Christ and receive his forgiveness of sins and eternal life. God offers this warning!

⁹ They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might. (2 Thess 1:9-NIV)

Come and stand before Him in prayer this Christmas 2025 and receive God's grace and let it go. He is welcoming you. Your hurt. Your bitterness. Your resentment. Bring it to Him.

And in exchange, receive Christmas JOY. Christ's Joy. Salvation Joy!

JOY

Pastor Ken

December 21, 2025

It is your choice to rejoice!

Thieves of Christmas Joy: Fear, Hurt and Worry

¹⁸ This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

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Everyone sitting here this Christmas experience hurts either from life's events or hurt from other people. When hurt metastasizes like cancer it spreads to vital emotional, physical, and spiritual parts of your life and can become bitterness and resentment. Now, listen...

You cannot be resentful and joyful at the same time.

Where does the cancer of resentment come from? You have been **hurt**. You have been **wounded**. You have been **injured**. Everyone in the sanctuary and everyone listening online has been hurt at some time. **Let me ask again:**

Where do resentment and bitterness come from? Being hurt!

Some of you have been wounded by people's words, and maybe you have carried those hurts for years, for some even since childhood.

Some of you have been wounded physically, some of you have been abused sexually.

I am sorry that has happened to you, God knows your hurt.

Some of you have been abused emotionally with words of guilt, anger, and intimidation.

Some of you have been wounded in relationships with mistrust and betrayal.

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Some of you have been wounded maritally by adultery, pornography, iPhone affairs, divorce, workaholism, unfaithfulness. Even sudden death of a spouse can cause deep seeded hurts.

Some of you have been wounded and hurt financially when a spouse mismanaged money, foreclosures stole your family home, bankruptcy, gambling addictions, overspending addictions.

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Some of you have been wounded and hurt deeply through prejudice, racism, bigotry against you.

Some of you have been wounded and hurt through rejection, failure, job firings and mistreatment by work associates and bosses.

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Regardless of how you have been hurt, let God help you heal or else! Or else what?

Your hurt will metastasize like cancer and spread into every vital area of your life causing your body, soul and spirit to become crippled, deformed or even shut down all together.

This world is filled with sin, and we all sin as the Bible tells us, *"All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God."* (Romans 3:23)

Because we have sinned against God, this causes us to hurt each other. We hurt each other all the time. Sometimes this happens intentionally and at other times unintentionally.

Now, would you agree with this? You have been hurt by others, and you have hurt others. Agreed? I need a little more consensus in the room, to continue. Ok, there it is, **that honest love for truth.**

Acknowledging truth is what leads to healing, it leads to trust, and it leads to God's blessing and favor. Resentment from hurt, will keep the joy out of your life.

Again, you cannot be resentful and joyful at the same time.

Bitterness and resentment keep billions of people from experiencing joy in life. We all know people who have been hurt, they let it manifest into bitterness and resentment, and some have carried that all their life.

How do I know if a person is ready at death to step into life beyond life? They are either at peace or bitter and angry at life.

Since we are talking about a little married couple in Israel, who suddenly have been selected by God to deliver a child into the world, the savior of the world I want to offer you this question:

Have you ever considered how hurt Joseph was when he found out Mary was pregnant?

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No revelation to the heart.

When God is silent, and you are anxious. Even fearful

The more Joseph thinks about how impossible the situation is, how unfair the situation is, how he has no control over his future, how hurt he is. It would be easy to become anxious. Bitter. Resentful. To become depressed. And rehearsing the dilemma over-and-over never helps.

The meaning of the words, “**Joseph had considered this,**” tells us that Joseph had been at this for some time, his mind was made up, and he was ready to go through with the plan to divorce Mary.

Suddenly. Shockingly. Surprisingly.

God arrives on the scene in the form of a heavenly visitation.

