

The Love of Immanuel

Matthew 1:18-25

Introduction

This Advent, we have seen the hope we have in the Son of Man returning with His kingdom of power and glory, the peace we have through the broken body and shed blood of the Branch of Jesse, and the joy we have in the glory of the Lord. Today, we will see the love we have from Immanuel, God with us.

Immanuel in Matthew

The concept of “God with us” is central to Matthew. He begins: *“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call His name Immanuel” (which means, God with us) (Matthew 1:23)*. And he closes with Jesus saying, *“And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20b)*. God is with us because of the Incarnation. This was God taking on a body, so He could be with us. We sometimes talk about having an incarnational ministry. This is when we have a real, physical presence in the community. In fact, that’s the only kind of ministry that counts, as the church embodies the Gospel. We are the hands and feet of Jesus on earth. God became a man so He could be with us.

God with His People

The truth is, God has always been with His people. He was with Adam and Eve, as He walked in the garden *in the cool of the day (Genesis 3:8)*. He was with the children of Israel in the wilderness in the *pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night (Exodus 13:21)*. He was with Israel in the Ark of the Covenant (Read *Exodus 25:21-22*). He was with Israel as He spoke through the prophets. But in Jesus, He was with us in a new way.

Not Just Near Us

When God became a man, He did not just condescend to come down and live among us for a while. He *became* a man. He *became* one of us, one of His creatures. That’s something we cannot comprehend. If we went to a foreign land, let’s say China, we could learn their language and adopt their customs to try to *fit in*. We could learn their history and try to learn what it means to be Chinese. But we would never become Chinese. That’s something we would have to be born into. It’s the same way with transgenderism. A boy can take hormone blockers and supplements and have surgeries. He may look and sound like a girl, even think like a girl. But he will still be a boy. That’s why he has to keep taking the drugs the rest of his life. But God became one of us and was born into our situation. He really *is* one of us. That’s what it means when we say, “God with us.”

With Us Because of Love

What would make God do such a thing? Why would He leave the glory of heaven, set aside His power, humble Himself to be one of us, and live in this world, suffering all the things we do? In a word, it was “love.” Yes, that concept that the world confuses with “acceptance.” *God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16)*. He wanted to save His people and He knew this was the only way. So, He gave Himself up for us.

With Us in Everything

Catherine Regina von Greiffenberg, Lutheran poet of the Reformation said of Immanuel, “All Christians called Him this. God with us in our nature. God with us in our flesh and blood. God with us on earth. God with us in our weakness. God with us!” In every aspect of our life, God is with us. That’s a comforting and scary thought at the same time. He is with us no matter what we are doing or what we are saying.

With Us Forever

Just before He ascended, Jesus said, *“I am with you always” (Matthew 28:20)*. Then, He ascended and left their sight. So, He’s not present with us bodily anymore. But that’s a good thing. In physical form, His presence was limited to locality. We call this His local presence. Since His exaltation and ascension, He can be present with us universally in His divine presence.

With Us in the Sacrament

Because of His love for us, He has given us another means by which He is bodily present with us. Because His humanity is still united to His divinity, He is able to give us His body and blood to eat and drink at the Lord’s Supper. It’s a mystery, but because Jesus said it, it’s so. He is Immanuel, God with us, every time we receive the Sacrament of the Altar. Receive Him today. Receive **THE LOVE OF IMMANUEL**, God with us.

*And the peace of God,
Which surpasses all understanding,
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
