

Waiting: it's worth it!

Isaiah 7¹⁰⁻¹⁶; Psalm 80¹⁻⁸; Romans 1¹⁻⁷; Matthew 1^{18-end}

When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

[Matthew 1²⁴⁻²⁵]

Today we have the opportunity to explore waiting through Jesus' step-father: Joseph! He is much more than the spare part in the Christmass story - and he is a role model in waiting for God's time!

- ✦ He had waiting from the birth of Mary to become engaged to her. Their families would have arranged the marriage from soon after Mary's birth - they would have grown up knowing that they were destined to be together. Something to wait for.
- ✦ They would have been betrothed when Mary was 10 or 11 and they were waiting then to live together after Mary's first menstrual cycle: it was important for the future that there was at least the potential of having children, which is why they waited. The problem was that God had a different plan for Mary as her puberty began.
- ✦ It is clear that Joseph waited to respond once he found out that Mary was pregnant. He thought about the best thing to do - he was a **righteous man** and wanted to avoid a **public disgrace**. So very few would respond in such a measured way, which was perhaps why God entrusted his Son to this step-father.
- ✦ God waited until he had resolved what to do and then sent the angelic messenger to him to explain what was happening. Again, the measure of the man, that he allowed this intervention to change what he had planned (a real role model in responding to God).
- ✦ Because Joseph realised that was unique and special he then waited to have **marital relations** with Mary until the boy was born and, obedient to God, the name **Jesus**, is given. That puts paid to the overly-spiritual nonsense that Mary and Joseph lived celibate lives and is an important underscoring that God chose a normal family to nurture Jesus.

- ✦ All of this ends the period of waiting for God's action to save humanity for in Jesus arrived the one will **save his people from their sins**.

Waiting isn't in fashion any more.

Few will save for things they need, but often take on credit that they can't afford.

Relationships no longer seem to build up to the intimacy of sex, but begin there - something that has great potential for emotional harm: commitment brings security.

There are also those who can't wait for God's timings for the things they want and either rush to do things for themselves or reject God, not realising that God's time is always perfect and best.

The waiting for Christmass is almost over - we gather this evening to sing and tell the story and then celebrate the birth of Jesus in the three services over Christmass Eve and Christmass Day. The waiting to tell the story means that we (unlike so many around us) aren't wearied by Christmass before it begins. But the waiting for the joy of being forgiven is over and that we celebrate all year.