

**McCabe United Methodist Church**  
**The Courage to Start (Part 4 of 4)**  
**Isaiah 35:8-10 \*Matthew 1:18-25: December 22, 2013**  
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So, here was Joseph. A good man. A strong man. A working man. A righteousness man according the Bible. A man who tried to live life right.

One day, he found the woman of his dreams. Her name was Mary. He met her. He courted her. He fell in love with her and he asked her to marry him. She agreed.

You might say life was good for Joseph. He was happy, excited and anxious. What more could a husband-to-be want?

Then, strange things happened one night. Strange things that caused Joseph to be not-so-happy and not-so-excited and not-so-anxious. In fact, these strange things that happened caused Joseph to be upset and even bewildered.

And here's the reason why: The book of Matthew doesn't say a lot about Mary in this story, but Matthew does tell us that Joseph found out that she, Mary, his wife-to-be was pregnant and he, Joseph, the husband-to-be was not the father.

My, O my! This definitely was not a part of Joseph's plan. No sir. No way. No how. Ma'am. He didn't see this one coming. Now Joseph, being a righteousness man and all, decided to divorce Mary quietly. He could have gone public and let everyone know the kind of woman Mary turned out to be, but he didn't. He didn't want to disgrace her.

But then, the strangest thing ever happened to Joseph. He had a dream. In his dream, an angel appeared to him. It was one of God's angels. And the angel said to Joseph something like this: **“Joseph, the son of David, I know what you're thinking and how you're feeling. But, don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife. You see, God is doing a new thing. God is changing how the world works. God has decided to become one-of-you. God's Son is being born into the world and Mary, your wife-to-be, is going to be the mother. The baby she is carrying is from the Holy Sprit. That was God's idea and not Mary's. She is innocent. She will give birth to a son and God wants you to name him Jesus because he will save people from their sins.”**

Do you remember what Joseph did? The Bible simply says, **“He did. He did as the angel commanded.”** Joseph stopped the divorce plans and he did what God asked him to do. He took Mary for his wife. You might say, he had the *Courage to*

*stop something old and start something new.*

This is the fourth and final message in an Advent series about *Courage*. Three weeks ago, we talked about the *Courage to Believe*. The *Courage to Believe* in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. The *Courage to Believe* that Jesus lived and died for us and has plans for us.

Two weeks ago, we talked about the *Courage to Listen*. If we believe in Jesus. If we believe that Jesus is our Lord and Savior. If we believe that Jesus did live and die for us and has plans for us. Then, don't you think he might be worth listening to?

Last week, we talked about the *Courage to Act Right*. Or the *Courage to be Righteous*. Righteousness means acting right or right living.

Today, we'll talk about the *Courage to Start*. If we have the courage to believe in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. If we have the courage to listen to Jesus. If we have the courage to act right. Then now, it's time to put them all together and find the courage to do it, like Joseph did.

There's a story about a baby deer who lived with his family deep in the forest. At first, he wouldn't let his parents out of his sight. But gradually, as he started to get older, he began to get braver. Each day, he'd walk in one direction and then in another. Each day, he'd walk a little further from home, but he would always come back.

One day, after he had walked further than he had ever walked before, he came to this huge wall and he couldn't go any further because of it. He had to make a choice. He could either stay where he was, and keep doing the things he'd always been doing or . . . or, he could jump over the wall and find out what was on the other side.

He knew though, that if he jumped over the wall, he'd probably never be able to jump back again. It's just the way it was.

Do you know what the deer did? What would you do? The deer jumped over the wall and he landed in a brand, new world. A world where he found meaning and purpose. A world where he found something worth living and working for, something worth even dying for.

He never would have found this new world if, if he hadn't had the courage to jump.

And this where many people are today. They affirm Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, but they stop short when it comes to actually inviting him into our lives and following him. They stay behind the wall.

It's a matter of courage, isn't it? The *Courage to Start*.

In our lesson from Isaiah, the old prophet talked about a certain highway. He called this highway the '*Holy Way*'. It's a special road. A road that leads people to God.

Isaiah wants us to take this road. He wants us to travel this road. But again, we have to have the *Courage to Start*. We have to have the courage to jump over the wall or we'll never see the highway Isaiah called the '*Holy Way*'.

In a few days, it will be Christmas. Christmas and Easter are the two most important days in our Christian calendar. Christmas is the day when the angels proclaimed the *Good News*: **"He's here. He's born. He's in the world and he wants to be in our lives today."**

What are we going say to him when he knocks on our heart's door and asks us to let him in? What are we going to say to him when asks us to follow him? It's matter of courage. The '*Courage to Start*'.

Someone once said, **"The tragedy of life is not that it ends too soon, but that we wait too long to start living life."**

Let today be the day we jump. Let today be the day we jump over the wall and discover the new world Jesus has waiting for us. Let today be the day we find the *Courage to Start*.