

Immanuel || God With Us

- I. INTRO: I feel like this was the most difficult Christmas in memory to get “in the Christmas season.”
 - A. Maybe it was b/c Thanksgiving was super late
 - B. Maybe it was b/c we had a lot of other pressing responsibilities
 - C. It just feels as though Christmas came out of nowhere
 - D. In the hustle and bustle of life, it is already difficult to get in the zone, but this year just felt harder
 - E. Sometimes these stories can feel flat even though they should be vibrant and alive
 - F. I think that’s one reason the Chosen has been so wildly successful
 - 1. Even people who aren’t true believers, so to say, but grew up in church are seeing the stories from their childhood CCD days in new light
 - G. Today I thought we would slow down and focus on the Christmas story, specifically this name Immanuel, and see why it’s so important as we bring these things to light...

II. *Matthew 1:18 This is how Jesus the Messiah was born. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took place, while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit. 19 Joseph, to whom she was engaged, was a righteous man and did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement quietly.*

20 As he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. “Joseph, son of David,” the angel said, “do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit. 21 And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”

22 All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord’s message through his prophet:

*23 “Look! The virgin will conceive a child!
She will give birth to a son,
and they will call him Immanuel,
which means ‘God is with us.’”*

- A. **Immanuel means God is with us, and this is, first and foremost, a promise**
- B. The first “with you” language that we see in Genesis is related to covenant
 - 1. A covenant is a sacred agreement or promise between two parties, often involving commitments and responsibilities. In Biblical covenants, God is the central figure in biblical covenants.
- C. In the case of Noah, God makes a promise to save Noah and his family
 - 1. *Genesis 6:18 – “But I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons’ wives with you.”*
- D. Abraham, great ancestor of Jesus, also received a promise from God →

1. a promise of land, descendants, and to bless the whole world through them
- E. When his Abraham and his descendants doubt this promise, he uses this same “with you” language to reinforce his promise
 1. *Genesis 28:15 – “Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go...”*
- F. Encapsulated in the name Immanuel is promise
 1. God’s response to humanity’s struggles, sins, unknowns, is PROMISE
- G. I think it’s a worthwhile exercise to try and imagine how Joseph and Mary felt...
 1. Pregnant... Engaged... Cultural Pressure
- H. Two main emotions... **SHAME & FEAR**
- I. I used to be so afraid of the dark as a child...
 1. When your child is afraid || “I am with you...”
 2. When you are afraid || “I just don’t want to be alone... stay with me...”
- J. And shame? Geez → What a terrible emotion
- K. Shame makes us fear like we will be alone. Fear is compounded when we are alone.
- L. We are communal people made in the image of a communal God
- M. Part of the impact of the fall is the severing of relationships
 1. Vertically || Horizontally w/ mankind || Horizontally w/ creation
 2. Immediate result of separation = shame & fear (e.g. Adam and Eve)
 - a) This is a tangible marker for us of the curse of sin and separation caused by sin
 3. Even secular psychologists know the interplay between fear & separation: *“Fear and relational separation are interconnected, as fear of rejection, vulnerability, or harm often drives people to withdraw from relationships, creating loneliness and isolation. In turn, separation amplifies fear by heightening sensitivity to threats and reducing the social support needed to manage emotional challenges, creating a self-reinforcing cycle.”*
- N. Our natural response to comforting those who are afraid or riddled with shame is: “I will be with you..”
 1. This is what’s carried in the name Immanuel → It’s God’s response to our shame and to our fear
 2. It’s God’s comfort to Mary and Joseph, “to a world in sin and error pining”
- O. The Gospel is about restoring that which was lost, relationship with Creator God
 1. It’s about destroying the sin chasm which separates us from our Creator
 2. It’s about making a way for God to be with us – not temporarily but forever
 3. No more fear, no more shame, no more crying → Why? Because he will be **with us** forever, and nothing will separate us ever again
 4. The restoration of relationship with God brings about the removal of fear because “perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:18)”
 - a) He deals with the separation... he deals with the fear... he deals with judgment... he restores the presence...

