

Grace, mercy, and peace be yours’ in Jesus Christ, our incarnate king! Amen. The title for tonight’s sermon is “God with you” and is from the Gospel reading, Matthew chapter 1. Let us pray.... Amen.

There is no greater time than at Christmas to reflect on how God came into this world to save sinners: you, me, and all people, and restore us back to God. At Christmas we look to Bethlehem and remember the birth of Jesus; God in the flesh come for you. But, unlike Christmas, how it is just a single day, God coming to you is not an isolated event from 2000 years ago, God is with you now as well. For Him to do this, the price wasn’t cheap, the work wasn’t easy, and it took a whole lot more than just being born in a stable and placed in a manger, but out of God’s enormous love for you, Christ came for you.

Originally, God didn’t have to find our first parents, Adam and Eve, because they were with God in the Garden of Eden. In the beginning God created man and woman in His image of holiness and righteousness. He walked with them, and they were with Him. But something terrible happened; Adam and Eve sinned against God. In so doing they completely lost the image of God in which they were created. When they sinner and saw the corruption they created they ran from God, they hid themselves from God; by their actions they separated themselves from God. We inherited this separation because we inherited Original Sin.

Yet despite the actions and separation caused by Adam and Eve, God didn’t forget about them or His creation. Before our first parents were sent out of Eden, God came and found them while they hid from Him. God also promised them a Saviour; one who would come to reconcile this separation by confronting the cause head on, or better said by placing its head under His heel; the source of our separation: Sin and Satan. Despite being removed from the Garden and from God’s immediate presence, God did not forget or abandon His creation. He continued to be with them.

God continued to be actively involved in human history. He was no longer as visibly as He was in the Garden, but God continued to support life, to hold all things together in Himself, and to give everyone and everything what they need.

God continued to point people to Himself and to draw people back to Himself. God did this in many ways, including as He as chose His people the children of Abraham and then more specifically the people of Israel. God redeemed them and saved them. God worked through them and commissioned them to draw other tribes, nation, and people to Himself. God promised them; **“I will dwell among the people of Israel and will be their God. ⁴⁶ And they shall know that I am the LORD their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them. I am the LORD their God.”**(Exodus 29:45-46)

Unfortunately they failed, both at drawing other nations to God and they failed in remaining faithful to God, not because of God, but because of their sinfulness.

Despite their failing, God still used them. He delivered His people. He saved His people from numerous enemies, numerous times. He broke down what kept them from Him and brought them back to Him. More importantly, God’s actions in the Old Testament pointed ahead

to what God would do for them through the Saviour to come, from the nation of Israel, from the Tribe of Judah, from the House and lineage of David: God would send the One who would reconcile the world to back to God.

His people, and all people were still separated from God because of their sins and sinfulness. But God had a plan from before the foundation of the world to save His creation.

So at just the right time, in just the right place, in an obscure stable in a small town best known for keeping the sheep to be used in the Temple sacrifices, God did something only He could do about our separation; He came to us and for us. God resolved our separation from Him by coming to us in our flesh and blood and by carrying our sins. God didn't instigated or caused our separation from God, it was caused by us and our sins; our separation from God was entirely our most grievous fault. Despite our guilt, our sin, our shame, our rejection of Him, God took on our flesh and blood; He was born in that stable to reconcile you and the world back to Him.

God had long promised the Messiah, the Saviour. He promised Him first to Eve. Immanuel, God with us, came into His creation that first Christmas, born to Mary, born to save her, Joseph, you, me, and all people.

At Christmas time we are reminded of who Jesus really is and why He came. The name 'Immanuel' means 'God with us'. The name 'Jesus' means 'He saves His people from their sins'. As such, Jesus is Immanuel, God in the flesh to save you and all His people from their sins. Jesus' Incarnation and birth gives the Christmas season the hope, peace, and joy because of what God instigated and came for you.

Jesus took on your sins, your shame, and your guilt, and Jesus freely and willingly carried all of it for you from His conception to His cross and grave. From Jesus' Incarnation, His conception, He carried everything which kept you separated from God so He could redeem you and reconcile you back to God. On the first Christmas, as Mary and Joseph held in their arms the baby Jesus; they were holding God in the flesh, their Saviour, your Saviour, the Saviour of the world.

Jesus came to restore you to Himself; He came to bridge the separation we cause by our sins by taking on Himself the very punishment we deserve. There is only one way to pay for sin; Scripture is clear: **“Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.”**(Hebrews 9:22)

The second verse of the hymn 'What Child Is This' (LSB 370), which we sang before the Epistle reading tonight, this hymn really 'nails' Jesus purpose for coming. We sang: “Why lies He in such mean estate where ox and ass are feeding? Good Christian, fear; for sinners here the silent Word is pleading. **Nails, spear shall pierce Him through, The cross be borne for me, for you;** Hail, hail the Word made flesh, the babe, the son of Mary!” Jesus didn't come to get cuddled, He came to die to save you and to reconcile you back to Himself. Jesus knew the propose from the start.

The good news is Jesus has come and through Him you are saved! Through Jesus and on account of His actions for you, He reconciled you back to God. God accomplished the work necessary to reverse our separation through Jesus’ life, death, resurrection, and ascension. God gave you these gifts and reconciled you back to Himself when He marked you with His Name in Holy Baptism; where He drowned you to sin and the devil; where He raised you and delivered you to new life, eternal life in Him at the font. He also personally promised you; **“I am with you always, to the end of the age.”**(Matthew 28:20)

Jesus continues to be with you now and always. He comes to you through His Word, where He says **“For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.”**(Matthew 18:20) Through God’s Word and Sacrament God continues to come to you to bring you Christ’s forgiveness and reconciliation. Here He comes to you call you by name to bring you back. Here He breaks down the wall of separation. Jesus does this no greater or more personally way than when He invites you to the Lord’s Supper and tells, in His own words: **“Take, eat; this, this is my body”**, and, **“Drink of the cup, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins.”**(Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:24-25)

God is not far off, unknown or separated from you, rather God is with you at all times in all places. God broke down the separation that kept us from Him when He sent His Son, your Saviour Jesus Christ. Through His Word and Sacrament Jesus comes to you and continues to bring you back to Him. Each and every day, no matter how good or bad the day or circumstances might be, God is with you because He promised and He reconciled you back to Himself forever. As the ‘voice from the throne of God proclaims in the 2nd last chapter of the Book of Revelation: **“Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and He will dwell with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God.”** (Revelation 21:3)

God is with you now and always. Rejoice in this, the greatest gift ever given man, not from a sleigh, but one placed in the hay for you. Thanks be to God. Amen.

* This sermon belongs to Christ and His Church because it is taken from His Word. Please feel free to copy or use it accordingly. I expect people to copy my sermons otherwise I would not post them. I only ask that you quote accurately if you attribute anything to me. Should you decide to contact me, I would be very interested in knowing where you are. Please include the name of your city, province or state, and country when contacting me.