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## Graphics and Audio Notes

- There **will** be a sermon starter video.
- There **will** be notes and / or scripture to show on screen during the sermon.
- There will be Holy Communion at the 9 a.m. worship service each Sunday in December.

Text highlighted in this way will have a slide prepared to be on screen.

Text highlighted in this way is a reminder for Andrew during delivery.



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## Key Questions

### What is this sermon about?

This sermon is about the down-to-earth lifestyle of Jesus and what it might mean to live this way today.

### Why is this sermon important?

It is important because Jesus' lifestyle is different than many lifestyles in our world today.

### What is the good news?

The good news is that God provides all we need to leave the confines of easy belief and risk a down-to-earth lifestyle of sacrificial love.

### What are the next action steps?

You are invited to live Jesus' lifestyle and consider giving to our 2016 Christmas Eve offering.

### What is the context of this sermon?

This series and sermon is adapted from the book *Down to Earth* by Mike Slaughter with Rachel Billups published through Abingdon Press.

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## Metadata

### Topics

- Change Lives
- Serve
- Transformation of the World

3rd Sunday of Advent  
Down to Earth - Down to Earth Lifestyle  
First United Methodist Church of El Dorado  
Text Online at <http://bit.ly/2diMwin>

December 11, 2016  
Matthew 1:24  
Preaching Target Word Count: 1,928  
Audio Online at <http://bit.ly/2hj4wdE>  
Video Online at <http://bit.ly/2hJjvha>

## Sermon Books of the Bible

- Acts
- Deuteronomy
- John
- Luke
- Matthew

## Tags

sermon, worship, church, Methodist, UnitedMethodist, UnitedMethodistChurch, FirstUnitedMethodistChurch, ElDorado, Kansas, GreatPlains, AnnualConference, GreatPlainsAnnualConference, Advent, Christmas, love, Jesus, downtoearth, lifestyle

**Introduction** **5**

Matthew 1:24, CEB  
Response to Scripture  
Sermon Starter Video

**An Angel Appears to Joseph** **5**

God speaks through Dreams  
Marriage in the Ancient Near East  
Mary and Joseph  
Key Scripture - Deuteronomy 22:20-21  
Imagine Being Joseph  
Joseph's Dream  
Excursus to Congregation  
Key Scripture - Matthew 1:24  
Down to Earth Reality of Discipleship  
Key Scripture - Luke 9:23-24  
Example: Dietrich Bonhoeffer

**Activating God-Sized Dreams** **7**

Work of the Holy Spirit  
Key Scripture: Acts 2:17  
Key Scripture: John 14:12  
Faith  
Example: Gift Cards  
Jesus and the Man at the Pool of Bethesda  
Jesus Knows Us  
Lukewarm Practice Faith

**Conclusion** **9**

Good News  
Call to Action  
Miracle = divine intervention + human responsibility

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Faith and Action

Example: Feed Five Thousand

Example: Healing Ten Lepers

Daily Acts of Faith

2016 Christmas Eve Offering

2016 Christmas Eve Offering - Skelly Elementary

Invitation

Invitation to Compassionate Action

Invitation to Invite

Your Invitation to Follow Jesus

I'm sorry. Thank you. Please.

Not ready to pray

Closing

Closing Prayer

## Introduction

### Matthew 1:24, CEB

<sup>24</sup>When Joseph woke up, he did just as an angel from God commanded and took Mary as his wife.

### Response to Scripture

One: The word of God for the people of God.

All: Thanks be to God.

### Sermon Starter Video

Play sermon starter video.

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## An Angel Appears to Joseph

### God speaks through Dreams

God speaks to people through dreams, even though most of us would prefer an audible voice booming from heaven.

An audible voice would give full assurance that the directive was from God and was not the results of last evening's spicy chili.

It was in a dream that an angel appeared to Joseph.

### Marriage in the Ancient Near East

In Jesus' time, marriage took place at a relatively young age.

Men often waited until they were eighteen, an age when they would have been established in a trade that would enable them to support a new family.

Women married as soon as they were physically able, around the age of twelve or thirteen.

Marriages were usually arranged by the parents.

