

This morning begins the season of Advent, the four weeks before Christmas where we look back at the coming of Jesus and look ahead to His return. I've entitled my Advent sermon series "The Names of the Messiah," and over the next four weeks, I will be looking at the various names given to Jesus, the Messiah, in the various prophecies about his coming, and what significance they have for our lives and our world. This morning we will be looking at the name Immanuel from Isaiah 7.

If you're unfamiliar with Isaiah, it is a collection of prophecies by the prophet Isaiah from the 8<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century BC. Remember that after God rescued the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, they met with God at Mt. Sinai, where God made a covenant with them. And whenever Israel was violating the covenant and experiencing the consequences, God would raise up a prophet to call the people to repentance. Isaiah came along at a time when Israel was very much in danger.

To set the historical scene: in those days Israel was broken into two kingdoms, Israel in the north and Judah in the south. Judah, the southern kingdom of Israel, was facing pressure from Aram & Ephraim, two tribes in the northern kingdom, who in turn were facing pressure from a foreign power named Assyria. Judah, especially King Ahaz, was left with a decision, whether to ally with Assyria or stand against Aram & Ephraim on their own. King Ahaz had to choose between trusting God to protect them or making an alliance with another nation. Isaiah, the prophet, tells him to trust God and not make an alliance, as we see in Isaiah 7:

***Isaiah 7:1-14** - When Ahaz son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, was king of Judah, King Rezin of Aram and Pekah son of Remaliah king of Israel marched up to fight against Jerusalem, but they could not overpower it. <sup>2</sup> Now the house of David was told, "Aram has allied itself with Ephraim"; so the hearts of Ahaz and his people were shaken, as the trees of the forest are shaken **by the wind**. <sup>3</sup> Then the LORD said to Isaiah, "Go out, you and your son Shear-Jashub, to meet Ahaz at the end of the aqueduct of the Upper Pool, on the road to the Washerman's Field. <sup>4</sup> Say to him, 'Be careful, keep calm and don't be afraid. **Do not lose heart because of these two smoldering stubs of firewood-- because of the fierce anger of Rezin and Aram and of the son of Remaliah**. <sup>5</sup> Aram, Ephraim and Remaliah's son have plotted your ruin, saying, <sup>6</sup> "Let us invade Judah; let us tear it apart and divide it among ourselves, and make the son of Tabeel king over it." <sup>7</sup> **Yet this is what the Sovereign LORD says: "It will not take place, it will not happen,** <sup>8</sup> **for the head of Aram is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is only Rezin. Within sixty-five years Ephraim will be too shattered to be a people.** <sup>9</sup> **The head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is only Remaliah's son. If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all."** <sup>10</sup> Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, <sup>11</sup> "Ask*

*the LORD your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights." <sup>12</sup> But Ahaz said, "I will not ask; I will not put the LORD to the test." <sup>13</sup> Then Isaiah said, "Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of men? Will you try the **patience of my God also**? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.*

Ahaz refuses to trust God, and instead submits to Assyria on condition that Assyria deals with the northern threat. Here is the historical account in 2 Kings 16:

*<sup>7</sup> Ahaz sent messengers to say to Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria, "I am your servant and vassal. Come up and save me out of the hand of the king of Aram and of the king of Israel, who are attacking me." <sup>8</sup> And Ahaz took the silver and gold found in the temple of the LORD and in the treasuries of the royal palace and sent it as a gift to the king of Assyria. <sup>9</sup> The king of Assyria complied by attacking Damascus and capturing it. He deported its inhabitants to Kir and put Rezin to death.*

Because of Ahaz's refusal to trust in God and his choice to become a servant of a foreign nation, Isaiah prophesies that God will use Assyria to discipline the people of Israel. Ahaz will end up being the last king in the line of David; the rest would be puppets of Assyria and then Babylon. In 100 years, by 587, all of Israel and Judah will be in exile. Even though God, through Isaiah, told Ahaz "*If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all,*" and even though He has given him a sign of something miraculous he will do, "*Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel,*" Ahaz will not place his trust in God. Instead, he puts his trust in what his eyes can see, the nation of Assyria.

