

2- Emmanuel – God with Us
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We are in a Christmas sermon series entitled God With Us. I want to begin today by asking you a question. Why did God come to earth 2000 years ago in the form of a human baby?

Did He come to earth so we could get presents? Isn't it interesting that at the first Christmas wise men gave gifts to Jesus; now we're more concerned about giving gifts to each other.

Did Jesus come to earth so we could eat a lot of food, get time off from school and work? Was He born in a filthy barn so we could have a fun Christmas?

Today we're going to examine what the Bible tells us about why God came to earth 2000 years ago in a sermon called Emmanuel-God With Us. Matthew 1:18-23 says:

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit.

Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

She will give birth to a son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call Him Emmanuel" - which means, "God with us."

This passage shows us the two main reasons Jesus came to earth:

Jesus came to save us from sin

Jesus came to be God with us.

It was the will of the Father to send His Son to earth as a sacrifice for our sins so that we might have a relationship with God. This is the greatest love story ever told. John 3:16-17 says:

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved.

The greatest event in history is Easter – but Easter required Calvary and Calvary required Christmas.

1 John 4:10 says:

This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

This is the first reason for the season-

1- Jesus Came To Save Us From Our Sins

1 Timothy 1:15 says:

This is a true saying, and everyone should believe it: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners...

Whether they know it or not, want it or not, everyone needs a savior.

You may say, "I don't need a Savior, I've been Christian all my life."

No you haven't - not according to the Bible.

Maybe your parents were Christians, but God has no grandchildren.

You must come to Him yourself.

You must make a choice to start a relationship with God.

That requires repentance – change of mind and change of heart.

Why? What do we need to repent of?

Who? Me? I'm not so bad, why do I need saving? Saved from what?

The essence of sin according to Isaiah 53:6 is not just all the outward acts we do, it is going our own way doing our own thing. We need to repent of that self-centeredness and turn to God-centeredness. That's only possible through Jesus.

One of the most important truths in the Bible is that we all are sinners who need saving from sin and its destructive results in our lives. Paul said in Romans 3:23 that all people are under the power of sin.

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Some people don't see their need for salvation because they compare themselves to the wrong person. They compare themselves to other people around them and conclude "I'm not so bad."

Listen - you can always find someone worse than you. But the true standard is not other people, it's Jesus Christ. The question is not how you stack up against other people – it's how you stack up against Jesus.

Any honest person would have to concede the fact that they are not as good as Jesus. We all fall short of Him because we all have sinned and He has not. And our sin actually earns us something. There's a pay day.

The Bible says in Romans 6:23 that *the wages of sin is death...*

We all die because of sin. None of us are exempt.

Dying is not bad – dying lost is bad because there’s no hope for salvation at that point. God does not want any to die lost – He wants everyone to go to heaven to spend eternity with Him.

He cares so much He did something about it. We read it earlier –
For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.

The wages of sin is death, but the rest of that verse says:
... but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.

Christ was born to die for our sins – to pay the price for us – to give us the free gift of salvation. Luke 19:10 says:

For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost.

THAT is what Christmas is All About. Jesus saving the lost, and giving them eternal life. That is why He was born.

If our greatest need was information, God would have sent us an educator.
If our greatest need was technology, God would have sent us a scientist.
If our greatest need was money, God would have sent us a banker.
If our greatest need was pleasure, God would have sent us an entertainer.
But our greatest need was forgiveness, so God sent us a Savior.

Not only did Jesus come to earth to die for our sins, but...

2- Jesus Came To Be God With Us

Jesus came as Immanuel – which means God with us – for two reasons:

- 1- So that we would experience the presence of God and
- 2- So we can see what God is really like.

There’s a lot of false, crazy, bizarre ideas about God out there. I’m sure you’ve seen them. Most people don’t reject the real God, but people’s misbeliefs about Him. By the way - anytime you hear somebody start a sentence with, “I like to think of God as...” you know they’re probably wrong. It’s just an opinion. They’re just making it up. What we need is not what someone likes to think of God as but we need to know the truth about God. It’s the truth that sets us free. Best guesses aren’t good enough.

People tend to imagine God in the way that’s most convenient for them. They want a God who supports their lifestyle. They want God to be their genie or their Santa Claus. They want Him to be their servant and not vice versa.

At creation God made us in His image and today we try to make God in our image. Instead of the Bible verse that says, “This is the day the Lord has made,” people today believe that “This is the Lord the day has made. The Bible is old and

irrelevant to our day and we don't like the God of the Bible." We want to fit God into our little box so He's neat and compact and controllable. But He's not – He's God and He's high above us and His ways are beyond our understanding!

By the way, sincerity is not enough for salvation!

You can be sincere, but sincerely wrong.

You need more than sincerity. You need truth.

Someone can sincerely say, "I think I look like Brad Pitt when actually they look like an avocado pit." It doesn't matter how sincere they are about what they believe; it's what they really look like that is the truth.

Over 95% of all Americans believe in God. The problem is that for many of these people their image or idea of God is distorted from what the Bible actually teaches.

But there are some things about God we only know because of Jesus. If He hadn't come to earth, we wouldn't know it. Fortunately, God wants us to know what He's like. So, He came to earth in human form in Jesus Christ 2000 years ago.

Jesus cleared up misconceptions about God in two ways.

By what He taught and by the way He lived.

By His example and by His teaching.

For instance, we wouldn't know that God is loving except Jesus told us and showed us. We wouldn't know that God forgives us except Jesus told us and showed us.