There was a period following the arrangement called "betrothal," and, following that, the wedding ceremony was held. It was after the ceremony, and presumably not before, that the marriage union was consummated.

### Mary and Joseph

But before the ceremony Joseph learned that his betrothed, Mary, was pregnant.

You can imagine the shock and betrayal that Joseph must have felt.

Matthew makes it clear that Joseph had been faithful in practicing physical restraint and that because he "did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly" (Matthew 1:19). Public exposure could have resulted in

execution by stoning, which is still carried out in some countries in the Middle East today.

### **Key Scripture - Deuteronomy 22:20-21**

This practice was based in a literal rendering of scripture from Deuteronomy 22:20-21:

“However, if the claim is true and proof of the young woman’s virginity can’t be produced, then the city’s elders will bring the young woman to the door of her father’s house. The citizens of that city must stone her until she dies because she acted so sinfully in Israel by having extramarital sex while still in her father’s house.”<sup>1</sup>

### **Imagine Being Joseph**

Take a moment to put yourself in Joseph’s shoes.

He was obviously devastated, definitely angry, but he chose to live above cultural-religious bigotry to seek the best way out of a broken trust.

Even a man in love, with great faith, knows that it takes two to make a baby.

And Joseph was not one of the two.

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*Pause*  
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That was when Joseph had the dream.

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*Pause*  
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### **Joseph’s Dream**

In Joseph’s dream, an angel appeared and told him to take Mary as his wife.

### **Excursus to Congregation**

Now, I don’t know about you, but I would want something more than a dream to inform me that “the Holy Spirit did it!”

But a dream was all that Joseph was given, and by faith Joseph acted on that dream.

### **Key Scripture - Matthew 1:24**

We read in Matthew 1:24:

“When Joseph woke up, he did just as an angel from God commanded and took Mary as his wife.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Deuteronomy 22:20-21, CEB.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 1:24, CEB.

## Down to Earth Reality of Discipleship

You and I can so easily “spiritualize” the events surrounding the Christmas story, but there was nothing about the Holy Family that would remove them from the down-to-earth realities of everyday life. This was true for Joseph, and it’s true for all of us in following the costly lifestyle of discipleship.

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*Pause*  
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### **Key Scripture - Luke 9:23-24**

Jesus’ words in Luke 9:23-24 are for us:

“Jesus said to everyone, “All who want to come after me must say no to themselves, take up their cross daily, and follow me. All who want to save their lives will lose them. But all who lose their lives because of me will save them.”<sup>3</sup>

### **Example: Dietrich Bonhoeffer**

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German theologian who was martyred by hanging in the dreaded Flossenburg concentration camp, put it this way:

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*“When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.”<sup>4</sup>*  
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*Pause*  
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## Activating God-Sized Dreams

### **Work of the Holy Spirit**

As we read in the Book of Acts, the ability to dream God-sized dreams demonstrates the reality of the Holy Spirit’s presence with us and in us:

### **Key Scripture: Acts 2:17**

“In the last days, God says,  
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.  
Your sons and daughters will prophesy.  
Your young will see visions.  
Your elders will dream dreams.”<sup>5</sup>

When God gives a vision, God will make provision!

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<sup>3</sup> Luke 9:23-24, CEB.

<sup>4</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Touchstone, 1995), 44.

<sup>5</sup> Acts 2:17, CEB.

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*Pause*  
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The Holy Spirit gives us the resources to live faith-based lifestyles and carry out kingdom of God missions.

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*Pause*  
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**Key Scripture: John 14:12**

This is what Jesus meant when he said in John 14:12:

“I assure you that whoever believes in me will do the works that I do. They will do even greater works than these because I am going to the Father.”<sup>6</sup>

Jesus follows this with the promise of the Father sending the Holy Spirit to be an “advocate” to help us and be with us forever.<sup>7</sup>

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*Pause*  
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Joseph’s obedience to the angel’s directive through his dreams shows the critical nature of faith and faith’s application in daily life.

**Faith**

Faith is perhaps the most underutilized asset in the church.

**Example: Gift Cards**

Have you ever received a gift card and then forgotten to use it?

If so, you are not the only one.

