

Sermon Title: God With Us

Main Text: Matthew 1:18-25

Main Idea:

The birth of Christ introduces the lengths that God will go to redeem back his people. Immanuel, God with us, displays God's power, love, and faithfulness.

1. God's Power on Display
2. God's love on Display
3. God's faithfulness on Display

Date/occasion preached: Sunday, Dec 24, 2023 & Sunday december 7th, 2025

INTRODUCTION

Years ago, I began working for a camp in West Virginia called Royal Family Kids camp. This camp specializes in bringing in children in the foster care system and giving them an unforgettable experience where they can feel loved, valued, cherished, and celebrated. Many of the kids came from trauma, rough home lives, drug, alcohol, and physical abuse. There was a lot of training that went into preparing for this camp, but nothing can prepare you for that moment the bus drives up. Children began flooding off the bus, high fives, streamers, posters, backpacks, and gifts galore. For five days, despite their home life, these kids were loved and cared for.

But once the excitement from the bus ride wore off, the kids started to get back to some of their old habits. That's okay. We were trained for this. Make them feel valued. Set rules and boundaries, but show them love. Some of these kids didn't know their actual birthdays, so we had a giant birthday party at the bowling alley where each of them got presents and cake. We had slip and slides, water wars, games, worship, activities. Everything had the emphasis of showing the love of Jesus and giving them a childhood that every child deserves.

After a full day of fun and activities, we settled into our bunks. They were excited to try out their new sleeping bags they just got. They told stories. All the excitement had them stirring around, like kids on Christmas. Finally, the room sat quiet. Nearly every child was asleep. I was laying in my bunk thinking about all I had experienced when from across the room a shriek rang out. This young boy was screaming and crying, pleading to someone in his nightmare to "please stop." I rushed over to his bunk. He was still mostly asleep, still crying when I grabbed his hand and started to pray with him. He looked at me with such fear in his eyes. All I could say to him was "buddy I'm here. Don't worry. I'm here." He squeezed my hand. I could feel the fear physically leave his body. He sat there in his bunk, playing with my hand until he finally fell asleep.

Through the week, we would have incidents here and there like that. But that little boy clung to me for the rest of the week. It was hard sending those kids back to their homes. You had no idea what they would enter back into. I think that was the hardest part.

If you have children or have been around children, maybe you know what I'm talking about. Sometimes they just need to know that you're there with them. They need to be comforted by your presence. For that little boy, that was all it took to give him the courage to be strong. Maybe you remember from your childhood when you got separated from your parents at the grocery store. The fear that washed over you ceased when your parents held you tight. Sometimes we just need some comforting arms, the presence of a loved one, and those simple words of "I'm here for you."

This Christmas, my prayer is that you would not only know intellectually that God is with you, but that you would know in your heart that the Christ child was born into our world for us today. That Immanuel not only entered our world by being born into a stable in Bethlehem 2,000 years ago, but that he enters into our world today. Join me in reading Matthew 1 if you will. Let's stand for the reading of God's word.

8Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. 19And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. 20But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." 22All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

23 "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel"

(which means, God with us). 24When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, 25but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

Jesus' birth shows that he came from humble beginnings. The Messiah was expected from the prophecies from the Old Testament. We see that Anna and Simeon were looking for the Christ child who would be born. The wise men, Herod, and Herod's scribes knew that there would be a ruler born in Bethlehem. The Israelites were waiting for a king who would rule and reign, one who would set the captives free. While they expected a king, Jesus would not be born into a palace, but a humble stable. The events surrounding his birth were nothing short of miraculous, albeit confusing. Mary had been entrusted with this task as a 13 year old girl. Joseph did not wish to shame her, thinking she had been unfaithful, he sought to divorce her quietly. But the angel comes to him to give him comfort that this was the will of God. In his pronouncement, the angel quotes Isaiah 7:14.

14Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

The name Immanuel means God with us. An important truth for us today, church. With the busyness of the Christmas season, the insecurities and anxieties of the world surrounding us, we need to hold onto this truth that God is in fact with us. He is with us in our pain, our heartache, our anxieties, our troubles, our difficulties. He is with us today and every day. So this Christmas season, as you do your Christmas shopping, opening presents, enjoying maybe just a few minutes of peace while the kids are in a sugar coma or engrossed in their new toys, I pray that we can find ourselves engrossed by the love of the Father that he sent his only son to redeem us.

Let's focus in on verse 23 for our time today.

23 “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall call his name Immanuel”
(which means, God with us).

Matthew is quoting Isaiah 7, a Messianic prophecy foretelling the birth of Jesus. The Christ child, born in a stable. It was a promise. Might I remind you that Jesus was never plan B of God’s will. Jesus was the plan from the very beginning in the garden. A promise in response to Adam and Eve’s sinfulness, he promised a rescuer.

There are three aspects of God that are on display in this text. **God’s Power, God’s Love, and God’s Faithfulness.**

1. God’s Power on Display

God decided to display his power by sending his son humbly into our world. The virgin birth is nothing short of a miracle. It was foretold that a virgin would bear a son. While the world around us disputes this miracle, Christians around the world have affirmed and believed that Scripture is true, including the virgin birth. We today affirm the Bible thus we affirm the virgin birth, not as myth or fable, but as a historical fact, a supernatural act of God wherein he intersects with our world in order to bring us back to himself.

All throughout scripture we see how God loves to display his glory in seemingly unordinary ways. And the apex of his glory on display is the birth of Jesus. He was much more than a good and moral teacher. He was more than a good example to follow. He was more than a miracle worker or someone who helped the poor and loved people. Yes, he was all of those things. But most importantly, he was God incarnate.

John gives us a more poetic depiction of Jesus’ entrance into our world. Look at John 1 with me.

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Jesus, the word from the beginning. The agent of God's creation. This theme is constant throughout the gospel of John, darkness and death juxtaposed with light and life. But John continues. Jump down to verse 9.

9 The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. 11 He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. 12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth

This light would not be hoarded but would shine brightly into our world. The word became flesh. Christ put on flesh and dwelt among us. I love the way John puts that. God dwelt among men. God moved into our neighborhood and lived as a man.

He saw us in our spiritual poverty and instead of condemning us and leaving us to our brokenness, he moved into our neighborhood and began to help us. He sent a Redeemer to fix what should have been condemned.

God's word became flesh and dwelt among us. That is the power of God on display.

It was God's power on display. It was also...

2. God's Love on Display

"His name shall be called 'Immanuel.' Jesus, his birth name means "The Lord is salvation." This tells us what Jesus came to do, to usher in salvation. Jesus is called by many names throughout the Bible. Wonderful Counselor, everlasting Father, prince of Peace, the Great I am. All of these point to his character and his calling to usher in peace to a lost and dying world. It was a sign of the Father's love. **"Immanuel, God with us."**

That means that God Himself would appear in human form. What this verse is telling us, is that Jesus IS God in flesh and blood and that He WILL be coming to earth to be with us. He is not a created being. He is God!

I think so frequently people view God as this distant, judgy old man who is far off in the sky. That he can't be bothered with my issues or my petty prayers. We believe that he doesn't have time to deal with the mess that is my life because he has so many other important things to concern himself with. But that couldn't be further from the truth.

What does John 3:16 tell us?

"For God so loved the world, that He gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."

It's because of God's love for us that He sent his son, Jesus, to be with us. Knowing what we know about what Jesus did for us on the cross, don't you agree that it would take an immense amount of love for us for God to send His son to this Earth so that we can have a relationship with Him? Look at the lengths our God went to in order to bring us back to himself.

God's love came on display at the birth of Jesus, but it culminated at the death and resurrection of Jesus.

'but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners,
Christ died for us. '

- Romans 5:8

Why would God send his son? Why would Jesus die on the cross? To display his love for us. To redeem us back to himself. Our sin has separated us from the Father yet he loves us in our sin and came after us.