Immanuel is a Hebrew word that means "God with us." A word about Old Testament prophecy. Often OT prophecy has a short-term and long-term fulfillment. There was a short-term fulfillment to this. Most commentators see the virgin as referring to Israel and the son referring to the remnant of believers that God will be with, and so therefore this sign is meant to encourage Ahaz that there is a remnant that will survive whatever attacks come Judah's way. But in the New Testament, Matthew picks up on this promise and sees it as ultimately referring to Jesus when he is born. That is what we are going to focus on today:

***Matthew 1:18-25*** - *This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was*

found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup> Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. <sup>20</sup> But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him **in a dream and said**, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup> She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." <sup>22</sup> All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: <sup>23</sup> "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"--which means, **"God with us."** <sup>24</sup> When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. <sup>25</sup> But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

Jesus, the Messiah, will be the ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy. He will be God with us, Immanuel.

What do we learn about God from this name?

### 1) Jesus is God in the flesh

The gospel of John begins with these words:

**John 1:1-18** - In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was with God in the beginning. <sup>3</sup> Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made... <sup>14</sup> The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us...<sup>18</sup> No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known.

Listen to the claims here – Jesus, the Word, was both with God and was God. He was there in the beginning, and everything was made through the Word. He became flesh and dwelt among us. And even though no one has seen God, God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known. The language of the Trinity is all over this – Jesus is not the Father, but they are both God. Different in person but same substance. One God in three persons. And Jesus is the eternal Son of God, the eternal Word, become flesh. Jesus claimed to be God in the flesh:

**John 14:5-9** - Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" <sup>6</sup> Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. <sup>7</sup> **If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen**

him." <sup>8</sup> Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." <sup>9</sup> Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.

And Paul recognized this as well:

**Colossians 1:15-17** - *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. <sup>16</sup> For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. <sup>17</sup> He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*

And listen to some of the claims that Jesus has made Himself in the gospel of John:

John 2:19 – predicts his resurrection

John 3:13-18; 4:13-14; 6:50-51; 8:23-24; 10:27-30; 11:25-26 – those who believe in him will have eternal life; those who reject him will be condemned and die in their sins

John 4:25-26 – he is the Messiah

John 5:19-27 – Jesus is the judge and gives life

John 6:35-40; 8:23-24 – Jesus has come down from heaven, and all who believe in him will have eternal life

John 7:16-17 – He speaks God's words

John 8:46 – He is without sin

John 8:58 – He is the eternal God

John 18:36 – He is a king from another place

This is why CS Lewis wrote:

*“I'm ready to accept Jesus as a moral teacher, but I don't accept the claim that he is God.' That is the one thing we must never say. A man who is merely a man and said the things Jesus said can not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic, on the level of the man who says he is a poached egg, or else he would be the devil of hell. You can shut him up as a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon, you may fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come up with any patronizing nonsense about him being a great moral teacher. He did not leave that open to us, and he did not intend to.”*

No sane person makes the claims that Jesus did. And then, in case there was any doubt, he backs up those claims by rising from the dead. Jesus is Immanuel, God

with us. And as He claimed, your eternal destiny depends upon whether or not you trust in Him. As Paul put it:

**Romans 10:9-10** - *That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.*

## 2) God desires a personal and intimate relationship with you

The significance of Immanuel for you is the recognition that God desires a personal relationship with you. In fact, from the very beginning, you can trace the theme of God's relational presence through the Bible.

### Creation –

**Genesis 1:26-27** - *Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." <sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*

It begins with God as Trinity. Before anyone or anything was created, God existed as Father, Son & Holy Spirit. Why does it matter that God is a Trinity? Because it means that God is a relational and loving God in His essence. If he was a unity, he could be all-powerful and all-knowing, but not loving, because there would be no one to love. Out of the overflow of the love shared in the Trinity, God created us to enjoy perfect community and relationship with him.