In the United States there are billions of dollars of unredeemed gift cards that accumulate from year to year.

As with our Christian faith, we have to often failed to redeem what has already been paid for with a price!

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*Pause*  
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**Jesus and the Man at the Pool of Bethesda**

It is just too easy to hold to a form of faith, and yet at the same time to deny faith’s power. Jesus encountered a man at the healing pools of Bethesda who had lain in the same state of paralysis for thirty-eight years. Honing in with laser like precision,

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<sup>6</sup> John 14:12, CEB.

<sup>7</sup> Jon 14:16



Jesus posed a question that penetrated to the root of the man's condition: "Do you want to get well?"<sup>8</sup>

## Jesus Knows Us

Jesus knows the nature of our hearts.

Rationalization, pride, deception, and procrastination – he sees them all.

Like the man at Bethesda, we learn to become comfortable in our current status, no matter how miserable, and resist a down-to-earth, kingdom-of-God lifestyle.

### ***Lukewarm Practice Faith***

There are times when our lukewarm practice of faith denies the gospel's power to bring good news to the poor and freedom for the oppressed.

We so easily gloss over the passages that call us to sell our possessions and give to the poor.

We surround ourselves in a comfortable and safe system of belief instead of following the living Christ into the trenches to attack the world's pain.

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*Pause*  
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## Conclusion

### Good News

The good news is that God provides all we need to leave the confines of easy belief and risk a down-to-earth lifestyle of sacrificial love.

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*Pause*  
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### Call to Action

#### ***Miracle = divine intervention + human responsibility***

Every miracle has two components: divine intervention and human responsibility.

For a real miracle to take place, we must act on God's directive, as Joseph did when he followed the angel's command and took Mary as his wife.

#### ***Faith and Action***

Faith always requires a corresponding action.

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<sup>8</sup> John 5:6

**Example: Feed Five Thousand**

When Jesus' disciples asked where the food would come from to feed over five thousand families, his response was, "You give them something to eat"<sup>9</sup>

**Example: Healing Ten Lepers**

When ten lepers came asking Jesus for healing, "he said, 'Go, show yourselves to the priests.' And as they went, they were cleansed"<sup>10</sup>

Like Joseph with his dream, like the disciples feeding the five thousand, when the lepers acted on their faith, a miracle happened.

**Daily Acts of Faith**

We are inviting you to do simple and beautiful thing each day this season.

Making faith commitments on a daily basis has a cumulative effect that will give exponential results – maybe even miracles – for the rest of your life and beyond.

**2016 Christmas Eve Offering**

As a congregation, we are taking responsibility to be part of God's transformation of the world through our Christmas Eve offering. Every year since 2012, we have given away 100% of our offering on Christmas Eve.

This year, our Christmas Eve offering will help build local and global mission partnerships.

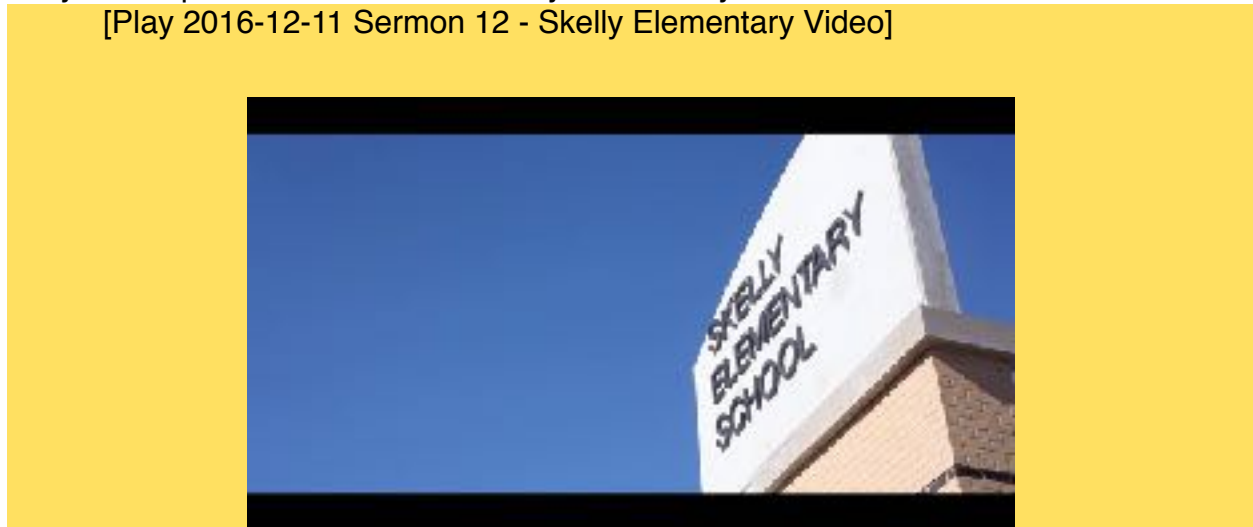
50% go to our local mission partnership with Skelly Elementary School.

