

Jesus our Emmanuel

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[0 : 00] Reading from Exodus 33, verses 7 through 23. While the Lord spoke with Moses, whenever the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance to the tent, they all stood and worshipped, each at the entrance to his tent.

The Lord would speak to Moses face to face as a man speaks to his friend. Then Moses would return to the camp, but his young assistant Joshua, son of Nun, did not leave the tent. Moses said to the Lord, You have been telling me, Lead these people, but you have not let me know whom you will send with me.

You have said, I know you by name, and you have found favor with me. If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so that I may know you and continue to find favor with you. Remember that this nation is your people.

The Lord replied, My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest. Then Moses said to him, If your presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us?

What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth? And the Lord said to Moses, I will do this very thing you have asked because I am pleased with you, and I know you by name.

[1 : 38] Then Moses said, Now show me your glory. And the Lord said, I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.

But he said, You cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live. Then the Lord said, There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. When my glory passes by, I will put you in the cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by.

Then I will remove my hand, and you will see my back, but my face must not be seen. This is the word of the Lord. Thank you, Keith.

So we're thinking today about Jesus, our Emmanuel. Thinking about that as one of the big ideas that we find through the Bible. But I want to begin with a surprising treat that I had last week.

Because last week I got to enjoy a new view of the city. Because I got to see Prince's Street from up on the roof. And it was wonderful to be able to get a great panorama.

[2 : 47] And then it was wonderful to see different details about the street. So then when I came down to street level, I had a new appreciation. Maybe you've had that experience with this whole earth from the air thing.

A chance to see the familiar in a new way. Now I hope and pray that today Emmanuel might be like that. This idea of God with us might be like that for us.

It's maybe a word we're familiar with. Especially at this time of year, we sing the songs. We do the readings. But to think together. To take the big panoramic view of God with us through the Bible.

To see the Emmanuel principle through the whole Bible. To recognize that actually the goal of God saving people. Is it so we might enjoy life in his presence forever.

That we'd understand that. And then we'd be able to think about the significance for our day-to-day life. That we'd have a new appreciation. Having seen the big story. We'd have a new appreciation for what it means for our salvation.

[3 : 46] And what it means for our fellowship with God. And what it means for our understanding of the beauty of God. As we recognize Jesus as Emmanuel. God with us.

Okay, so we're going to begin with Emmanuel from the air. We're going to look at six locations. To see this theme through the whole Bible. To see God with us at the center. So we will begin at the beginning.

So let me take us all to the Garden of Eden. And there in those first three chapters of the Bible. We discover the desire of God our creator. Is that he would dwell with people made in his image.

To dwell with Adam and Eve. That they would see and enjoy his glory. And that glory would then spread from the Garden of Eden. To the ends of the earth. That was God's goal.

Of course, Adam and Eve. If we know our Bibles. We know that they fell into sin. And rather than enjoying the presence of God. They're hiding. They find themselves under the curse. And ultimately, they find themselves banished from the Garden of Eden.

[4 : 44] And they see the angel with the flaming sword of God's judgment. Denying them access back in. But God's desire remains unchanged. He will be the God who is with his people.

And now that's going to work out in the story of salvation. We're going to see that in the rest of the Bible. So the next place we'll go to. Is we'll go to the story of the Exodus.

And ultimately to the promised land. So think with me of Moses. Moses, God's chosen redeemer. And Moses is called. And God says to him throughout his story.

Remember, I am with you. As he is called to lead the nation of Egypt out of slavery. He's called to do that. So that the people of God might enjoy life in the promised land with their God.

And we see God's presence all through the story. We see it as a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire. Led them through the wilderness. We see it as they arrive at Mount Sinai. And there's God in the cloud.

[5 : 44] And there's the thunder. And there's the rumblings. We read about it in Exodus 33. Moses had that amazing privilege of talking with God face to face. And Moses recognized that God's people need God's presence.

So he insists that God would be with them as they anticipate going into the promised land. Now, of course, Moses doesn't get there. But Joshua, his assistant, he does lead the people into the promised land.

