

# A Word on Wednesday

Pastor Woods

I am amazed at how fast time goes any more. Both my boys are young men. Yesterday they were just babies in Preschool. Over the years there have been many phases. “Shy Phases”, “football phases”, “long-hair phases”; micro eras, if you will, that once dominated our attentions and schedules. Like many I can look at my own life and see mirco eras; junior high, high school, college, seminary, being single, certain girlfriend eras, early married years, being a young father, being skinny once upon a time, having dark hair once, etc. One era transitions into another and when it does a sudden moment of revelation will hit me and I will realize that one era has effortlessly melted into another. I remember watching my boys get on the bus for the first time. That was strangely sobering as I realized I won't have them *with me* all day at the office ‘terrorizing’ the church or making skid-marks with their bike tires in the fellowship hall. Suddenly now my wife and I are paying college tuition and including the boys’ girlfriends at family events. Huh? Who...ah...what...? The Bible says, life is a *mist* so these days I try not to *miss* much anymore.

## Time has Context

Have you ever considered how important context is in time? For example, if we were to visit Jerusalem today we would not be under the same dangers as Joseph who had to run from Herod to Egypt with his family. Rome no longer carries with it the lingering emotions and oppressions it once held in Joseph's time. Today a black woman would think nothing of riding in the front of a bus but not so in the 60s. Anyone who wants to visit Germany for the 500th anniversary this year can do so. An American wouldn't even consider it in 1942 except to defeat Hitler as a soldier. In recent days fans mourn Carrie Fisher and her mom. In another era fans mourned silent movie stars like Charlie Chapman, Douglas Fairbanks and Rudolph Valentino—names younger people are asking, “who?”. And if you want to take a flight to Egypt today it will cost you anywhere from 1500 to 5600 to ride on a airplane that can carry over 150 people at speeds of 500 miles an hour at 40,000 feet. In Joseph's day, no

airplanes; just 200 miles of walking with a young wife and a brand new baby. With time context changes; we don't dress like we did in the 70s and by next year already we will all wonder what the big deal was with Hatchemals.

When Joseph and Mary traveled 200 miles to Egypt their context changed rather urgently. Context includes culture, language, and things like idols. It is a life of exile from everything Joseph knew. Most likely Joseph traveled with his family to known communities of Jews within Egypt. Egypt is a place of fine stone work and trademark woodworking techniques that will benefit Joseph later in Nazareth. But for a mirco era it was an exile for Joseph and Mary from everything and everyone they knew. But note that they chose this context out of faithfulness to the Lord. The angel warned Joseph and Joseph acted upon the word given to him.

### **Jesus changed his context in order to change ours.**

It is good to remember that Christ's humility was an exile too, but it was also the path to His exaltation (Philippians 2:6-11), and ours. For Him, going down "by night into Egypt" (Matthew 2:14) was a further step of descent towards the nether regions of death. When we are in darkness: physically, mentally, emotionally, or spiritually - even in darkness like the darkness of Egypt - even there our beloved Jesus is with us (Psalm 23:4). There is no era, no period of time regardless of our context that Jesus is absent. God is with us whenever and wherever we go. This is good news because it also means that we are never in exile from Him. This also means that when our time runs out here we are given a new life altogether, an everlasting one, without all the concerns, troubles, and tribulations that come with each passing year.

### **Be Faithful in the Now**

What happened years ago may haunt us, or it may bring us smiles, or may evoke a feeling of nostalgia, or it may just be a distant memory. Sometimes we can change our context by losing weight, changing jobs, etc. But a lot of times context just changes without our help such as

with the effects of age. Truthfully, we can only live in the current moment. But I believe it's a good thing that context changes.

I can imagine a happier Mary on Easter Sunday than on Good Friday. And Joseph...well, Joseph's context changed many times, not always happily. His initial discovering of Mary's pregnancy must have been very disappointing. Then in a dream the angel reveals the truth—She conceived by the Holy Spirit with her virginity intact. Then it's off to Bethlehem, shepherds visits, circumcision eight days later in Jerusalem where he meets Anna and Simeon, then the Magi come, and then another warning to escape to Egypt in the middle of the night. But Joseph remained steadfastly loyal to his purpose, to Mary, and to Jesus. In the end his decisions protected his family and created a loving environment for Jesus to grow up in. Isn't this the best we can ask of ourselves?

The Lord only asks for us to be faithful especially in the now. I pray to be a faithful father like Joseph and thank the Lord for His help when I could be better. I pray to be a good husband and a good pastor and thank the Lord for His help when I should do better. I pray for my boys to be faithful whatever their circumstances or context and thank the Lord for His strength when they are tempted to waiver. I pray for you to be strong in the Lord and give thanks that Jesus chose the cross to be with each of you and you with Him. This is what the Lord wants for us. He wants us to know the timeless fruits of our relationship with our Savior, Jesus because time eventually runs out. I can think of no greater legacy to leave than one of godly character like Joseph and Mary.

A lot of things may change this year but one thing remains the same yesterday, today, and in the future—Jesus. It is good to have an element of eternity in a world full of things that don't last long. May this new year for you begin with a confidence that the Lord is with you in this era and in the next just as He has promised.

Blessings on Your 2017  
Pastor Woods