50% go to our global mission partnership with Nyameni United Methodist Church.

**2016 Christmas Eve Offering - Skelly Elementary**

I want you to know more about these partnerships. We have a video telling a story of compassion and need at Skelly Elementary. Let's take a look...

[Play 2016-12-11 Sermon 12 - Skelly Elementary Video]



<sup>9</sup> Matthew 14:16

<sup>10</sup> Luke 17:14

## Invitation

### ***Invitation to Compassionate Action***

Jesus tells his disciples that faith can never be separated from a down-to-earth lifestyle of compassionate action.

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*Pause*  
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A commitment to follow Jesus means that we commit to a lifestyle of service.

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*Pause*  
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The Christmas season reminds us that Christians are to form a community of light in the midst of darkness – a broad, thriving, and investing community through which God pours heaven’s resources and purposes into Planet Earth.

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*Pause*  
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### ***Invitation to Invite***

Christmas, along with Easter, marks one of two seasons each year when our friends, family members, and neighbors are most spiritually open. This means that the two weeks are one of our best opportunities to introduce another person into a life-giving and life-transforming relationship with Jesus Christ.

Friends don’t let friends miss out on the Kingdom.

Inviting others to meet Jesus is our most sacred task, and Christmas is the perfect opportunity to include others, inviting them to pull up a chair at the Kingdom table.

I recognize that “inviting” for many of us can be personally challenging.

We all have excuses: *I don’t know the Bible. I’m too shy. It won’t work anyway.*

In those moments of fear, we have to remember that we are not called or expected to change anyone’s life. We are merely asked to share our own story of life transformation and offer an opportunity. The rest belongs to Christ.

### ***Your Invitation to Follow Jesus***

If you don’t have a relationship with Jesus that is life-giving and life-changing, You can.

All you have to do is ask.

### ***I’m sorry. Thank you. Please.***

In just a moment, I will invite you to join with me in prayer.

And, if you would like to pray, you do not have to pray out loud, just repeat after me, quietly, under your breath.

It's a very simple thing to pray – I am sorry. Thank you. Please.

I'm sorry - to turn away from the things that we know are wrong  
Thank you - to express gratitude for God's love for us in Jesus Christ  
Please - to put our faith in Jesus and ask to be filled with God's Holy Spirit.

***Not ready to pray***

If you don't want to pray a prayer like that today, it's okay.  
No problem.

***Closing***

Jesus' mother Mary was only a young teenager when she was approached by God's messenger about her incredible and personal dangerous mission to bear God's Son. The responsibility was uncomfortable, inconvenient, and scary. Yet Mary responded, in essence, "I am your servant, Lord. Let it be done to me as you say"<sup>11</sup>

Let's make that our heart's desire and prayer this Advent as we demonstrate down-to-earth lifestyles that point others to Christ.

Will you pray with me?

**Closing Prayer**

Jesus, I am sorry for all the wrong things I have thought, said or done.

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*And if anything comes to mind, ask God's forgiveness.*

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Wash me clean and make me new.  
Thank you for your love for me in Jesus Christ.  
Please fill me with your Holy Spirit  
so that I can live as part of your down-to-earth kingdom.  
In Jesus name, I pray.  
Amen.

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<sup>11</sup> Luke 1:38 paraphrase