*...behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear **to take Mary** as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. (Matt 1-NIV)*

Joseph, you have been troubled long enough. You have agonized over this enough. It is time to STOP. Do not be afraid another moment. Some of you are afraid to move ahead with God because of fear. God’s word to you today is to STOP. Do not be afraid. Move ahead with God’s plan.

Joseph do not be afraid to “para-lambano” (to take Mary) as your wife. To take her to yourself. To lead her home. Take her into your life and love.

Mary's belling is growing. Do not let that be a concern to you. It is time for your love for her to start growing. **Joseph, you have reason to rejoice beyond your personal inconvenience.**

God clears his throat and announces; Joseph the whole world has reason to rejoice. Don't make it about you. Mary carries the Savior of the world. She carries God's son in her womb, the angel announces.

²¹ She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." (Matt 1-ESV)

How to keep joy alive? Choose to offer grace and let it go.

A bead of sweat forms below Joseph's beard. It is time for Joseph to make a decision. Preserve his reputation in the community or kiss his reputation good-bye. The decision is made. And verse 24-25 tells us of Joseph's history making decisions.

²⁴ When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, ²⁵ but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus. (Matt 1-ESV)

Joseph swapped his Torah studies for a pregnant fiancée' and an illegitimate child in the eyes of the world and made the biggest decision of his life.

Joseph placed God's plan ahead of his.

Don't make the mistake another minute of trying to control what God is already in control of. You are fighting a losing battle to wrestle with God about control of your life. Since God's plans will always prevail, you will just get a black eye, bruised arm or a headache trying to stop God's plans from becoming a reality.

Joseph swapped his reputation for a rattle.

Joseph heads over to Mary's house, he has good news to tell her. He understands. He accepts. He is excited about the future together.

He is ready to do this. Because, he believes down to his toes, God's Got This. Joseph arrives at Mary's and tells her...

The child is God's. The plan is God's. The idea is God's. Forgive me for doubting you Mary, even for a minute.

The questions that people will ask about the pregnancy - I can handle. The snickers and the gossip - I can handle.

And if our future is still hard, and if God calls us to more difficulties (late term pregnancy travels or lack of adequate accommodations or even a humble stable, I am ready to walk this road)

I will be at your side when Jesus is born. Not only a child, but birth to the Messiah. Not just an infant, but God himself.

...Who has come to take away the sins of the world.

Sin put you in prison. Sin has locked you behind bars of guilt, shame, deception, and fear. You are shackled to the wall of misery and pain.

Then Jesus came and paid your bail. He served your time. He satisfied the penalty with his death as a payment to set you free.

Jesus died for you and when you cast your lot with him, your old nature dies too.

One day you will die. If a heaven-sent substitute has died for you and you have trusted Jesus Christ, your death will really mean your resurrection.

Jesus death on the cross, means the claim that sin has on your life is broken. You are free.

⁵ For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶ We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. (Rom 6-ESV)

Surrender your life today to the only God-Man Jesus Christ that can keep from an eternity of torment away from Christ and receive his forgiveness of sins and eternal life. God offers this warning!

⁹ They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might. (2 Thess 1:9-NIV)

Come and stand before Him in prayer this Christmas 2025 and receive God's grace and let it go. He is welcoming you. Your hurt. Your bitterness. Your resentment. Bring it to Him.

And in exchange, receive Christmas JOY. Christ's Joy. Salvation Joy!

JOY

Pastor Ken

December 21, 2025

It is your choice to rejoice!

Thieves of Christmas Joy: Fear, Hurt and Worry

¹⁸ This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

²⁰ But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." (Matt 1-NIV)

Everyone sitting here this Christmas experience hurts either from life's events or hurt from other people. When hurt metastasizes like cancer it spreads to vital emotional, physical, and spiritual parts of your life and can become bitterness and resentment. Now, listen...

You cannot be resentful and joyful at the same time.

Where does the cancer of resentment come from? You have been **hurt**. You have been **wounded**. You have been **injured**. Everyone in the sanctuary and everyone listening online has been hurt at some time. **Let me ask again:**

Where do resentment and bitterness come from? Being hurt!

