

Walking with God into the unknown \* Matthew 1 & 2  
January 2, 2022 \* Langford Community Church \* Graham Gladstone

As we enter into this new year, there are a lot of unknowns. Will the kids go back to school? Will I get COVID? Will the troubles of 2021 carry over into 2022? And how do we, as children of the living God, deal with that uncertainty?

To answer that question this morning, I've invited a guest speaker who knows a thing or two about walking with faith into the unknown, and that's Jesus' father Joseph. He has made the jump forward two thousand years to talk about facing uncertainties and he's going to join us in just a minute here. So let me see if he's ready.

Joseph:

Good morning! Good morning! What a pleasure it is to be with you this morning! And my how technology has changed! Back in my day, we thought that writing on paper was cutting edge! The wonders of the modern world!

But I'm not here to talk about technology; Pastor Graham came and asked me to speak to you about walking with God into the unknown. That's a great topic. I can't count the number of times when I didn't know what was going on – you try raising the Son of God – but in every situation, I knew that God knew what was going on and so by faith we made it through.

And I'll tell you, there are two Scripture passages that really helped me in uncertain times. Proverbs 3:5-6 and Micah 6:8. From a very early age, my mother and father taught me these verses and taught me how to live in them and they have made all the difference in the world.

Proverbs 3:5-6 - 5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;  
6 in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.  
(Pro 3:5-6 NIV).

And Micah 6:8 - 8 He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. (Mic 6:8 NIV).

In my opinion, those verses capture how to walk by faith into the unknown, but to fill that out a little, let me tell you about a couple times in my life when I put those into play – first, Mary getting pregnant and second, travelling to Egypt.

So first, the whole pregnancy thing.

It all started many years ago, when I was working in my father's carpentry shop. A neighbour came in with a broken table leg and he left it for me to repair. When I got it done, I took the table back to his house, and there, collecting firewood, was his daughter Mary.

Now I'd seen Mary many times before; she was known around town for being kind and compassionate, a 'good and godly' girl, but in that moment, I realized that we were bound to be together. We went through the usual courtship rituals and then before long we were engaged to be married.

But then, disaster. Faithful Mary was pregnant. This pure, sweet girl had played the harlot. I was shocked, heartbroken. I didn't know what to do. I mean, it seemed so out of character, so out of the blue; I just didn't know what to do.

And that's where Micah 6:8 came in. I wasn't sure what to do but what does Micah 6:8 say? Act justly.

Well, I knew what I had to do. I knew what Romans and Greeks and Jews said to do with people like this; Deuteronomy 22 says this sort of thing deserves death! And being a righteous man, I want to do the right thing and act justly.

But Micah 6:8 also says to love mercy, doesn't it? Act justly but do it in a merciful way. So I considered my options. How could I avoid exposing her to public disgrace without it looking like I approved of her sin?

In the end, I settled on divorce. I could give her a letter of divorce quietly, without much fanfare, and thus spare her life and so I decided that that's what I would do.

But then one night, an angel of the Lord appeared to me in a dream and said "20 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" (Mat 1:20-21 NIV).

All of a sudden, it all made sense – faithful Mary had not been unfaithful; her faithfulness had led her to put herself at the service of the Lord, no matter the cost. She was the virgin who would carry the child that Isaiah said would be Immanuel, God with us. She was to carry the Messiah who would save His people from their sins! It all made sense!

But wait, did it? Did that REALLY make sense? I mean, there's no precedent for that. No virgin has ever given birth. And generally speaking guys, if your girlfriend gets pregnant unexpectedly, maybe look for another girlfriend. But in this case, did it make sense?

I mean, that angel spoke to me in a dream. The angel Gabriel appeared to Mary. The promises of a Davidic king were all on the books in our Holy Scriptures and Mary and I were both of David's line – could I trust that this was all legit?

Well, this is where Proverbs 3:5-6 kicked in – trust in the LORD with all your heart; lean not on your own understanding. I mean, this made ‘no sense’ to me, but YHWH is all knowing and all powerful and He knows what He’s doing, so given His clear direction, it seemed right to trust Him with all our hearts. We put Him first and He made our paths straight.

I would never have dreamed that this would be the case, but nine months later, there we were in Bethlehem, the city of David, in a manger, surrounded by animals, and Mary gave birth to our son. The newborn King. We named Him Jesus, just as the angel had said.

I acted justly, I loved mercy, I walked humbly with God. I leaned not on my own understanding and trusted YHWH with all my heart, and look how it turned out. I was now the adoptive father of the Saviour of the world. God knows what He’s doing, even when we don’t.

Now, I’d like to say that the uncertainties ended there, but that’s just not life, is it?

We weren’t sure if maybe the Messiah should grow up in the city of David, so we rented a room in Bethlehem. It wasn’t much, but it was enough for our little family. The most remarkable thing though – for two years, every night, this star shone over the house. I often wondered what it meant; I mean, there is that line in the book of Numbers - A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel.<sup>1</sup>

But then, one day, out of the blue, these foreign dignitaries showed up at the door. Magi! Imagine that! Gentile philosophers came in and knelt down before Jesus. They’d been following the star for months; tracking its course to find the king who lay beneath it. And after stopping in Jerusalem, they came here. They brought these lavish gifts – gifts fit for a king – gold and incense and myrrh – but that wasn’t all they brought.

The very night they left, the same angel who came to me before appeared in a dream and said ‘Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.’ The magi had inadvertently told the king about Jesus’ presence in Bethlehem and now we had to flee. ‘Get up’ the angel said. ‘take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for you are in great danger.’

Talk about uncertainty. Waking up in the middle of the night; running for your life to a foreign land. It turned our lives upside down again. The adrenaline alone gave me nausea for hours on end.

I would like to have acted justly, but we were kind of the ones being unjustly pursued. I would have loved to be shown mercy but all I could do here was walk humbly with God – well, run, humbly with God, trusting Him with all my heart, leaning not on my own understanding. I’ll tell you, those days when we fled into Egypt, trying to find food and shelter and water and rest – it was a struggle every day. We wondered if we would make it through.

But Mary and I both resolved to trust in the LORD with all our heart and to lean not on our own understanding. We chose in the midst of that struggle to see God at work in it, rather than being discouraged by the struggle itself.

And I'll tell you, as we relied on God, He showed Himself to be faithful. Those lavish gifts the magi brought? Those gifts funded our escape. We hadn't brought much from Galilee, but they had given us a treasure to draw from. We didn't realize it at first, but there was already a well-established Jewish community in Egypt; when we arrived, we immediately found a whole community of people who trusted in YHWH, just like we did. God knew that, but we didn't. When we trusted in Him with all our hearts and leaned not on our own understanding, He led the way and His way was best. God knew what He was doing and He deserved our trust.

So that's my story – my turn at living out Proverbs 3 and Micah 6; what's yours? What lies ahead for you? What challenges lay in your path in this new year? What struggles do you anticipate? What bad habits do you need to break and what good habits do you need to pick up? Most importantly, what is God calling you to in 2022? It won't be the same as what I went through, but God has good plans for you. He has put you right where He wants you to do something great for His kingdom. Will you trust Him enough to do it? Take hold of what God is calling you to in 2022.

And when you're not sure what to do, remember Micah 6:8 – Act justly, love mercy, walk humbly with your God. You can't go wrong with that.

And if you're facing an uncertain situation, remember Proverbs 3:5-6: Trust in the LORD with all your heart; lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make straight your paths.

---

<sup>i</sup> "I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near. A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel. He will crush the foreheads of Moab, the skulls of all the people of Sheth" (Numbers 24:17).