And again, Joshua chapter 1. Joshua is fearful of the responsibility he has. And God comes to him numerous times saying, I will be with you. I am with you.

Leading the people into the promised land. And that promised land is for them like Eden. Here they are in God's place, under God's rule. And they're enjoying God's blessing. They know God with them.

But their story, too, is marked by sin. Marked by rebellion. Marked by idolatry. We read Exodus 33. But Exodus 32 is the story of the golden calf.

[6 : 44] As they make an idol instead of worshiping the one true God. And ultimately, we know that the disobedience of the people is so great that numerous times they're driven into exile.

Staying with the promised land, we're going to zoom into the temple. As our third location, we're also thinking about the tabernacle. Tabernacle and temple are the literal heart and center of the life of God's people.

And God, in his kindness, as it were, set the tabernacle, then the temple, as his physical address on the earth. This is where God would meet with his people.

That behind the curtain in the holy of holies was where God's throne was. That's where his presence resided. Although, as Solomon said, the whole earth and heavens couldn't contain the glory of our God.

And we see in the story of Israel that the tabernacle and the temple are vital to their life. It's the place where they worship. It's the place where they offer sacrifice. And it's the place they go to meet with to enjoy the glory of God.

[7 : 52] But in their story, the temple, too, becomes unclean. There is false worship. The prophet Ezekiel anticipates a day when God's glory would depart, when he would leave his temple.

So as you look at the Old Testament, as you look at the big picture of the Old Testament, you see God desires and God promises that he would be Emmanuel, God with his people. But we also see there's this great barrier, the people's sin.

And so the question is, how is God going to fulfill this promise? And that takes us to our fourth location. And that takes us to the story of Advent.

Matthew chapter 1, verses 21 to 23. The words that we read last week, let me read them again for us now, so that we can hear the words of the angel to Joseph and to recognize their significance.

So verse 21. Mary will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins. All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the

prophet.

[9 : 02] The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Emmanuel, which means God with us. The virgin birth is the great miracle.

But the great miracle is also that here is God with us. This is who is to be born. That God's promise will be kept not in a tabernacle, not in a temple, but as the Son of God comes to take on flesh and dwell among us.

John chapter 1, verse 14. The Word became flesh, and we've seen his glory. The glory is of the one and only, full of grace and truth. In the coming of Jesus, God's glory and God's presence comes up close and personal.

We discover Jesus is God who saves, and he is the God who saves as the God who is with us. And so, as we look at the life of Jesus, we see the glory of God with his people, and then we see the wonder of his saving plan, that in the death and resurrection of Jesus, the one who is God with us, he now opens up for us the way of access back into life with God.

The sin barrier is torn down. Jesus pays for sin so that new life with God is possible. Now, let's move from our fourth location from Nazareth to our fifth location as we think about this Emmanuel idea, and we need to come to the church.

[10 : 29] Now, sometimes people have the idea, maybe have the imagination, wouldn't it be wonderful? Wouldn't it be just the best thing ever to have walked with Jesus, to have talked with Jesus, to have been there as he did the miracles?

And of course it would have been. But remember, for example, what Jesus said to Thomas in John chapter 20. He said, after Thomas saw the risen Lord Jesus, you have seen and believed.

Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe. Or to think about Jesus' words to his disciples before going to the cross, when he said, it's better for you that I go away. And you're thinking, how can it be better?

And the reason is that Jesus is going to come to be present with his people as the Spirit comes to dwell in us. The new address of Jesus on the earth is now in the hearts of his people.

Jesus now dwells with his church. We become the living temple in which God dwells by his Spirit. And then to go back to Eden for a moment, you and I, just like Adam and Eve, we have, as Christians, the same task.

[11 : 35] We are image bearers and we have seen the glory of God and we are sent to spread the glory of God through the world, to spread the light of Jesus through the world.

So that's our fifth location. We have one place to go. We started in Eden. We need to go right to the end of the Bible to think about the new heaven and the new earth.

So remember, Advent is a time of waiting. We're not waiting for Jesus, our King, to come. The first time we're waiting for Jesus to return, to establish his kingdom and to make everything new.