Some of you have been wounded by people's words, and maybe you have carried those hurts for years, for some even since childhood.

Some of you have been wounded physically, some of you have been abused sexually.

I am sorry that has happened to you, God knows your hurt.

Some of you have been abused emotionally with words of guilt, anger, and intimidation.

Some of you have been wounded in relationships with mistrust and betrayal.

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Some of you have been wounded maritally by adultery, pornography, iPhone affairs, divorce, workaholism, unfaithfulness. Even sudden death of a spouse can cause deep seeded hurts.

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Some of you have been wounded and hurt deeply through prejudice, racism, bigotry against you.

Some of you have been wounded and hurt through rejection, failure, job firings and mistreatment by work associates and bosses.

I am sorry that has happened to you, God knows your hurt.

Regardless of how you have been hurt, let God help you heal or else! Or else what?

Your hurt will metastasize like cancer and spread into every vital area of your life causing your body, soul and spirit to become crippled, deformed or even shut down all together.

This world is filled with sin, and we all sin as the Bible tells us, *"All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God."* (Romans 3:23)

Because we have sinned against God, this causes us to hurt each other. We hurt each other all the time. Sometimes this happens intentionally and at other times unintentionally.

Now, would you agree with this? You have been hurt by others, and you have hurt others. Agreed? I need a little more consensus in the room, to continue. Ok, there it is, **that honest love for truth.**

Acknowledging truth is what leads to healing, it leads to trust, and it leads to God's blessing and favor. Resentment from hurt, will keep the joy out of your life.

Again, you cannot be resentful and joyful at the same time.

Bitterness and resentment keep billions of people from experiencing joy in life. We all know people who have been hurt, they let it manifest into bitterness and resentment, and some have carried that all their life.

How do I know if a person is ready at death to step into life beyond life? They are either at peace or bitter and angry at life.

Since we are talking about a little married couple in Israel, who suddenly have been selected by God to deliver a child into the world, the savior of the world I want to offer you this question:

Have you ever considered how hurt Joseph was when he found out Mary was pregnant?

Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. (Matt 1:18)

If any part of life has its share of hurt and resentment stealing our joy, it is marriage.

Since I love laughter, and marriage has its share of examples of hurt turning in bitterness, let me give you a few examples before I reveal **how Joseph was hurt** when he found out his soon-to-be wife was pregnant, and he was not the father.

One couple had a blow up, that was over the top. The husband was a contractor. He possessed master-level building skills. Anger and conflict grew. Anger and conflict escalated. Anger and conflict went off the rails.

When it went off the rails, he grabbed for the nails.

As a builder, after they had a fight one day, he nailed his wife into the house. Literally. The builder-husband nailed every door and window tightly shut. He then went to work. The wife could not get out for a long time. You are wondering does this type of stuff really happen in a marriage? Yea, when hurt turns into bitterness.

A man in Texas remains married to his wife but would not speak to her for 40 years. Now that is some hurt that has manifested into resentment for a lot of years.

The fight was over how much money she spent on sugar at the grocery store. One day he took out a lumber saw and sawed the entire house exactly in half. The husband nailed up planks to cover the raw sides of the house. He then moved one side of the house behind some scrawny pine trees on his Texas property.

He moved his portion of the house to where he could not see her half of the house from his window. There the two, husband and wife, lived out the rest of their days in separate houses.

Neither is willing to **break the cycle** of hurt, bitterness and resentment that began 40 years ago. **Neither will forgive. Neither will let go.**

Pride can cause all of us to become unmovable, unforgivable, unyielding, and unrelatable, some would...

... rather live in falsehood, than freedom,

...rather live in torture, than togetherness,

...rather live in unforgiveness, than forgiveness,

...rather be resentful, than joyful.

So, many walk around in life carrying the weight of unresolved hurt. Unresolved bitterness. Unresolved injury. Unresolved unforgiveness. Unresolved anger. Announcing to anyone who will listen, **life is not fair.**

So, the hurt continues to cause pain today. When this happens, we are hindered from experiencing JOY.

