

Grace, mercy, and peace be yours in the name of our Lord, Saviour, and coming King, Jesus Christ, Amen. The title for today’s sermon is ‘O come Emmanuel’ and is from the Gospel reading, Matthew chapter 1. Let us pray...Amen.

We are now in the 4th week of Advent. Today is the 4th Sunday of Advent. Christmas is almost here. Preparations are mostly complete. Are you ready for the events occurring over the next couple of days. But even more so, are you prepared for the return of our Saviour and King to come? Still we sing and pray: O Come Emmanuel, our Lord and Saviour!

In the Old Testament reading for today we hear about this Saviour to come. Isaiah talked to Ahaz the King, telling the king he could ask anything for anything from God. Ahaz refused God’s offer because Ahaz didn’t believe or trust in God. Yet, despite Ahaz’s refusal God still replies and gives a promise and prophecy of what would come and who God is. Isaiah prophesied: **“A Virgin would conceive and bear a son and his name would be Immanuel.”**(Isaiah 7:14). This prophecy was partially fulfilled in the years to come, but it didn’t end there. The prophecy continued into chapter 9 where Isaiah said: **“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.”**(Isaiah 9:6-7)

This One, this is the Saviour God promised to Eve in the Garden. This is the Saviour God promised to Abraham. This is the Saviour God promised to Isaac and Jacob. This is the Saviour God promised to David. This is the Saviour God promised through the whole of the OT Who would save us from our sins. This is the Saviour the Jews looking forward to, He was the one they were expecting to arrive, this Saviour they longed to see His day finally come because He would save them. This is the one for whom they prayed “O Come Emmanuel”

But this Saviour would come to do something greater than just about any of them fully could understand.

Now, jumping ahead about 700 years from Isaiah to today’s Gospel text, this text we hear almost every year. Often we focus on Jesus, the Immanuel. But have you ever stopped to think about what was going on with Joseph. Imagine what was going through Joseph’s mind. Everything in his life was already in turmoil. His betrothed, Mary, was pregnant and Joseph knew he wasn’t the father. Joseph had figured a way out of the marriage which kept Mary from being executed for her adultery, for her having sex outside of the confines of marriage. This is because Mosaic Law, as recorded in Deuteronomy chapter 22, demanded that such a woman, and the man with whom she committed the adultery, both should be stoned to death for their offence against God. Joseph, while trying to get out of the betrothal commitment to Mary and her family, was going to try to save the life of Mary.

But then Joseph, similar to king Ahaz, hears God’s Word: **“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.”**²¹

She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”(Matthew 1:20-21) Woa! The angel tells Joseph “**that which is conceived in in your virgin wife is from the Holy Spirit.**”²¹ **She will bear a son, the long promised One, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.**” Emmanuel is not coming. The one and only Saviour, has finally come to save people from their sins.

God had repeatedly and clearly proclaimed He was the only Saviour in the Old Testament. God told the Israelites when He gave them the 10 Commandments “**I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.**”(Exodus 20:2) Later God refreshed their memory through the prophet Hosea “**But I am the LORD your God from the land of Egypt; you know no God but me, and besides me there is no savior.**”(Hosea 13:4) Additionally, God used Isaiah to clearly proclaim He is the only Saviour a number of times as recorded in the Book of Isaiah. God says: “**For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.**”(Isaiah 43:3), and “**I, I am the LORD, and besides me there is no savior.**”(Isaiah 43:11), and finally, “**And there is no other god besides me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none besides me.**”(Isaiah 45:21)

God promised He is the One to come and the One to crush the dead of the devil and save His people. This Saviour is the One whom even King David called Lord (Psalm 110:1)

So going back to Joseph, God told him that not only was Mary entirely faithful on her end in their betrothal that she was also carrying God in her womb and Joseph was called to be the child’s adopted father. This idea would be baffling. There is a song by Michael Card in which he tries to grasp Joseph’s thoughts and Joseph tried to comprehend and process the enormity of the situation. Part of the lyrics go as following: “**Father show me where I fit into this plan of Yours. How can a man be father to the Son of God? Lord, for all my life I’ve been a simple carpenter. How can I raise a king, how can I raise a king?**”(Joseph’s Song; *The Promise*)

But unlike king Ahaz in the Old Testament lesson, Joseph trusts God at His Word. Joseph takes God at His Word and Mary as His wife. Joseph trusts God that this child growing in Mary’s womb is from the Holy Spirit, it is Emmanuel come.

No longer do the Jews need to pray, O Come Emmanuel, because Emmanuel is already there in the flesh. This is the Immanuel, the Saviour Incarnate growing in the womb of Joseph’s betrothed, the long promised Saviour of the world! In today’s Gospel text, we hear the angel’s words proclaiming to Joseph, and also us, how the long expected Saviour of the world was not only coming but was already in the flesh, already actively working to redeem and save all people, including you, me, Joseph, Mary, and every other person ever conceived. The Saviour had arrived and was literally alive and kicking inside Mary.

But why did this Jesus really come? Simply to save sinners: all of us, you, me, Joseph, Mary, and every other person from their sins. Jesus did not come to save you from financial distress, health problems, stress with this holiday season, job uncertainty, bad hair day, or bad government decision, just as Jesus did not come to save the 1st century Jews from their Roman occupiers, or to feed them fish and bread on a daily basis. Jesus came to save you from your sins. He came to deliver you from death and the devil. Jesus came to save your condemned and

hell bound self from the eternal punishment you have rightly and repeatedly earned by your sins. You, me, and all people are guilty, along with Adam and Eve for their Original Sin as we were conceived sinful and born in wickedness. (Psalm 51:5) As such we came into this world as self professed enemies of God, as haters of righteousness, and as despisers of God's holy Word. (Ephesians 2, Romans 3) We were by nature dead in our sins and trespasses, condemned and condemning ourselves to the eternal fires of hell by our own actions and inactions.

There was no other option for us to be saved. There was no way, apart from God getting involved for us to be saved. We could not do, in fact, it was and is completely impossible for us to save ourselves. Apart from Christ and His work for salvation, from His incarnation, to His birth, to death on the cross, to His resurrection, we would be eternally condemned. We were the brood of vipers John the Baptist talked about, the spawn of Satan, the children of the devil Scripture so aptly describes.

But for this very purpose Emmanuel became incarnate and took on our flesh and bones. Jesus took upon Himself all your sins, all your shortcoming, and all your failures for the sole reason to die in your place to redeem you from sin, to deliver you from death and the devil, and to exchange the eternal suffering you deserve for the gift of His eternal life.

This Incarnate baby, growing and developing in Mary, would later take the full punishment for each and every one of our sins, this Incarnate One would die on the cross in our place and for all people. Then, on the Third Day, He would also rise from the dead to freely give eternal life to all who believe in Him. This is the One who come for you. This is the One who came for you 2000 years ago, and He is the One who continues to come to you this day, and every day when you hear His Word. It is this Incarnate One who come to you with His own body and blood in the Sacrament to feed you and strengthen you, where He joins Himself to you to lead you to eternal life in Him.

It is this One who come to you to prepare you. Unlike our preparations for Christmas with the wrapping of the presents, setting up the tree and decorations, and buying and preparing the food, Christ comes to prepare you for when He returns in glory as He has promised to do.

Is Saviour brings His gifts from His first Advent to you, where He gives you faith, forgiveness and eternal life. Here is the One has comes, who has come, and who will come again 'for you.' He has done all this because He loves you and is always with you. Thanks be to God. O come, o come Emmanuel. Amen.

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