

December 22, 2019  
THE WONDER OF CHRISTMAS – Part 4  
“The Wonder of a Promise”

There are many reasons why a baby named Jesus was born here two thousand years ago, but one of the most important is so that we never have to be alone again.

Isaiah 7:14 (NLT): “...The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel (which means “God is with us”).”

God’s plan was always to be more than simply for us or even with us in some formal way – He wanted to be *with us* personally, individually, so we’d never be alone.

Galatians 4:4-5 (NLT): “<sup>4</sup>But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. <sup>5</sup>God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children.”

Matthew 1:22-23 (ESV): “<sup>22</sup>All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: <sup>23</sup>Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel’ (which means, God with us).”

Jesus was and is our Immanuel, God actually with us – through His physical presence in being born to Mary, and, beginning with Pentecost, His spiritual presence through the Holy Spirit.

Jesus: “...And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”  
(Matthew 28:20 NLT)

This is the wonder of Christmas, that God would come into the world in Jesus Christ as both the Lord of all Creation *and* Immanuel, God with us!

Pastor Robb Renfroe: “We exist by *fact* – what has happened to us and what is now happening around us. But we live, thrive, and overcome by *promise*. And there is no promise more wondrous, more empowering, or more real than the promise of Christmas. In Jesus Christ, God is Immanuel, God with you today, tomorrow, and forever.”

Christmas is not only a promise we are meant to experience; it’s also a promise we are meant to keep by helping others experience it.

A big part of why the church is called the body of Christ is that once Christ comes into *our* lives, we’re meant by God to join together in common mission and ministry to the world around us, doing what Jesus did.

It's amazing what we can hear when we know the one speaking to us really loves us.

The world we live in is messed up, but maybe it's because we haven't really been very much like Jesus to those in this world.

**2 Corinthians 5:18-20 (NLT):** “<sup>18</sup>And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. <sup>19</sup>For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. <sup>20</sup>So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, 'Come back to God!'"

## HOW DO WE BE *WITH* PEOPLE?

### 1. We Must *Understand* the People We Want to Reach

We need to understand that those around us have lost something important, even essential, and don't know where to find it.

### 2. We Must *Remember* Our Own Stories

If we forget our own stories, then when we see people who are lost or hurting or angry, we may not have much empathy, becoming unbending and judgmental.

Being lost from God leads us to do all kinds of things that make it difficult and hard to be loved by others, but God didn't give up on us or anyone.

Our faith in Jesus can help us identify with lost and hurting people more and help them discover God is with them, too.

### 3. We Must *Care* About Others' Stories

We earn trust by caring about others' stories enough to want them to experience God's best.

Most folks aren't lectured or argued or guilted into the Kingdom but loved in.

When we sense that someone genuinely cares about us, we begin to feel safe with that person and are willing to start opening ourselves up and be real.

We aren't growing as disciples of Jesus if we're aren't unleashing more and more of Christ's love and kindness to those around us, if we aren't increasingly concerned about the eternal state of their souls.

No life is saved, and no story redeemed, unless someone cares enough to be willing to go to a cross.

Every *one* matters to God, and so they must matter to us!

Christmas is this incredible invitation to experience the presence and power of God Himself and offer it to others.

**Jesus:** "'Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in....'" (**Revelation 3:20** NIV)

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