

God With Us
Contemporary Christmas Eve
2024

I. Introduction

Good evening and Merry Christmas!

Tonight, we are gathered to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ.

Whether you know it or not, that means we reflect on one of the most profound truths of the Christian faith: God is **with** us.

The incarnation is a technical theological term that means God became human.

And the central truth I want us to focus on tonight is this incarnation is not merely a historical event that we can read about, but a divine invitation into a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Let's take a look at this sacred story that made the invitation possible.

Read **Luke 2:1-7** (NIV)

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. ² (This was the first census that took place while^[a] Quirinius was governor of Syria.) ³ And everyone went to their own town to register. ⁴ So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. ⁵ He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, ⁷ and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

There is a lot more to that story in the next 13 verses about the shepherds and angels – I encourage you to read it for yourself later.

But, as we work our way through tonight, keep in mind this scene of a baby being born in the most difficult and bizarre of circumstances.

Why in the world would a King who lived in the perfection of heaven choose to come down here?

I want to give you 4 truths about it and I hope you will begin to see yourself in Jesus' "why".

II. **Number 1: The Word Became Flesh**

John 1:14 says, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."

This verse sums up the wonder of Christmas.

Jesus, the perfect Son of God came to live in the world **He** created that **we** as humans had so messed up.

Why would He do that?

Let's back up a few verses and see how the first chapter of John starts out.

John 1:1 (NIV) In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Jesus is given the title of "The Word." That seems like a funny or maybe a confusing description but let's think about what it means.

Words are powerful.

You may have had incredibly painful experiences with words from others...

- you aren't enough
- you're a failure
- you're such a disappointment
- why can't you be like so & so
- I wish I'd never met you

Those may not be the exact words someone said to you but I guarantee if I asked you what is the most painful thing anyone has ever said to you, you wouldn't have to think very long.

Those aren't things we easily forget.

Words have tremendous power. They can wound or they can heal.

The words of others or our own words against ourselves wound.

But Jesus, who is the one and only TRUE Word came to restore our broken lives.

Scripture bears this out over and over again.

One example is Psalm 107:20 (NIV)
He *sent out his word* and healed them; he rescued them from the grave.

What healed them? The Word!

It starts to make a little more sense why Jesus was called The Word, doesn't it?

God's heart toward us is for healing and restoration and there is no greater revelation of the character and nature of God than through the person of Jesus.

When Jesus showed up on the scene in Luke 2, the world was a dark and lonely place.

It had been 400 years since mankind had heard the voice of God.

The silence was broken by the cry of a baby who came to rescue us from ourselves.

Have you ever heard a newborn cry? That is a piercing sound. Undeniable.

And that's how Jesus arrived. He came to pierce through our pain and darkness and offer us a relationship with God.

But why?

The Word becoming flesh was of no advantage to Jesus. It would have been much easier and comfortable to stay in Heaven!

So why would he do it?

Because He loves you.

Jesus arriving as the Word made flesh was the love of God made tangible to us.

God's love for us is not abstract, but it is personal and relational.

Which leads us to our second truth about Jesus leaving heaven and coming to earth...

III. **Number 2: God Dwelt Among Us**

Remember John 1:14a (NIV) The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

Think about all the stories of Jesus in the Gospels – what was He doing?

Spending time with people.

He was relational and demonstrated His love **toward** us by becoming **one of** us.

To dwell together means to do life together.

This goes beyond being an acquaintance and just knowing ABOUT Jesus –

It's having a relationship WITH Jesus where you are fully seen, and known, and loved by the one who created you.

Matthew 1:23 (NIV) The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel which means "God with us".

His actual name means he came to dwell with us. He came to have a relationship with us.

How amazing is that? I don't deserve that!

But, Colossians 1:19 tells me that "For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ"

Did you catch that? It **PLEASED** God to come to Earth in Jesus! He didn't do it begrudgingly.

Ron Ball says, "God is never reluctantly good."

Isn't that great news for us??

He was pleased to send Jesus as a baby who grew into a man whose sole purpose was to love us and save us.

He didn't sit up in heaven issuing edicts from His throne.

He humbled himself and came to Earth as a baby.

Why? Because He loves us.

This leads us to our third and final truth...

IV. **Number 3: The incarnation is not a historical event, it is a divine invitation.**

We read the familiar Christmas story a few moments ago. And it is an accurate historical account of what happened. But that isn't all it is.

We are eight days away from 2025. That's hard to believe and for some might feel overwhelming.

For some of you, you can't leave 2024 in the rearview fast enough.

Regardless of where you find yourself, here is my question for us tonight...

How will my life look different in 2025 because The Word became flesh and dwelt among us?

Do I have a relationship with Jesus that is vibrant and growing?

If not, how am I going to respond to this divine invitation?

Jesus is not some idea or school of thought. He is God who made his dwelling among us and wants to have a relationship with you.

You no longer have to struggle to find purpose or meaning. Jesus can offer that to you.

You no longer have to rely on your own understanding. Jesus can offer that to you.

You no longer have to make your own way. Jesus IS the Way and offers Himself to you.

At the beginning of our time together I said I hoped you would find yourself in Jesus' why.

Have you found yourself there yet?

His "why" is simply this:

He loves you.

And He invites you to be in a relationship with Him as your King, your hope, and your peace.

If you would like to have a relationship with Jesus, we are going to pray together right now.

Lord Jesus, thank you that you came to earth as a baby to be with us.

Thank you for loving us and offering yourself to us.

We know that we are broken and we need you to restore us.

Please forgive us and save us.

Thank you for loving me.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

If you prayed that for the first time, allow me to welcome you to the rest of your life. You have made the best decision you could ever make.

Before you leave tonight, please share with someone about your decision to follow Jesus.

You can come speak to one of us or you can indicate on your connection card that you have decided to follow Jesus and we will connect with you and help you know how to get started.