When you surrender to a prison of hurt, eventually it becomes bitterness and resentment. Don't you think it is time to stop spraying the icy chills of resentment toward those you love? You cannot be resentful and joyful at the same time.

Again, have you ever considered how hurt Joseph was when he found out Mary was pregnant?

The wife to be, the women he loves, they have never had sex, is pregnant. Imagine this scene:

Hey sweetie, Joseph I have some news. I am pregnant.

How betrayed would you feel if your fiancée' told you she was pregnant, and you were not the father of the child?

How wounded would you be by that announcement? You are planning your wedding, working overtime at the carpentry shop to save some shekels for a little tent on the outskirts of Nazareth.

Your soon-to-be wife is telling you she is pregnant. How would you feel? You would feel just like Joseph did, you would feel betrayed, cheated, he was extremely hurt and disappointed.

How many of you know these feelings from being hurt?

How Quickly Joseph's Life Changed

*One day he was planning for a life with Mary and the next moment her reputation was tarnished with an out-of-wedlock pregnancy.

Is this how you planned to tell your family about being a dad? Are your parents going to understand the supernatural nature of that birth-virgin birth?

*One day he is a carpenter and the next he is a caretaker.

A finished carpenter at that, well respected in the community and now you must think about your reputation, your community standing. What will the guys at the gym think?

*One day he was living in Nazareth and the next he was returning to Bethlehem because of a census.

How quickly Joseph's life changed, one day Joseph has his whole marriage and family mapped out, and the next his fiancée' is blemished and tarnished.

How quickly Joseph's life changes, and yet, he gives up his life for Jesus' life. And isn't that what God asks all of us to do?

How about you? Are you willing to give up your life for Jesus?

You will be frustrated, fretting and fleeing God's purposes until you give up your hurt, bitterness, and resentment. Do you realize God has a plan and purpose, even for our pain? Hurt. Betrayal. Woundedness.

So many of life events seems accidental, incidental, or even coincidental but they are really God-cidental.

Joseph does not know God was at work delivering personally on a plan that was designed to save the world from sin. Years later one of Jesus followers make that idea blindingly clear in John 3:16,

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16-NIV)

Joseph has no idea that God is testing him to see if he will be a loving husband to Mary and a good father to Jesus.

God often allows you to find yourself in impossible situations so God can show you a God-possible solution.

Put yourself in Joseph's shoes.

What if you could live your life with the confidence God is guiding every confusing and hurtful event for his glory and your growth. You can.

What if you could extract the proper meaning from every painful and pleasurable event? You can.

Let me remind you how God does this. *Our God is in the Heaven. He does whatever he pleases. (Psalm 115:3-NET)*

Unless you accept that God either causes or permits everything that happens you will continue to be hurt everyday of your life.

You will continue to become resentful and bitter. And most of all you will miss out on the Joy God wants you to experience.

Are you anxious? *When anxiety was great within me, your consolation **brought me joy.** Psalm 94:19 (NIV)*

Are you hurt and need God's help? For you have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings I will **sing for joy.** My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me. (Psalm 63:7-8-ESV)

Are you facing sadness, loss, and grief? *And do not be grieved, for the **joy of the Lord is your strength.**" (Nehemiah 8:10b-ESV)*

In a few minutes, those who want to give their hurt, bitterness, resentment to God, will be invited to come and stand with me at the altar. For many you will be letting go of some hurt that has been hampering and hurting you for years. So, don't let pride, ego, or embarrassment rob you of the visitation that God wants to offer you this Christmas in the form **joy unspeakable and fully of glory!**

Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, (1 Peter 1:8-ESV)

Look at that verse, God will give you a kind of joy that is fully of his very power, presence, and protection. If our great God is a joy giving God, then why would you not want that? If God already knows your hurts, habits and hang ups and He wants to carry them, cancel them and even redeem them or remove them, then why would you stay in your current state of hurt when you can have healing?

