

## Where Did That Come From?

Have you ever had one of those days, seasons, situations, where everything is good, until it isn't? This is one way to describe the point in which Joseph enters the "Christmas Story". We are introduced to Joseph in the middle of an unwelcome nightmare. Having become engaged to young girl in the accepted manner for his day, time and society, he has worked hard to establish an income to support his new bride and begin a family. He is committed to Mary. Then the news comes that betrothed is pregnant.

Potentially heart-broken and obviously betrayed, how should Joseph react to this news? Should he publicly shame her and serve her with a certificate of divorce? Should he surrender her to a public stoning? Where does whatever he may have been feeling rank with the expectations of his family and friends? What does this do to his future, how should he precede? What can be trusted?

When everything is good, until it isn't, is more about the situation or circumstance than any choice or option. When everything is good, until it isn't, something unexpected strikes, something that we cannot control. When everything is good, until it isn't, our focus may be on where did that come from as much as it is on what should we do now. In the midst of the "until it isn't" faith can be shaken.

Then an angel visits Joseph, in a dream. That clears things up, right? The angel, God's messenger doesn't offer an easy solution. There is nothing in the passage to indicate that the angel offered much in the way of assurances. The angel confirms the situation, then invites Joseph to abide in the midst of it.

Who wants to live in the "until it isn't"? What might be accomplished, for the glory of God and the good of creation, when it goes against all that is understood about right and about wrong? Joseph awakes and proceeds to marry Mary, name the child, raise the child. What amazing trust Joseph had. Trust in God. What trust Joseph displayed in his ability to hear and know the message and leading of God! Joseph didn't ignore his dream, didn't attribute it to stress of perhaps too spicy of a late night snack. There is no indication that Joseph heard the angel, then conferred with others, or waited for confirmation.

Trust is one of those so simple yet so complex concepts. Think of the number of things that you have trusted in so far this morning. Did an alarm wake you, a light come on in response to a simple action? Did you pour a cup of coffee or fix a bite for breakfast and trust in what it would taste like? Yes. Most everything we do, every choice we make includes some aspect of trust. We do not know all that there is to know, about anything, and as the saying on the sign reminds us, none of us are self-sufficient or self-made.

Yet human nature tends to want to base trust on something, something concrete -- the greater the risk in trusting, the deeper the search for such a base. To trust in one's alarm is the norm, for a normal day. Yet when what we are waking up for is critical, we may set several alarms, or enlist the help of others to ensure we arrive on time. Trusting in our infrastructure, that the power, water and gas, will most often, work as expected is based upon experience and our sense that we have provided for it, in one way or another.

Trusting that when we make the best choice, when we think it out, research it, perhaps seek advice, is based somewhat upon our own sense of self. Yet, for Joseph, trusting in God and in God's leadings for his life, conflicted with experience and understanding. And as with all of the "Christmas Story" the ways and wonders of God speak to the here and now and to the days to come, as surely as they tell of the past. What a radical trust. Where did it come from? What might we be reminded of in order to trust completely in God, in this good until it isn't world?

Such trust is found in the unswerving belief that the God of Heaven will indeed work on our behalf to bring God's perfect will for our lives into being. Such trust grows when we look to the stories of the past in order to see that God is active and present in the here and now. Such trust can only come when the understanding that life is far more our physical existence, comfort or even desires and that our lives, as well as our interests or responsibilities, do not end and are not limited by physical death.

Joseph enters the biblical narrative in the midst of a "everything was good, until it wasn't" nightmare. Life did not suddenly or ever get any easier. Joseph lost the illusion of control, traveled and was chased to Egypt and back, provided for his family as best he could, and stood by their side in whatever the situation. Yet he trusted in God.

And through his trust, God was made known, through his trust, we was graced with God's presence and experienced God's power, through his trust, the world was changed and goodness drew closer. All this, God did through his trust. Imagine what God might do as we choose so radical a trust!