God dwelt with Adam and Eve, walking in the garden in the cool of the day. But then they lose God's presence in their rebellion against Him. The fall is the loss of God's presence.

**Tabernacle & Temple** - It continues in the time of Moses with the Tabernacle, a holy God making a way to dwell among his people.

**Exodus 29:42-46** - *"For the generations to come this burnt offering is to be made regularly at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting before the LORD. There I will meet you and speak to you; <sup>43</sup> there also I will meet with the Israelites, and the place will be consecrated by my glory. <sup>44</sup> "So I will consecrate the Tent of Meeting*

*and the altar and will consecrate Aaron and his sons to serve me as priests. <sup>45</sup> Then I will dwell among the Israelites and be their God. <sup>46</sup> They will know that I am the LORD their God, who brought them out of Egypt so that I might dwell among them. I am the LORD their God.*

***1 Kings 8:10-11** - When the priests withdrew from the Holy Place, the cloud filled the **temple** of the LORD. <sup>11</sup> And the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled his **temple**.*

**Jesus** - And then, of course, there was Jesus, Emmanuel – God with us, the Word become Flesh.

**Holy Spirit** - And then the giving of the Holy Spirit, God in us and dwelling in the midst of His people.

***1 Corinthians 6:19-20** - Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; <sup>20</sup> you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.*

***1 Corinthians 3:16** - Don't you know that you yourselves are **God's temple** and that **God's Spirit** lives in you?*

We are the new temple of God. The presence of God in the midst of His people. Worship from home is second best.

**New heavens and new earth** - And finally, the restored presence of God with His people forever in the new heavens and earth.

***Revelation 21:1-5** - Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. <sup>2</sup> I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. <sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and **be their God**. <sup>4</sup> He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." <sup>5</sup> He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."*

It's not just living forever, it is loving forever. It is eternal love. What is the point of this? Immanuel is the recognition that God's desire is a personal and intimate relationship with us.

### 3) Life to the full is found in a relationship with God

**John 17:3** *Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.*

Not religion but relationship. Allegiance to a person. You were created to know God. This is not a religion but a relationship. This is not about belief or adherence to laws but knowing God. In fact, James goes as far as to say:

**James 2:18-19** - *But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. <sup>19</sup> You believe that there is one God. Good! **Even the demons** believe that-- and shudder.*

The demons believe that God is real and that Jesus is the eternal Son of God, but they do not love Him. The greatest commandment is not to believe in God but to love Him:

**Matthew 22:35-40** - *One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: <sup>36</sup> "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" <sup>37</sup> Jesus replied: "**Love the Lord your God with all** your heart and **with all** your soul and **with all** your mind.' <sup>38</sup> This is the first and greatest commandment. <sup>39</sup> And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' <sup>40</sup> All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."*

Do you know God? Do you love Him? Life to the fullest is found in knowing Him. Listen to just a couple of the pictures used to describe how desperately we need Him for true life:

**Psalms 1:1-3** *Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. <sup>2</sup> But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. <sup>3</sup> He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.*

**John 15:4-5** *Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in*

me. <sup>5</sup> "I am the **vine**; you are the **branches**. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

God does not desire a relationship with us because he is needy. He knows that we were created to live in relationship with Him. He knows that we will die eternally if we reject Him, because life is found in Him. Open your heart in prayer and worship to experience more of God's heart, power, and presence in your life. If you don't know Him, come to Him.

**James 4:8** - *Come near to God and he will come near to you.*

And if you do know Him, come to Him! There is so much more to know, so much more life to experience.

**Romans 11:33-36** - *Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond **tracing out!*** <sup>34</sup> "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?" <sup>35</sup> "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?" <sup>36</sup> *For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.*

How will you prioritize Him this year? There is so much more of God to know.