Be ready to move in a few minutes!

Would anybody be interested in returning a little Joy this Christmas to your life?

How to keep joy alive? Place God's plan above yours.

For Joseph the news of Mary's pregnancy was a real burden, it busted up Joseph's plans and left him looking bad in the eyes of the synagogue community.

In Torah school Joseph aced the test that included the 10 commandments **thou shalt not commit adultery.**

In Judaism and the time of the New Testament gospels, a pledge to be married was legally binding. Only divorce could break it. And infidelity at this point was considered adultery.

Mary was pregnant and it should have been good news. But it was news that hurt Joseph. **It drained the life of joy out of Joe!**

You can hardly blame Joseph for considering divorce when he discovered that, to no fault of his own, Mary is pregnant. For a few fleeting minutes, perhaps hours Joseph wanted to quietly divorce Mary.

¹⁹ Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. (Matt 1-NIV)

Who would blame Joseph for not wanting to divorce her?

How to keep joy alive? Choose to please God instead of others.

Joseph is righteous and godly. He lives by the law. The bible text calls him a “just man.” Our story identifies Joseph’s character and competency. Joseph’s character was that he was a “just man.” Joseph is a community spiritual leader. Like a church elder. Like a Timothy to the apostle Paul.

Of all the people in the Christmas story, Joseph may be one of the most misunderstood. People often assume Joseph became angry when he found out Mary was pregnant and hurried to end the relationship to spare himself embarrassment.

Joseph wanted no part in this. He decided instead to “divorce her quietly” and spare Mary the public spectacle. As a righteous man, he would have been compelled to pursue this public action. And yet, Matthew 1:19 tells us Joseph did not want to expose Mary to this public trial. **Compassion wins out over the letter of the law.**

Joseph was a righteous man. And Mary was “the Lord’s servant” (Luke 1:38). Both are great examples for us today.

Of course, they were not imperfect humans, just as we are not. But they were faithful. And because of their faithfulness, God chose Joseph and Mary to play a role in His glorious story of salvation.

God's choice of you, follows the same pattern 4 God's choice of Joseph.

Matthew gospel also, highlights **Joseph's competency**, Jesus earthly father was a craftsman. He was a small-town carpenter from a 1-hump camel town on the edge of boredom called Nazareth. Years later a sharpened tongue disciple would eat those words, as he spouted off about the place of Jesus birth, "can anything good come from Nazareth." *"Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip. (John 1:46-ESV)*

I can imagine when the disciples got bored while waiting in the upper for the Holy Spirit's arrival, they would exchange stories of their years with Jesus. The disciples would often chide Philip, as they reminded him how he stuck his foot in his mouth about the **birthplace of Jesus**.

How to keep joy alive? Don't let unresolved hurt rob you of joy.

Is Joseph the right choice? Doesn't God have some options?

What about a lawyer from the Sanhedrin? Why not a high priest that has stood in the presence of God in the temple offering sacrifices?

Why Joseph? The answer lies in part because of what Joseph was willing to give up for Jesus. Joseph would not let his hurt keep him from winning the **baby Jesus dad** contest.

Joseph chooses love over the law.

Joseph chooses responsibility over reputation.

Joseph chose fatherhood over fleeing.

The law says stone her, love says forgive her. Joseph is caught in the middle and uncertain what to do. Joseph can control his future, or he can let God control his future. The only thing he lacks is an answer from heaven as to what to do. Suddenly, God shows up. Joseph has been schooled on prayer. He knew where to turn.

²⁰ But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. (Matt 1-NIV)

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...rather live in unforgiveness, than forgiveness,

...rather be resentful, than joyful.

So, many walk around in life carrying the weight of unresolved hurt. Unresolved bitterness. Unresolved injury. Unresolved unforgiveness. Unresolved anger. Announcing to anyone who will listen, **life is not fair.**

So, the hurt continues to cause pain today. When this happens, we are hindered from experiencing JOY.

