

## God With Us...Immanuel

John 1:14

12/8-9/2019

From a little boy I have always loved the time of year from Thanksgiving to Christmas  
As an adult, and a Christian, there is something restorative for me to move from a season of  
heightened thankfulness to a heightened reflection on the birth of Christ  
Yet admittedly there is difficulty because we encounter this time every year and it is our  
tendency for the message of Christmas to become stale

This Advent season we are inviting you to reflect very simply on the name Immanuel

As we begin to reflect on this, I want us to read a quote from Tim Keller: **PP** *"Christmas is the end of thinking you are better than someone else, because Christmas is telling you that you could never get to heaven on your own. God had to come to you."*

Hold on to this thought and let's take a journey through the bible which will begin in Eden

The bible declares that the universe was created by Jesus Christ: **PP** *"For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through Him and for Him."* Colossians 1:16

As you look at that verse, note the phrases, *'by Him'*, *'through Him'*, and *'for Him'*

God created all there is by Jesus, through Him speaking it into existence, for His pleasure

Jesus didn't create the universe and then hang it on a wall in a little-used room, it became the  
object of His delight and interaction and pleasure

God loves His creation, and chief among it, humanity who He made in His image

God created it all so He could interact with and dwell among what He made

One of the early church's greatest theologians, Augustine, once said, **PP** *"Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in thee."*

**We were made for God, and to have such a beautiful relationship with Him, and He desires greatly to be with us**

God would walk through the garden in the cool of the day enjoying time with Adam and Eve

But then, they sinned, they committed treason, doing what they thought would make them like  
God, defiantly eating from a tree God had told them not to eat from

God, crystal pure and holy, without even a nano particle of metaphysical sin, cannot dwell with,  
be in fellowship with sinful, tainted humanity

It isn't that God is prudish, it is actually that an encounter with the full on holy God would  
destroy a sinner

I wonder if the ending scene of Raiders of the Lost Ark got it more right than we realize

Still, even more than the lethal effects of a sinner in the presence of holy God, is the fact that sin  
is repugnant to Him, and it creates a problem that humanity can not resolve

The only human beings that can dwell with God are completely sinless ones, and Adam and his  
wife had no way to scrub their souls clean of their sin

God expelled them from the garden into the east, a compass heading that regularly in the bible  
symbolizes the place of lost and sinful humanity

We just began our journey and already we wonder did God lose His creation?

Is His hope out of reach, to dwell in and among creation, in relationship with those He made?

We turn the page and see that His people have multiplied among the people groups on earth

The Israelites now number nearly 2 million, and they are in bondage to Egypt as their slaves, and  
miserable crying out to the Lord for help

He hears their cry and delivers them out of Egypt and while they were traveling to the land He would give them He has Moses construct a tabernacle

**PP** *“And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst.” Exodus 25:8*

This is the desire of God, to dwell with His people, and He would do so within the tabernacle

Except, He could only be approached through a sacrificial offering, and only the High Priest

once a year could come into the interior of the tabernacle where God’s presence dwelled

God wants to dwell among and all He has made, especially those made in His image

So we turn the page on our journey again and see that Israel has now made it into the promised land, and David, the man after God’s own heart had died and Solomon his son reigns

Solomon builds God something better than a movable sanctuary tent, a temple

**PP** *“Then Solomon said... ‘I have indeed built you an exalted house, a place for you to dwell in forever.’” 1 Kings 8:13*

It was a glorious temple, which kings and queens came to see from their distant lands

God was in a house, not a tent, but even though He was in the midst of His people, they still had to approach Him through sacrifice, and only the High Priest once a year could come into His glorious presence

To make matters far worse, one day that incredible temple would be destroyed by Babylon but not before God would depart that temple

It would be 584 long, dark years before the page of history would turn again

It was the Apostle John that brings us back to this redemptive journey that God has to dwell with and among His people and he does so in John 1:14, our main text this morning

*“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.” John 1:14*

John tells us that God tabernacled, ‘dwelt’ among us in flesh in the Person of Jesus

Yet this divine dwelling would not be permanent, for He would be put to death, and it is in His death that what Tim Keller said becomes glaringly seen, and we’ll see it in a few minutes

Jesus would die, His dwelling among us not yet permanent, but He promised that God would never leave or forsake His people and the page turns again

For the Spirit of God would come, and when He did, He would dwell in each of His children and among His children in the church