God's love on display. He sent his son to offer us peace.

3. God's Faithfulness on Display

At the creation of all things, God displayed his love and care for his creation. He warned them what would happen if they disobeyed. Yet they rebelled. They chose to disobey and all of humanity was doomed. God could have reveled in their disobedience and given them what they so desired. But he made a promise. He told of a rescuer. Right now you will experience separation. You will experience sin, death, disease, darkness, pain, turmoil. But I won't leave you alone. I'm coming back for you.

The rest of Scripture accounts of God's covenant faithfulness through Abraham, Moses, Noah, and countless others. It shows us that in spite of their sin, God was faithful. So much so that this Jesus would be born for us. God in flesh would redeem what was lost. Because God loved his creation so much that he remained faithful to them. Our Father has expressed his faithfulness to us by sending His son Jesus.

Church, as we celebrate Christmas this season, please hold on to the truth that Jesus was the greatest gift ever given. When all the toys are put away, the gadgets are out of date, the mess is finally cleaned up, Jesus is still relevant. Don't miss the greatest gift given to us was not the latest technology but was Jesus wrapped and placed in a manger.

INVITATION

Many religions have some form of a higher power and call that higher power “God”. If you have conversations with people of these religions they will try to tell you that your God and their God are the same God. But they all view their god in this way. He is up on a mountain and we have to get to him. They may even say there are many routes up the mountain but as long as you get to him, you get their version of heaven. But the problem is this. There is no way for us to get up the mountain. And God knows this. So he came down off the mountain and came to his people.

This Jesus has come into our world. Unlike any other religion where it is seen as us making our way to God or ‘finding our way up the mountain,’ This Jesus saw that we could not get there on our own so he came down to us. And in that we see God’s love on display for us. He saw our need and unlike any other religion that says “try hard and you’ll make it” he came down to us. I remember having conversations with people from other religions, specifically a close friend who held to Mormonism. In our conversation, his response was “In mormonism, we have to do enough good works, convert enough people to our faith to get into heaven.” I asked, “How do you know if you’ve done enough?” He responded, “We don’t know. We just hope that God won’t turn us away when we get to heaven.”

Hope. Whether it’s the five pillars of Islam, a hope to be reincarnated to something better when we die, respecting all of creation on this earth, seeking enlightenment or nirvana is all based on a hope that their religion is the correct one. But friends we can have a hope against all hope. A hope that leans on the glory of Jesus for our sin and not on my own doing. A hope that unlike every other religious leader, Christ is alive and he is not in his grave. We have a hope that God saw us in our sin and chose us anyway. In no other religion does God die for his creation.

So I want to ask you this today. Jesus has been born. He lived a perfect life. He stood in our place and took on our sin by dying on the cross for

us. He faced and defeated death and walked out of that grave. Jesus stands in victory today. Will you accept his free gift? Will you believe that Jesus loves you and is for you? Will you worship the Christ as the risen Savior, Immanuel, God with us? Matthew's Gospel is bookended with this truth that He is with us. It begins with Matthew 1 where the baby was called God with us and Matthew 28 wraps up the gospel with the Great Commission that He is with us always to the ends of the earth. Jesus' authority gives us the power to be rescued and the power to go.

Maybe you're here today smothered by the weight and the worries of this world and you need to be reminded of God's promise. In the face of your anxieties, God is with you. In the face of your financial struggles, God is with you. In the face of your fears, your worries, your health situation, God is with you. Not once does God promise that your life will be easy if you follow him but constantly he promises us that he will be with us.

Maybe you're here today and you need to come back to him. Once you have trusted in Jesus but the pleasures of this world have gotten a hold of you. Will you come back to him? Will you make Jesus the main thing this Christmas? Jesus is the reason we celebrate this Christmas, but more than that he is the reason we do all things. For the believer, Christ is the promise, the hope against all hope, that we can know and believe that the Father will never leave us nor forsake us.