When you surrender to a prison of hurt, eventually it becomes bitterness and resentment. Don't you think it is time to stop spraying the icy chills of resentment toward those you love? You cannot be resentful and joyful at the same time.

Again, have you ever considered how hurt Joseph was when he found out Mary was pregnant?

The wife to be, the women he loves, they have never had sex, is pregnant. Imagine this scene:

Hey sweetie, Joseph I have some news. I am pregnant.

How betrayed would you feel if your fiancée' told you she was pregnant, and you were not the father of the child?

How wounded would you be by that announcement? You are planning your wedding, working overtime at the carpentry shop to save some shekels for a little tent on the outskirts of Nazareth.

Your soon-to-be wife is telling you she is pregnant. How would you feel? You would feel just like Joseph did, you would feel betrayed, cheated, he was extremely hurt and disappointed.

How many of you know these feelings from being hurt?

How Quickly Joseph's Life Changed

*One day he was planning for a life with Mary and the next moment her reputation was tarnished with an out-of-wedlock pregnancy.

Is this how you planned to tell your family about being a dad? Are your parents going to understand the supernatural nature of that birth-virgin birth?

*One day he is a carpenter and the next he is a caretaker.

A finished carpenter at that, well respected in the community and now you must think about your reputation, your community standing. What will the guys at the gym think?

*One day he was living in Nazareth and the next he was returning to Bethlehem because of a census.

How quickly Joseph's life changed, one day Joseph has his whole marriage and family mapped out, and the next his fiancée' is blemished and tarnished.

How quickly Joseph's life changes, and yet, he gives up his life for Jesus' life. And isn't that what God asks all of us to do?

How about you? Are you willing to give up your life for Jesus?

You will be frustrated, fretting and fleeing God's purposes until you give up your hurt, bitterness, and resentment. Do you realize God has a plan and purpose, even for our pain? Hurt. Betrayal. Woundedness.

So many of life events seems accidental, incidental, or even coincidental but they are really God-cidental.

Joseph does not know God was at work delivering personally on a plan that was designed to save the world from sin. Years later one of Jesus followers make that idea blindingly clear in John 3:16,

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16-NIV)

Joseph has no idea that God is testing him to see if he will be a loving husband to Mary and a good father to Jesus.

God often allows you to find yourself in impossible situations so God can show you a God-possible solution.

Put yourself in Joseph's shoes.

What if you could live your life with the confidence God is guiding every confusing and hurtful event for his glory and your growth. You can.

What if you could extract the proper meaning from every painful and pleasurable event? You can.

Let me remind you how God does this. *Our God is in the Heaven. He does whatever he pleases. (Psalm 115:3-NET)*

Unless you accept that God either causes or permits everything that happens you will continue to be hurt everyday of your life.

You will continue to become resentful and bitter. And most of all you will miss out on the Joy God wants you to experience.

Are you anxious? *When anxiety was great within me, your consolation **brought me joy.** Psalm 94:19 (NIV)*

Are you hurt and need God's help? For you have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings I will **sing for joy.** My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me. (Psalm 63:7-8-ESV)

Are you facing sadness, loss, and grief? *And do not be grieved, for the **joy of the Lord is your strength.**" (Nehemiah 8:10b-ESV)*

In a few minutes, those who want to give their hurt, bitterness, resentment to God, will be invited to come and stand with me at the altar. For many you will be letting go of some hurt that has been hampering and hurting you for years. So, don't let pride, ego, or embarrassment rob you of the visitation that God wants to offer you this Christmas in the form **joy unspeakable and fully of glory!**

Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, (1 Peter 1:8-ESV)

Look at that verse, God will give you a kind of joy that is fully of his very power, presence, and protection. If our great God is a joy giving God, then why would you not want that? If God already knows your hurts, habits and hang ups and He wants to carry them, cancel them and even redeem them or remove them, then why would you stay in your current state of hurt when you can have healing?

