**SERVICE OF READINGS AND CAROLS 22nd Dec 2025**

**Joy and adoption Matthew 1:18-25**

It’s hard to imagine what it must have been like for Joseph. Excited about his future with his soon to be bride … he discovers that it’s got a bit complicated! Too complicated! Then in a dream, through an angel, he is told to go ahead, as planned … marry Mary and become her Son’s adoptive father. Destined to marry a pregnant girl and raise her Son as his own. From simple, unknown carpenter … to… the talk of the town, misunderstood, father to the Son of God!

Matthew describes him as a “righteous man”. Luke says very little about him. But from his actions we know he was courageous, faithful, devoted … both to God, his soon to be wife and his not yet born, adopted Son.

Adoption is an interesting thing. In our culture - for many - adoption is a negative term! Those adopted often struggle with knowing who they are, where they fit. It brings feelings of rejection, alienation. Of being not wanted, abandoned.

And in terms of Australian history – a whole generation were forcefully adopted. Therefore because of how it happened, why it happened … and the trail of destruction and difficulty that remains, adoption is not something to be celebrated!

But what about from the perspective of the parents. Desperately wanting a child – they choose a child to bring into the family, make them their own! The deliberate selecting of a child to become theirs. But what about a parent who had no choice – for whom it was thrust upon them … like Joseph?

Sadly, the Bible tells us little about Joseph, and even less about his relationship with Jesus. Although we know, like his dad, Jesus grew to be a carpenter. So I imagine Him, from a young age, trotting around after His dad, watching him carefully, copying him, mimicking his every move. And then, once 12, he enters the family business, taken under His father’s wing, taught everything His father knew. And for 18 years – works in the trade.

I imagine Joseph, the righteous, courageous, devoted man, occasionally sitting back, glancing over, he sees Jesus! Caught off guard he finds himself pondering the mystery and wonder of God’s ways. That he has the privilege of being this boy’s adoptive dad. Of His miraculous and amazing birth. And that he should now be Father to the Son of God!

And when I think of this, I think about God adopting us. The prophet Hosea puts it this way *“When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.” Hosea 11:1*

And Paul in Galatians 8:15-17 *For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption (by which we become his children and), by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!”   The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.*

Have you ever considered that Joseph’s willing inclusion of Jesus into his family, is a picture of God’s inclusion of us into His? Since the foundation of the world God decided to choose you to be His precious child. You are loved, accepted and a member of His one family. In Christ, you have been adopted as His daughters and sons: The one true all powerful creator God – we can now call Daddy.

For Paul – this is the best news of all - God is our Father! He has chosen us to be His children! We are adopted into His family! He is so convinced that this is great news, that in Ephesians 1 he gets caught up in a cacophony of praise: *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. (Eph 1:3-6)*

We are God’s adopted children – we belong in His family. It is not something we do, not something we have earned or achieved. It is a gift God has given us, made possible because of Jesus. God for us … God with us!

PRAYER

VIDEO