

“Christmas Around the World: Germany”

Matthew 2:13-15

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All Scripture quoted from ESV unless otherwise noted

Germany is a country that is rich in Christmas tradition and history. The Christmas tree tradition may have begun in Latvia or Estonia, but gained popularity in Germany, where the tree is brought in and decorated on Christmas Eve. Christmas markets, where all sorts of Christmas foods and decorations are sold, are also very popular in Germany, and Germany is often credited as the origin of glass ornaments. Other traditions include the Sternsinger (or star singers) who go from house to house, sing a song and collect money for charity, glass ornaments, advent wreaths and advent calendars, which allow you to count down the days while you are waiting for Christmas Day.

Waiting can be very difficult, and especially so when you don't know how long you will have to wait. Christmas always involves waiting – waiting for the perfect sale, the ideal gift, the guests to arrive, the cookies to be done, and so on. Likewise, life involves waiting – waiting for a promotion, waiting for enough money, waiting for an answer to prayer. It's been said that “The waiting is the hardest part” and often, that seems to be the case.

In Matthew 2, we read of an angel who tells Joseph to go to Egypt until it is safe to return. In this example of extreme faith and absolute trust, there are several observations and valuable lessons that we can find on how to “wait well.” The first of these ideas is to trust God's purposes. God's ultimate purpose is to provide a way for all who call on the name of Jesus Christ to be saved. Sending Joseph, Mary, and Jesus to Egypt was necessary in order to fulfill the prophecy of Hosea 11:1 (“**Out of Egypt, I called my son.**”), which is a vital part of proving Christ's identity.

There are hundreds of prophecies about the Messiah, and in order to prove Jesus is the Messiah, God inspired men to record prophecies, written hundreds of years prior, that would prove who the Messiah is, so we would know it was Him when He arrived . . . and then He made a plan to fulfill those prophecies. That's the second lesson we learn from Joseph's example in Matthew 2: trust God's plan. Going to Egypt might not have made sense to Joseph, but he put his faith into action when he chose to trust God. After all, there's a big difference between having faith that an old rope bridge to hold you and trusting it enough to cross over it.

Finally, waiting well means trusting God's provision. By all accounts, Joseph was not a wealthy man, and now, with their finances already stretched far too thin, Joseph wakes Mary up and tells her they need to go to Egypt – right now. But God provided by

financing the entire trip! Matthew 2 records the visit of the wise men, who brought gifts of significant value. This was God's way of orchestrating events in order to accomplish His purposes and plans.

Waiting can be hard – the *uncertainty, your impatience and lack of control over the situation all make it difficult to wait well. But Joseph's example offers us a model of obedience in entering a season of waiting. Joseph shows us that we must obey immediately (he left that very night); we must obey completely (he doesn't bargain or obey half-heartedly; we must obey unconditionally (he doesn't seem to ask the question, "why?")*

Waiting would not have been easy for Joseph, and it isn't easy for you, either. But you can learn to wait well by trusting God when you're tired, unprepared, weak, or afraid. God calls us to wait at times, and in doing so, He provides opportunities to put your faith into action – opportunities for you to trust Him – opportunities to, like when you're on a roller coaster, grab the bar and hold on for dear life. And God will meet you on the other side of the waiting. He will be there; He will catch you – He always does.

Takeaways from this message.

Germany is often considered to be the origin of the Christmas tree tradition.

While you're waiting...

- ... trust God's Promise.
- ... trust God's Purpose.
 - The Fulfillment of Prophecy is a vital proof of Christ's identity.
- ... trust God's Plan.
 - Trust is Faith in action.
- ...trust God's Provision.
 - God had just Financed the trip to Egypt.

Joseph's model of obedience in entering a season of waiting.

- Obey Immediately.
- Obey Completely.
- Obey Unconditionally.

DIG IN!

Here are some farm-fresh questions that will help you to personalize and apply this morning's message.

1. *What was most surprising, unexpected, or helpful from today's passage/message? Why?*
2. **What does the flight to Egypt teach you about the methods God uses to accomplish his plans? Why?**
3. **What challenges do you suppose Joseph, Mary, and Jesus faced during their flight to Egypt?**
4. *What is the best Christmas cookie?*
5. **What would you tell someone who believes that trials are evidence that God is not with them? What does today's passage have to say about that?**
6. **What would you say to encourage someone to keep their eyes fixed on Jesus during times of waiting?**
7. **Describe the difference between faith and trust, using your own terms.**
8. **In what area of your life do you need to trust God more? How will you learn to trust God more in this area?**
9. *What have you learned through your personal time of Bible reading this week?*