Be ready to move in a few minutes!

Would anybody be interested in returning a little Joy this Christmas to your life?

How to keep joy alive? Place God's plan above yours.

For Joseph the news of Mary's pregnancy was a real burden, it busted up Joseph's plans and left him looking bad in the eyes of the synagogue community.

In Torah school Joseph aced the test that included the 10 commandments **thou shalt not commit adultery.**

In Judaism and the time of the New Testament gospels, a pledge to be married was legally binding. Only divorce could break it. And infidelity at this point was considered adultery.

Mary was pregnant and it should have been good news. But it was news that hurt Joseph. **It drained the life of joy out of Joe!**

You can hardly blame Joseph for considering divorce when he discovered that, to no fault of his own, Mary is pregnant. For a few fleeting minutes, perhaps hours Joseph wanted to quietly divorce Mary.

¹⁹ Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. (Matt 1-NIV)

Who would blame Joseph for not wanting to divorce her?

How to keep joy alive? Choose to please God instead of others.

Joseph is righteous and godly. He lives by the law. The bible text calls him a “just man.” Our story identifies Joseph’s character and competency. Joseph’s character was that he was a “just man.” Joseph is a community spiritual leader. Like a church elder. Like a Timothy to the apostle Paul.

Of all the people in the Christmas story, Joseph may be one of the most misunderstood. People often assume Joseph became angry when he found out Mary was pregnant and hurried to end the relationship to spare himself embarrassment.

Joseph wanted no part in this. He decided instead to “divorce her quietly” and spare Mary the public spectacle. As a righteous man, he would have been compelled to pursue this public action. And yet, Matthew 1:19 tells us Joseph did not want to expose Mary to this public trial. **Compassion wins out over the letter of the law.**

Joseph was a righteous man. And Mary was “the Lord’s servant” (Luke 1:38). Both are great examples for us today.

Of course, they were not imperfect humans, just as we are not. But they were faithful. And because of their faithfulness, God chose Joseph and Mary to play a role in His glorious story of salvation.

God's choice of you, follows the same pattern 4 God's choice of Joseph.

Matthew gospel also, highlights **Joseph's competency**, Jesus earthly father was a craftsman. He was a small-town carpenter from a 1-hump camel town on the edge of boredom called Nazareth. Years later a sharpened tongue disciple would eat those words, as he spouted off about the place of Jesus birth, "can anything good come from Nazareth." *"Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip. (John 1:46-ESV)*

I can imagine when the disciples got bored while waiting in the upper for the Holy Spirit's arrival, they would exchange stories of their years with Jesus. The disciples would often chide Philip, as they reminded him how he stuck his foot in his mouth about the **birthplace of Jesus**.

How to keep joy alive? Don't let unresolved hurt rob you of joy.

Is Joseph the right choice? Doesn't God have some options?

What about a lawyer from the Sanhedrin? Why not a high priest that has stood in the presence of God in the temple offering sacrifices?

Why Joseph? The answer lies in part because of what Joseph was willing to give up for Jesus. Joseph would not let his hurt keep him from winning the **baby Jesus dad** contest.

Joseph chooses love over the law.

Joseph chooses responsibility over reputation.

Joseph chose fatherhood over fleeing.

The law says stone her, love says forgive her. Joseph is caught in the middle and uncertain what to do. Joseph can control his future, or he can let God control his future. The only thing he lacks is an answer from heaven as to what to do. Suddenly, God shows up. Joseph has been schooled on prayer. He knew where to turn.

²⁰ But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. (Matt 1-NIV)

Joseph response to the angel, well that makes sense. I knew all along the Holy Spirit had something to do with this. Joseph is a bundle of nerves trying to solve this dilemma. Joseph is stuck between a rock and hard spot. Clearly Joseph is conflicted. He is perplexed.

Who would Joseph not be frustrated as to what to do, when there is no light from above?

No revelation to the heart.

