

“Trust His Plan” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Advent 4

December 21, 2025

- I. **Matthew 1:18-25** – Previously read
- II. **Our best and most faithful plans** are not always what God has in store for us.
 - a. You see, our plans may or may not align with the final outcome of God's designs and will.
 - b. A number of years ago, a show called, *This American Life* did a feature on what they called “Plan B”.
 - i. The host described standing in a room of about a hundred adults and asking them to think back to the beginning of their adult lives... when they had a clear picture of how things were supposed to go....
 - 1. He called this “Plan A”, or the future you were sure life had in store for you.
 - ii. Then he asked a simple question: “How many of you are still living Plan A?”
 - 1. One person raised her hand. She was twenty-three years old.
 - 2. Everyone else, without exception, was living some version of Plan B.¹
 - c. Most of us don't need a poll to know that's true... because reflecting on our own lives, we see how they rarely unfolded according to our careful plans.
 - i. Some of you are thinking to yourselves... I'm on Plan C, D, or E at this point!
 - d. I can look back on my life and see how many times my best plans were changed, but I was given what I needed to be a better pastor.
 - i. Sometimes my plans were just selfish and sinful, but the twists and turns of life took me on a journey that I could not have planned myself – from careers... to school... to relationships... and places I lived... and all of these things ultimately prepared me to be a pastor.
 - ii. Although it wasn't clear at the time, I can see God's hand in so many different places along the way.
 - e. Life rarely unfolds according to the plans we carefully construct... even when we are trying to follow God's will in Scripture.
 - i. Careers change.... Relationships break.... Suffering comes.... Doors close.
 - ii. Suddenly, the life we thought we were building and planning so wisely is no longer possible.
 - 1. You wait until retirement to travel, only to become a caregiver instead.
 - 2. You plan carefully and still find yourself overwhelmed by what you never saw coming.
 - 3. You train for a career, only to watch it disappear.

- 4. You assume health, stability, and time... until one of them is taken away.
- iii. And the reality is, these moments can come at any stage of life... just ask Joseph!

III. **The Gospel of Matthew** does not give a long account of the birth of Jesus.

- a. Unlike the Gospel of Luke that goes into great detail about how Jesus was born, Matthew gives the account of Joseph finding out about Mary.
- b. Joseph doesn't say a word, but we can only imagine all the things that might be going through his head when he discovered his future wife was already pregnant... and he was not the father.
- c. Joseph is a righteous man, following the Jewish laws, but he is also merciful enough not to have Mary stoned to death for her offense.
- d. His "Plan A" was to have a wonderful marriage and family with a woman betrothed to him... fulfilling his vocation as husband and father.
 - i. His "Plan A" was what many of us sought to do at the same point in life.
- e. Suddenly, with the news of Mary's pregnancy, Plan A no longer seemed possible... so, maybe it's time to consider Plan B?
 - i. Joseph does not become infuriated and lose control... He does what many of us do when plans fail... he formulates Plan B.
 - ii. For Joseph, Plan B was to quietly divorce Mary as an adulteress... it is lawful... compassionate... and the best plan he can make with the information he has.
- f. However, what Joseph doesn't know yet is that God is not offering him a Plan B... no, God had a Plan A that was not going to be changed.
 - i. God's Plan A was much older than Joseph... older than King David... as old as the world itself.
 - ii. The angel does not come to Joseph and say, "Here's an alternative."
 - iii. No, the angel comes to Joseph and says, "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. She will bear a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." (Matt. 1:21b-22)
 - 1. Yes, the name Jesus comes from the Old Testament name Joshua – which means Yahweh saves...
- g. In all of this, Joseph's plans are set aside and give way... to the Word and promise of God.
 - i. Joseph does not trust because things now make sense, but because God has spoken His Word and promise.
 - ii. What feels like Plan B to us... or going in a different direction than we intended... is often the place where God's promise is most clearly revealed.
 - iii. The birth of Jesus came in spite of Joseph's careful planning, as God's plan of action became preeminent.

- h. Scripture goes on to tell us that Joseph woke up from his dream and began carrying out God's plan...
 - i. Whether that was going to his hometown in Bethlehem for the census, and with a very pregnant wife... or fleeing to Egypt when Herod wanted to kill his young Son.
 - ii. No matter what we think is important, God's plan is always the best plan.

- IV. **As the people of God by grace through faith in Jesus Christ**, we live by His command and promise – which may not be our plan.
 - a. There is no end to the disappointments and shattered expectations of life, even when we try our best to remain faithful to God.
 - i. We are facing the consequence of sin that was brought into the world through Adam and Eve and their desire to make their own way...
 - ii. Now, we cannot break free from the brokenness that surrounds us every moment of every day... but we still are called to trust God through the brokenness.
 - b. God's Plan A was to send His own Son, who would save His people from their sins... and that means us.
 - c. Although we are not quite to the celebration of Jesus' birth, the truth is that God was full of mercy and compassion, and instead of allowing sin, death, and the devil to destroy us... He provided a victor to overcome them.
 - i. No plan or work on our part can win the battle over sin, or death, or the devil... but Jesus is all powerful... has all authority... and came into this world to win the battle for us.
 - d. Yes, the Baby that was God's Plan A did not go His own way or make His own plans, He followed the will of His Father even to the cross.
 - i. Yet, sin could not win the day... neither could death... not even satan could claim a victory as Jesus walked out of the tomb in glory.
 - ii. The victory belongs to Jesus and guess what?
 - 1. Everything He won is passed along to those who believe in Him as their Lord... and their Savior.
 - iii. The victory for us means that no matter what comes at us in this world... it has no real power to take us away from God.
 - 1. Sin can no longer condemn us... the grave is not the end... and the devil can try all he wants, but he cannot separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- V. **Trusting God's plan** does not mean pretending our losses are good.
 - a. It means trusting that God keeps His promises... even when the path forward looks nothing like what we imagined.
 - b. So, when your plans fall apart and your expectations are shattered, remember this... God's Plan A has already won.

- i. The Child born of Mary did not just survive the chaos of this world.... He conquered it.... Sin does not win.... Death does not win.... The devil does not win.
- c. The perfect plan of God succeeded through Jesus, which means we can fully trust in His perfect Word and way for our lives.
- d. You may not see the plan... but you can definitely trust the victory. Amen

¹ Source: Jill Carattini, "Redirection," *A Slice of Infinity* (7-5-17)