Turn with me, if you have a Bible, to Revelation 21. Here is the goal. Here is God with us as it reaches its climax.

And as we read it, we recognize here too is the world that you and I want more than anything else. Revelation 21 at verse 3.

[12 : 35] I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 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. And what will this be like? 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. That's the goal of our salvation right there.

Eternal life in a restored world, enjoying the presence of God forever. So we think about Emmanuel from the air. And what do we see as we look through the Bible? We see God's unstoppable desire to call a people to himself so that we would enjoy his presence and glory.

We see too Emmanuel as a principle that stands at the heart of this story of Christmas. Here is Jesus come to be God with us to keep God's promise. And we need to recognize this, that in Jesus, God is inviting you and me to enjoy his friendship, to enjoy life with God.

[13 : 48] It's an invitation to trust him and to worship him and to enjoy him this Advent, this Christmas, for all of our lives. So we've taken the tour.

And hopefully you have that sense of wonder that this lies at the heart of the story of the Bible. But maybe we have the question, but now what? What's this got to do with me today or tomorrow or this

week?

So let's go back down to street level. Now let's think about Emmanuel, not from the air, but Emmanuel on the ground. Three things to think about.

Three implications. First thing, salvation depends on Jesus, our Emmanuel. There is no salvation without Jesus becoming one of us.

Maybe you can think with me of those signs that you sometimes see on building sites, depending on what kind of site they are. Something along the lines of, no unauthorized entry, danger of death. [14:55] Well, the Bible would say that because of our sin nature, we are unable and unauthorized to enjoy life with God.

Indeed, His perfect holiness and our sinfulness renders us in terrible danger. And our situation is hopeless without Jesus.

We cannot enjoy the life we were made for by ourselves. We simply cannot ascend to God's level, try as we might. Perhaps we have tried that, tried to be really moral or really religious, but the reality is that we lack the perfect obedience, the absolute holiness, and the unwavering love that God expects.

And if we try to ascend to God's level without Jesus, we will find ourselves full of insecurity and doubts and fears, and ultimately we will fail because we simply cannot go up to God.

But the good news is that Jesus, our Emmanuel, has come down fully God and fully man, the glory of God has come down to us, the love of God has come down to us in Jesus, the Son of God.

[16:14] It's Jesus who will be born in Bethlehem to die at Calvary. Jesus, we know, dies on the outside of the city.

He is on the outside. Why? So that we, by faith in Him, might be brought in and brought near. Jesus, we know, goes under the sword of God's judgment.

Why? So that by faith in Him, we need not face that condemnation. Jesus on the cross loses a sense of His Father's presence. He feels the anger of God as He becomes our sin-bearer so that He cannot know and enjoy God's love.

Why? So that we might know God's love for all eternity. Our salvation depends on Jesus, our Emmanuel, coming to be with us and for us.

So if we don't know Him today, here is an invitation to turn to Him and to trust Him, to trust Him, to forgive our sin and to give us life with God.

[17:26] So that's the first implication of this Emmanuel principle. Secondly, Jesus, our Emmanuel, makes fellowship with God possible.

There's this wonderful reality that we need to experience as Christians to recognize that we enjoy the same level of communion and friendship with God that the disciples had as they ate and as they spoke with the Lord Jesus.

Because our God isn't a God who has stayed at arm's length. Rather, He has walked in our shoes and now He lives in our hearts. And He's promised to be with us always.

Matthew's gospel begins with Emmanuel, Emmanuel, but He also ends with Emmanuel. Again, if you want to turn in your Bible to Matthew chapter 28, we come to what's known as the Great Commission.

So Jesus has risen. He is shortly to ascend back to glory in heaven with His Father. And in Matthew chapter 28 and verse 18, we read this, Jesus came to them, that's the eleven disciples, and said, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

[18:47] Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

And surely, I am with you always to the very end of the age. The life of God's people is life with Jesus.

The mission of God's people is mission we do with Jesus. Every moment of our life as Christians, we enjoy the presence of Jesus.