When God is silent, and you are anxious. Even fearful

The more Joseph thinks about how impossible the situation is, how unfair the situation is, how he has no control over his future, how hurt he is. It would be easy to become anxious. Bitter. Resentful. To become depressed. And rehearsing the dilemma over-and-over never helps.

The meaning of the words, “**Joseph had considered this,**” tells us that Joseph had been at this for some time, his mind was made up, and he was ready to go through with the plan to divorce Mary.

Suddenly. Shockingly. Surprisingly.

God arrives on the scene in the form of a heavenly visitation.

*...behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear **to take Mary** as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. (Matt 1-NIV)*

Joseph, you have been troubled long enough. You have agonized over this enough. It is time to STOP. Do not be afraid another moment. Some of you are afraid to move ahead with God because of fear. God’s word to you today is to STOP. Do not be afraid. Move ahead with God’s plan.

Joseph do not be afraid to “para-lambano” (to take Mary) as your wife. To take her to yourself. To lead her home. Take her into your life and love.

Mary's belling is growing. Do not let that be a concern to you. It is time for your love for her to start growing. **Joseph, you have reason to rejoice beyond your personal inconvenience.**

God clears his throat and announces; Joseph the whole world has reason to rejoice. Don't make it about you. Mary carries the Savior of the world. She carries God's son in her womb, the angel announces.

²¹ She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." (Matt 1-ESV)

How to keep joy alive? Choose to offer grace and let it go.

A bead of sweat forms below Joseph's beard. It is time for Joseph to make a decision. Preserve his reputation in the community or kiss his reputation good-bye. The decision is made. And verse 24-25 tells us of Joseph's history making decisions.

²⁴ When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, ²⁵ but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus. (Matt 1-ESV)

Joseph swapped his Torah studies for a pregnant fiancée' and an illegitimate child in the eyes of the world and made the biggest decision of his life.

Joseph placed God's plan ahead of his.

Don't make the mistake another minute of trying to control what God is already in control of. You are fighting a losing battle to wrestle with God about control of your life. Since God's plans will always prevail, you will just get a black eye, bruised arm or a headache trying to stop God's plans from becoming a reality.

Joseph swapped his reputation for a rattle.

Joseph heads over to Mary's house, he has good news to tell her. He understands. He accepts. He is excited about the future together.

He is ready to do this. Because, he believes down to his toes, God's Got This. Joseph arrives at Mary's and tells her...

The child is God's. The plan is God's. The idea is God's. Forgive me for doubting you Mary, even for a minute.

The questions that people will ask about the pregnancy - I can handle. The snickers and the gossip - I can handle.

And if our future is still hard, and if God calls us to more difficulties (late term pregnancy travels or lack of adequate accommodations or even a humble stable, I am ready to walk this road)

I will be at your side when Jesus is born. Not only a child, but birth to the Messiah. Not just an infant, but God himself.

...Who has come to take away the sins of the world.

Sin put you in prison. Sin has locked you behind bars of guilt, shame, deception, and fear. You are shackled to the wall of misery and pain.

Then Jesus came and paid your bail. He served your time. He satisfied the penalty with his death as a payment to set you free.

Jesus died for you and when you cast your lot with him, your old nature dies too.

One day you will die. If a heaven-sent substitute has died for you and you have trusted Jesus Christ, your death will really mean your resurrection.

Jesus death on the cross, means the claim that sin has on your life is broken. You are free.

⁵ For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶ We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. (Rom 6-ESV)

Surrender your life today to the only God-Man Jesus Christ that can keep from an eternity of torment away from Christ and receive his forgiveness of sins and eternal life. God offers this warning!

⁹ They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might. (2 Thess 1:9-NIV)

Come and stand before Him in prayer this Christmas 2025 and receive God's grace and let it go. He is welcoming you. Your hurt. Your bitterness. Your resentment. Bring it to Him.

And in exchange, receive Christmas JOY. Christ's Joy. Salvation Joy!