**PP** *“In Him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.” Ephesians 2:22*

God has a new home, and Christian it is in you, and God is bringing us together as a new temple for Him to dwell and live and love and enjoy

Yet even now, neither you nor I can see Him face to face, touch Him, have an audible conversation with Him

We cannot walk together physically in a garden in the cool of the day

This cannot yet be the culmination of God’s plan that reclaim the dwelling He once enjoyed

The page will one day turn again, the journey will be complete and **PP Revelation 21:2-3** tells us, *“And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from*

*God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God.’”*

Jesus, God in flesh, perfect flesh, will dwell with His people for eternity, tabernacling with them

I hope you can see from our historical look at God's journey the incredible truth that God created us to be with Him, and every step of the way He has made that happen more and more. And it turns our eyes again to Tim Keller's comment: **PP** *"Christmas is the end of thinking you are better than someone else, because Christmas is telling you that you could never get to heaven on your own. God had to come to you."*

As we return to **John 1**, let's bring Keller's thoughts with us. Look with me at verse 1 of this chapter and you'll see that John uses '**Word**' to refer to Jesus. He is the living Word of God, and in the beginning, Jesus was with God, and was God. The Son of God was already there and '**all things were made through Him**'. Then John seems to hit fast forward in his writing. In verses 6-8 he introduced John the Baptist, the herald announcing the coming of Jesus. In verse 9, he tells us that the true light of the world, Jesus, was now coming into our world. In verse 10, Jesus is now in the world and though Jesus made the world, it didn't recognize Him. In verse 11, the majority of His own chosen people, Israel, didn't recognize or affirm Him. In verse 12, those who did became part of His family, the children of the Heavenly Father. Then John wrote one of the most amazing tells us in verse 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."*** John 1:14

This is all the more amazing when we understand some of the background

### **PP 1-Jesus, the eternal Son of God had to become a human being if we were to be saved**

**PP** *"For in [Jesus] the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily,"* Colossians 2:9

God had to do this if He were to save sinners from eternal judgment

God the divine cannot ever die, but God the man could

God-ness is unkillable, humanness is frail and weak and able to die

God-ness cannot identify with us, and the Savior must be able to do this very thing

**PP** *"Therefore He had to be made like His brothers in every respect, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because He Himself has suffered when tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted."* Hebrews 2:17-18

God must take on flesh in order to die for us, sympathize with us, and show us how to live. '**The Word became flesh**' and look hard, don't miss the next part: '**and dwelt among us**'

### **PP 2-Jesus, the eternal Son of God came to us because we could not come to Him**

John doesn't say, and nowhere does Scripture say, that if you want to be with God, you must find your way to Him.

**PP** God *"dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see."*

**1 Timothy 6:16**

He is so holy, that to be in His presence a sinner would be atomized and blown away in the wind.

John doesn't say in our verse that we dwelt with Him, for we couldn't do it.

We lack the means to scale that height, to gain access to Him.

This is why Keller said that *'we could never get to heaven on our own. God had to come to us.'*

And He did in the birth of the God-Son, Jesus Christ.

God became a man so that He could dwell among us.

He crossed that divide, coming down out of heaven, gaining access to us, a lost sinful people

And John describes Him as ***'full of grace and truth'*** 1:14

We need a clearer understanding of the word ***'grace'***

**PP** ***'grace'*** is the loving power of God to take away a person's sin, and the means for God to do that is none other than Jesus

Jesus is full of grace, but also full of ***'truth'***

Truth tells us there is a fixed moral point outside of us and we live in it's gravitational pull

Truth is not our prerogative to define and dictate and Jesus embodies it

It is Jesus Who is full of truth that confronts us that there is one way to God, through Him

That no one's natural goodness can compare to divine goodness that He showed in life

Yet He is also full of grace that salvation can be found in Him alone

**PP** ***"there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."*** Acts 4:12

Grace and truth are brought together as the gospel declares **PP** ***"all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus"*** Romans 3:23-24

All of us have defied God, none of us deserve His forgiveness, yet God graciously offers a gift, and it is salvation through Jesus

It is because Jesus came and dwelt among us, clothing His divine Person with human frailty that we could be saved and become the sons and daughters of God

This Christmas season, we are inviting you to reflect deeply on the amazing name ***'Immanuel: God with us'***

God came to the very people who have shaken their fists at Him, in order to save and give life

There is an unstoppable determination in God's heart to dwell with His people, and Immanuel tells us that He is willing to pay whatever cost to bring that about

Let's pray