Think about what that means for where we are right now. Perhaps the family tensions that we have, perhaps the new work patterns we're adjusting to, the big financial decisions we're having to make. But think too about the regular and the everyday. As we spend time with family and friends, as we look to share the meaning of Christmas with somebody who hasn't heard the good news yet, in all of those moments, if our faith is in Jesus, He is with us and we are never alone.

[19 : 57] And do you know, as Christians, that's something we must keep reminding ourselves of so that we would value this above anything in our lives. And one thing practically that means for us is that we should never neglect the ordinary means that God has given in His kindness for us to enjoy fellowship with Him.

That's why we come to church. So, the Emmanuel principle is there at the beginning of Matthew, it's there at the end of Matthew, but it's also there in the middle, Matthew chapter 18.

we find Jesus saying, where two or three gather in my name, I am with them. Now, we all know, whether we're at home or whether we're here, that church doesn't feel the way it used to.

But here's this wonderful promise that regardless of how Jesus is with us right now in order to bless us and do us good and to remind us of the gospel and our hope.

And so, church matters. whenever we read the Bible, Jesus would speak truth to us by the same Spirit who inspired the Word.

[21 : 09] That Spirit comes to illuminate our understanding, to make it alive, that we would know more of Jesus, that we would see Jesus on every page so that we might worship and enjoy Him.

where else do we enjoy fellowship with the Lord? As we pray. I read an article this week by a pastor in the States called David Platt who said, stop praying for stuff, start praying for God.

because he was coming to that point of understanding that the greatest thing that we need as Christians, the greatest gift we have to offer is the presence of God in our lives day by day by day.

And so, we have church, we have Bible, we have prayer, we have fellowship, those ordinary means that God gives us so that that sense of being in the presence of Jesus might be everyday reality for us.

One last implication. We see the beauty of God in Jesus our Emmanuel.

[22 : 17] You know, sometimes you'll hear maybe if there's particularly significant things happening up in the sky, not typically this time of year because we don't see much of the sun, but you know you get those warnings about looking at the sun.

You know, His glory is so bright it would just burn our eyeballs. And so, if you want to look at the sun, you need a filter. And so, the people that say they need a filter to look on its glory.

Now, let me take us back to Exodus 33. Remember Moses' request? He wanted to see God and God said, no one may see me and live.

But now we come to the announcement of the angel in Matthew chapter 21 and what's been told to us about Jesus. Jesus is God with us. So, Jesus is the filter by which you and I can safely see the glory of God and not be burned up, but rather, we can receive grace and we can receive life.

Jesus makes the glory and the beauty of God relatable to us. As John Calvin said, His words and actions bring Him within human range.

[23 : 23] So, we might have the question, what is God like? And we can answer and say, look at Jesus. He is God with us. So, on the one hand, we can think about His absolute authority as He does those powerful miracles, as He heals the sick, as He still storms, as He raises the dead, and we see Him loving the poor and the weak and welcoming the children and the marginalized.

We hear Jesus say, I am the only way to God because I am God, but we also see Him washing His disciples' feet and dying on the cross for sinners like you and like me.

And as we see the beauty of God in Jesus, again, we are to trust Him. We are to worship Him. We are to enjoy Him.

So, this Advent, we both worship and we wait for Emmanuel. We worship because Emmanuel has come and He's come bringing salvation He's come opening up the way for us to enjoy fellowship and friendship with God.

He's come to reveal the glory of God to us, the glorious presence of God. We see it when we look at Jesus. But we're also waiting. We're also waiting for Emmanuel to return, to establish His kingdom once and for all, to establish that world without pain and sickness and tears and death, that world where He is at the center, where all is worship and joy, whereby faith in Jesus, we get to enjoy His presence forever.

[25 : 04] Let's not miss this at Christmas. Let's not miss this in our lives, that Jesus has come as Emmanuel, God with us. The Redeemer of the Soul and Heaven the Cons model is especially ugh.

Ah, God with us. All is equal to energy to all. But... May God with you first olhar this to the world dying and let this show you to the reg with a m