- P. All of this is wrapped into the Messianic promise first given in Isaiah 8 that is quoted in Matthew 1:23: "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us).
 - Q. God doesn't say, "Don't worry, Joseph, people won't mock you until the day of your death (even your own children)." He says, "Immanuel – God with us."
 - 1. His response is, in essence, "Do not fear... I will be with you."
 - R. Mary and Joseph are going to need to cling to that reality, cling to the promise of this Christ child who is both in promise and reality "God with us" b/c pretty soon they are going to be stepping out into the **unknown**
 - S. Just like Adam and Eve leaving that Garden and wandering into the wilderness, the announcement of Jesus' birth is just the beginning
 - 1. A trip to Bethlehem for a census, the journey along the way, Egypt, being led by dreams → can you imagine the anxiety?
 - 2. Husbands, can you imagine trying to keep your wife encouraged along the way?
 - 3. We picture Joseph and Mary as these immovable rocks, but they were human just like us - subject to discouragement, doubt, frustration, bad days, and good
 - T. Throughout the scripture, God's response to the unknown is clear → "I will be with you."
 - 1. It's not to give a road map or to give a bulleted list of what is to come
 - 2. His response is not to remove hardship or anxiety
 - 3. He says, "Cast your anxiety on me b/c I care for you"
 - 4. He says, "I will be with you when you pass through waters, the waves will not overcome you..."
 - U. Picture Joseph, bending low to a crying, emotional wife packing up her baby and in the middle of the night to flee to Egypt, "Mary... God will be with us... he is right here in this little child... he will be with us... but we have to go right now."
 - V. Picture Mary, encouraging her rock of a husband as he breaks after trying to carry too much on his own shoulders... "Joseph, he is with us... he will never leave us..."
 - W. Immanuel...
- III. **Fulfillment in Christ || "God with you" is a person**
- A. Immanuel is a promise... immanuel is a reminder of God's presence... immanuel is a soothing gift for you in your anxiety, in your shame, in your fear, in the unknown
 - B. God with you was a promise, but all of those promises (presence, victory, deliverance, peace, hope) would be wrapped up into the gift of a person.
 - 1. *Matthew 1:23 – "...and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us)."*
 - C. A little baby, wrapped not in paper with a bow but in swaddling clothes would be placed in a manger
 - D. He wouldn't be a box under a tree, like a gift we'd expect, but he would hang on tree as God's gift to us

- E. Although he spoke universes into existence, and breathes out stars, he would drape himself in the likeness of sinful flesh to be born for our salvation
 - 1. *John 1:14 – "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us..."*
 - 2. His punishment would bring us peace
 - 3. His death would bring us victory
 - 4. His sacrifice would pay the penalty that mankind deserves so that our relationship with God could be restored
 - 5. He would be fully God and fully man → truly GOD with US
- F. Upon his resurrection, having walked (God with us), he went to prepare a home for you and for me
 - 1. *Matthew 28:20 – "...And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*
- G. But once again we find ourselves waiting... waiting for when the promise will come to fruition
- H. But God's Word is sure. It is a sure and steady anchor for our souls
 - 1. You can bring it to the bank. It's a guarantee.
 - 2. He gave us his Holy Spirit as the deposit to prove that his Word is his bond
- I. Now we wait for the return of our king (cause he finished making our home ready)
- J. But we are not a people with out hope... because God with you is a forever promise
 - 1. *Romans 8:31 – "If God is for us, who can be against us?"*
- K. And one day it will come to pass completely and fully
 - 1. *Revelation 21:3 – "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man."*

IV. CONCLUSION

- A. In THIS life, you will have trouble
- B. My property: shed, vine
 - 1. Yesterday I chopped it at the root, it was almost as thick as my wrist
 - 2. Now it will wither and die and one day be thrown in the bonfire
 - 3. It's still green today, and tomorrow, and for quite some time
 - 4. But it's end is guaranteed
- C. We live in a world entangled with sin by sin, but its grip has been broken, Jesus chopped its source at the root
- D. Yes, we were separated by sin. We couldn't be with God.
 - 1. What came with that was fear, shame, anxiety, unknown, pain
- E. But God made a promise
 - 1. Through all that he said, "I will be with you..." and he was
 - 2. Even in the dark days of the OT, God was always with his people, always faithful to his promises
- F. And then the embodiment of those promises came in the form of a little baby, Jesus. The Christ. Immanuel // God with us
- G. He was with them physically, but that was just a shadow of what is to come

- H. One day he will be with us forever. He is with us in his Spirit, yes, but we WILL walk with him
- I. Friends, in this life you will have trouble
 - 1. Shame. Fear. Anxiety. Unknown. Loss.
 - 2. God's response is not to take away the things that ail us always... that day WILL come
 - 3. What is God's response to us? I will be with you.
 - 4. As you pass through the waters, I will be with you
 - 5. As you pass through the fires, I will be with you
 - 6. When things go bump in the night, I will be with you
 - 7. When your family abandons you, I will be with you
 - 8. When your friends leave you, I will be with you
 - 9. When your sin leaves you ashamed and feeling alone, I will be with you
 - 10. When those around you pass away, I will be with you
- J. Today we taste in part, but one day we will experience his presence completely – if we are in Christ.
- K. Jesus invites you to surrender to him as King
 - 1. He has conquered sin. He has conquered death. He wants to be with you, but he won't force it.
 - 2. Behold, he stands at the door and knocks. Let him in.