

Theme: Nothing but the Truth: Truths of Christmas

Title: God w/Us – Matthew 1:18-25

Aim: Knowing God is w/us & because of Christ, w/in us.

Intro: As you read through the Bible & if you look for them, you'll notice various themes running through: the holiness of God, the rebellion of mankind, the faithfulness of God, the grace of God, the plan & promise of redemption, etc. One of the most blessed threads running thru the pages of Scripture is the promise of the presence of God w/His people. Theme: Nothing but the Truth (year) & for this Advent season the sub-theme is Truths of Christmas. Last week Pastor Derek took us to Nazareth, where the angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she, a virgin, by the power of the Holy Spirit, would conceive & bear a Son, even the Son of God. The highlighted truth of Christmas last week was that nothing is impossible w/God. This week's highlighted truth is the truth of the remarkable gift of God w/us. Matthew 1:18-25 [READ]. So, we know that Mary was betrothed to a man named Joseph – that is, she was legally pledged to be married to him - an even stronger bond than engagement, tho practically the same. Joseph is the other side of the story, so to speak. Mary, tho perhaps scared, had to be excited, tho I'm sure she also experienced the shock & disbelief of her parents & family. And then, there was Joseph. "What? An angel? Son of God? C'mon, Mary, just be honest w/me. How could you?" Matthew reported that Joseph was "a just man [who was] unwilling to put [Mary] to shame, [so he] resolved to divorce her quietly." Mary could have been stoned to death if Joseph had taken her to court. Or at the least she would be humiliated publicly. Joseph didn't want that. Afterall, he loved her, but didn't want to marry her anymore. He has the right to divorce her quietly w/a letter of divorce. But it seems Joseph was also a dreamer & before he "put Mary away" an "angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream," telling him, in essence, "It's true, Joseph. Mary has conceived, but it's

the work of the Holy Spirit. I want you to proceed to take Mary as your wife & you, Joseph, name the child Jesus” That name is significant because it means “God saves.” The child born of Mary would save His people from their sins. The angel was letting Joseph know that this child was the promised Messiah. What a relief for Joseph! He didn’t have to divorce Mary & he could have her as his wife. But what a challenge for Joseph! He would be responsible for raising the Son of God, while putting up w/the scorn of others! Matthew shared this account of the birth of “the Christ” in order to point out to his Jewish audience that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, fulfilling the prophecies of the OT, such as he noted in vs22-23. The vs quoted is Isaiah 7:14 & that prophetic promise was fulfilled 2ce: 1st when a young woman (probably newly married) gave birth to a child. In Isaiah’s day, the kingdom of Judah & the city of Jerusalem were threatened by the kingdoms of Syria & Israel. The key point in Isaiah is that *“before the boy (Immanuel) knows how to refuse the evil & choose the good (in other words while he was still very young), the land whose 2 kings you dread will be deserted”* (vs17). God would thwart their plans & see them conquered by Assyria. God would be w/Judah & would protect them. But Matthew pointed out here in our text that the greater fulfillment of this prophecy would be in the coming of the Messiah, Jesus. He, Jesus, would be Immanuel – “God w/us.” I) **From the earliest time that was God’s intention, to be present w/His people.** God was w/Adam & Eve at least at times in the Garden of Eden, walking w/them in “the cool of the day.” In the ESV the assurance of God was “I am w/you” – recorded 13 times throughout the OT. The promise “I will be w/you” is given 11 times. Because of Israel’s sin of rebellion & idolatry, God was not going to personally lead the people into the Promised Land, but Moses said (Ex.33:14), “If you don’t go w/us, I don’t want to go,” in essence, “we dare not go.” And God said, “I will be w/you.” The Ark of the Covenant, kept in the Holy

of Holies in the tabernacle/temple represented the very presence of God among His people. It was God's intention to be present w/His people. Perhaps the saddest chapter of Scripture in all the Bible is Ezekiel 10, where it is recorded that the glory/presence of the Lord left the temple & Jerusalem & Judah & the people. That glory did not return until the birth of Christ. II) **Jesus came to be God w/us.** John 1:14 announces to us "*The Word became flesh & dwelt among us...*" While He walked on the earth, Jesus was God in the flesh, teaching, healing, displaying the glory of God. John said, "*We have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.*" But He came to do more than be God in the flesh. He came to tear down the barriers between man & God so that we would no longer be separated from God, but God could be w/us forever. Sin separates us from God & we are helpless to remedy the situation. But nothing is impossible w/God. God the Son took on flesh & then took on sin & death, defeating them forever. I Peter 2:24 tells us that "*He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree (cross), that we might die to sin & live to righteousness.*" God reconciled to Himself all who believe/receive Christ as Savior so that He could be w/us always. God w/us in embodied in Jesus, Immanuel. III) **The promise of God for eternity is that He will be w/us.** Revelation 21:3 bears the beautiful promise that in the eternal kingdom of God "*the dwelling place of God is w/man. He will dwell w/them, & they will be His people, & God Himself will be w/them as their God.*" Hallelujah! That is the most glorious promise of the kingdom - the unhindered presence of God always, eternally. God will be the temple; God will be the light. His glorious presence will illumine our lives so that there will be no more night! But what about now? What about in this broken & very dark world? Is God w/us? Yes, we know that what the Psalmist wrote is true (139): there is no place we could go where God is not: not the highest heavens (as far as we can see) or the deepest grave or the deepest sea.

God is omnipresent. But His being present everywhere doesn't necessarily compute to His active, abiding presence, even tho Jesus Himself said, very significantly recorded at the end of Matthew's gospel, ***"I am w/you always, to the end of the age"*** (Mt.28:20). Immanuel, God w/us, personally promised "I am w/you always." But then He ascended into heaven to sit at the Father's right hand, His place of eternal victory. How is He then w/us? IV) **The provision of God for us now is the blessed Holy Spirit.** Jesus made this precious promise in John 14:16-17, ***"I will ask the Father, & He will give you another Helper, to be w/you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. You know Him, for He dwells w/you & will be in you."*** There it is! The active, abiding presence of God; Immanuel, God w/us is the Holy Spirit, God the Holy Spirit, w/in us! Note that the world does not know Him. Those who don't believe in Christ as Savior & thus are not children of God thru faith, they don't have the Holy Spirit w/in. But those who are in Christ by faith do have the Holy Spirit w/in. If you want the active, abiding presence of God, embrace Christ by faith. Display your faith by surrendering your life to Christ as Lord. "Lord Jesus, I believe in You. I believe You died to pay for my sin. I believe You rose again & are my Savior & Lord, so I give my life to You. Come dwell w/in me by Your Holy Spirit. Come live your life in me. Help me to live my life for You." Then trust Him w/your life, to guide you in the darkness, to carry you through, to use you, to work in you. That doesn't mean life will be easy. Your faith will be tested. Dark days will come. As you seek to follow Christ you will face opposition from the enemy of God. But ***"He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world"*** (I John 4:4). Practice the presence of God. Give way to the Holy Spirit w/in you. "Our God is w/us, Immanuel." That's the truth of Christmas & that's nothing but the truth! Believe it!