Jesus said in John 18:37

This is why I was born and came into the world: to tell people the truth.

He said I came to tell the truth. The truth sets us free from false ideas about God. John 1:18 says:

No one has ever seen God. The only One, who is the same as God ... has made Him known.

In other words, Jesus is God with skin on.

Jesus shattered a bunch of myths about God. For instance, He shattered the myth that God is distant, detached and too busy for me. Jesus exploded the myth that God is uncaring and unconcerned. The Bible says that God cares so much about you that He has every hair on your head numbered. The Bible tells us this fact to show that God is interested in the smallest details of your life.

Jesus Christ exploded the myth that God is unmerciful and unloving by dying on the cross for us. He said, "This is how much I love you."

Luke 2:32 says “*Jesus is the light to reveal God to the nations.*”

What does light do? It helps us see things as they really are. Do you see better in the dark or in the light? You see better in the light.

Jesus helps us to see what God is really like. A lot of our problems come from being in the dark. And when you're in the dark you get confused.

One hot summer night some kids were having a sleep over at their house. They were going to sleep outside in a tent, but the mosquitoes were biting them, so they came inside to sleep. However, since they had been going in and out and leaving the door open, some started complaining about mosquitoes again.

The mom didn't want to wake everybody up, so she left the light out and in the dark went into the kids' rooms, sprayed all of the kids and sprayed the rooms with insect repellent and went back to bed. The next morning – to her horror – she discovered that she had covered the kids, the bedding, the room walls and everything with blue spray paint. She said, “I thought it smelled kind of funny.”

The problem was she could not see clearly in the dark. Her solution created a bigger problem. That's what we do – we create bigger problems by trying to solve them on our own.

If you don't know Jesus Christ, you're in the dark.

You're in the dark about life. You're in the dark about God.

You're in the dark about problems. You're in the dark about your future.

You're just kind of stumbling along through life.

You won't really see clearly unless you know the light of the world.

Do you want to get to know God?

It's real simple. Get to know Jesus Christ. Jesus said in John 14:9

Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father.

Billy Graham once said, “When I want to know what God's like I take a long look at Jesus Christ.” Jesus is God coming to earth. He not only shows us what God is like – He is Immanuel – God with us.

There's a Bette Midler song that says “From a distance God is watching us.” God says, “Sorry Bette. I'm not from a distance. I'm here with you and I'm all around and I'm close.”

He came to earth to be God with us.

He's not a dead religious hero we respect.

He's not a cold distant God we're afraid of.

He's Immanuel – God with us.

He wants an intimate relationship with us.

Not only does God love you, but He's *with* you.

Many people feel alone at Christmas.

I'm here to bring you good news of great joy today: God will never ever abandon you. In Hebrews 13:5

He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

You may not feel it, but it has nothing to do with feelings. God is with you all the time. Jesus is Emmanuel, "God with us."

On the best day of your life – God is there.

On the worst day of your life – God is there.

No matter if anyone else is there – God is there.

That's why Hebrews 13:6 goes on to say

So we may boldly say: "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"

When you know God is with you, it does not matter what others do.

Many of us have been abandoned at times in life. Abandoned by parents.

Rejected by friends. Divorced by a spouse. Left behind by others.

All of us have experienced the pain of rejection at some time.

Maybe it was racial prejudice or gender bias or religious intolerance.

But God will never reject you.

God will never abandon you. God will never forsake you.

Did you know that God hates loneliness? He hates it. That's why, when He created the first human being, He said, "It's not good for a man to be alone."

Whether you ever get married or not is irrelevant.

The issue is, you need people in your life.

And more than that, you need God in your life.

One reason people feel lonely is because they are not connected to God.

God is with us all the time, but we are not always aware of His presence.

We are like Jacob who said in Genesis 28:16

Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it.

I'm here to give you the good news today that whatever place you are in, God is right there with you. You might not believe it, but God is there.

You might not feel it, but God is there.

You might not even want it, but God is there.

Whatever you're going through right now, God knows, God cares, God understands and He's going through it with you.

Wherever you are in your walk with God – you can know He is with you because He said in Genesis 28:15

I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go...

When you are tired – you can know God is with you because He said in Exodus 33:14 - *My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.*

When you are in a battle – you can know God is with you because He said in Deuteronomy 20:1 - *When you go to war against your enemies and see an army greater than yours, do not be afraid of them, because the Lord your God will be with you.*

When you are weak and afraid - you can know God is with you because He said in Isaiah 41:10 - *Don't panic. I'm with you. There's no need to fear for I'm your God. I'll give you strength. I'll help you. I'll hold you steady, keep a firm grip on you.*

When you are hurting and broken hearted – you can know God is with you because Psalm 34:18 says – *The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.*

No matter what you are going through - you can know God is with you because Isaiah 43:2-5 God says: *When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; ...Do not be afraid, for I am with you.*

No matter how long it seems to be taking - you can know God is with you because in Matthew 28:20 Jesus said - *Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*

You see when you understand the story of Christmas you begin to realize that you can make it because God is with you, and “if God be for you who can be against you.”

You can make it because God is with you and “You can do all things through Christ Who strengthens you.”

You can make it because God is with you and “Your God shall supply all of your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”

You can make it because God is with you and “Greater is He that is in you than He that is in the world.”

You can make it because God is with you and “The Lord is your light and your salvation, whom shall you fear.”

You can make it because God is with you and “God is your refuge and your strength, a very present help in the time of trouble.”

Jesus is your Emmanuel – God with you!