

Thought For The Week

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Joseph the Carpenter

Sunday evening, October 4, 2026 — Jim Lokenbauer

Scripture does not record a single word from Joseph. That was where Jim Lokenbauer began on Sunday evening. The morning lesson had set Joseph in David's legal line and Mary's seed line beside it. The evening lesson asked a simpler question. If the man never speaks, how do we know him? We know him the way Scripture leaves him: by what he did.

Joseph was a Jew of Bethlehem, a descendant of David through Solomon, the husband of Mary, and the man the town supposed to be the father of Jesus. Matthew calls him her husband and a just man. God entrusted him with a child who was not his own, and with the care of the mother who bore that child. Almost nothing else is told. Jim's point was that the little that is told is enough. A man's faith can be read from his actions when his words are never written down.

A just man, and merciful

Matthew 1:18–19 is the first clear look. Mary was betrothed to Joseph. Before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.

Jim paused on the word betrothed. This was not a modern engagement, the kind that can be broken with a conversation. In Israel a betrothal was a binding marriage contract. A betrothed woman was legally the wife of her betrothed. Unfaithfulness in that season was treated as adultery, and the law made it a capital matter. To end it, Joseph would need a certificate of divorce entered in the legal record. He could have insisted on that record in public. He meant to do it quietly.

That choice is the first mark of the man. Justice did not make him cruel. He would not pretend the situation was ordinary, and he would not disgrace her to clear his own name. He was sleeping on the decision, turning it over, when the angel came.

He woke and did it

Matthew 1:20–21 records the dream. An angel of the Lord addressed him as Joseph, son of David, and told him not to be afraid to take Mary as his wife. What was conceived in her was from the Holy Spirit. She would bear a son. Joseph was to name him Jesus, for he would save his people from their sins. Matthew ties the word to the prophet: the virgin would conceive and bear a son, and they would call his name Emmanuel, God with us.

Jim set Mary's answer beside Joseph's, from Luke 1. Gabriel had already told her she would conceive by the Holy Spirit and bear the Son of the Most High, the heir of David's throne, whose kingdom would have no end. She asked how this could be, since she was a virgin, and then she answered as a servant: let it be to me according to your word. Joseph received the same plan from the other side of the house. The child was not a scandal to be managed. He was the Savior, named

by heaven, given to this couple to raise.

When Joseph woke, he did as the angel commanded. He took Mary as his wife. He did not know her until she had given birth to a son. He called his name Jesus. Jim called him a man of action. He did not delay. He understood the weight of what he had been told, and the moment he woke he took care of the Lord's business. The self-control is part of the same obedience. He lived with his wife and restrained himself until the child was born. Desire did not outrank the word he had been given.

Present, then gone by night

Luke 2 places him where a husband ought to be. The decree of Caesar Augustus sent them from Nazareth to Bethlehem, the city of David, because Joseph was of the house and lineage of David. While they were there Mary gave birth to her firstborn, wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. Joseph was there.

The shepherds came in haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. They told what the angels had said. Jim noted what that witness would have done for Joseph. It confirmed the dream. Mary was a good woman. There had been no impropriety. The child in the manger was the expected Savior. All who heard it wondered. Mary treasured the words. Joseph, still silent in the text, stayed.

The next command came the same way. After the visitors from the east had gone, an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him to rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt. King Herod was about to search for the child to destroy him. Joseph rose, took them by night, and left. They remained in Egypt until Herod died, and Matthew hears in that flight the word of the prophet, "Out of Egypt I called my son."

Herod, refused the Magi's report, calculated from the time of the star and killed the boys of Bethlehem, two years old and under. God had already moved the child. When Herod died, the angel sent Joseph back to Israel. Joseph heard that Archelaus reigned in Judea in his father's place and was afraid to go there. Warned again in a dream, he withdrew to Galilee and lived in Nazareth, so that the child would be called a Nazarene.

Jim gathered the pattern. Again and again Joseph did exactly as he was told, without question and without hesitation. He protected the child and hid him from the men who wanted him dead. Not enough good, Jim said, can be said about him.

The last scene

Luke 2:39–52 is the last place Joseph appears. After they had done everything according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom, and the favor of God was upon him. His parents went to Jerusalem every year for the Passover. Jim took that yearly journey as evidence of Joseph's devotion. Passover was one of the three feasts that required the men of Israel to go up. Joseph went.

When Jesus was twelve they went up according to custom. After the feast, as the company started home, Jesus stayed behind. His parents supposed he was in the group, traveled a day's journey, and then searched among relatives and acquaintances. Not finding him, they returned to Jerusalem. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening and asking questions. All who heard him were amazed. Mary asked why he had treated them so. His father and

she had been searching in great distress. Jesus answered that he must be in his Father's house. They did not understand the saying. He went down with them to Nazareth and was submissive to them.

Then the record falls silent. Jim does not think the silence means the role was small. In the life of Jesus the role was huge. Joseph taught him the law. He taught him a trade. He protected him. He did the work of a husband and the work of a father, and he did it as the work of God. Scripture calls him a just man. He was full of compassion in the way he treated Mary. In Jim's judgment he would fit in the company of Hebrews 11, beside Abraham, who was called to leave his country. Joseph was called to leave his, and to look after a child who was not his own.

What his actions still say

People come and go. Jim closed on that note, and on the hope that belongs to the child Joseph raised. Joseph waits for the day when his son will call him from the grave. The same Lord will call his own, the living at the trumpet and the dead from the ground, and they will be with him.

Until then, Joseph still teaches, and he teaches without a recorded sentence. Righteousness can be merciful. A hard decision can be made without shaming the person caught in it. When God speaks, the answer is to wake and do it. A man can restrain himself because a word from heaven outranks his own desire. A father can spend his years on a child the town only supposes is his, and the years will not be wasted. The carpenter never speaks in Scripture. His obedience does.

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He Woke and Did It

Sunday evening, October 4, 2026 — Jim Lokenbauer

Scripture never records a word from Joseph the husband of Mary the mother of Jesus. Jim Lokenbauer asked the congregation Sunday evening to read the man by what he did. The clearest window is Matthew 1:19–24.

Mary was betrothed to Joseph, and before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. Joseph was a just man, and he was unwilling to put her to shame, so he resolved to divorce her quietly. A betrothal in Israel was not a modern engagement. It was a binding marriage. Unfaithfulness in that season was treated as adultery, and the law made it a capital matter. Joseph could have insisted on a public record. He meant to end it without disgrace.

While he was still turning the decision over, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. “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.” Matthew ties the word to the prophet: the virgin would conceive and bear a son, and they would call his name Emmanuel, God with us.

Joseph woke and did as the angel commanded. He took Mary as his wife. He did not know her until she had given birth to a son. He called his name Jesus. Jim called him a man of action. He did not delay. The moment he woke, he took care of the Lord’s business. The self-control belongs to the same obedience. Desire did not outrank the word he had been given.

That is the man the town supposed to be the father of Jesus. Justice did not make him cruel. When God spoke, he woke and did it. A hard decision can be made without shaming the person caught in it, and a word from heaven can outrank a man’s own plan. The carpenter never speaks in Scripture. His obedience does.

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