

Matthews Story

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Preacher: Rev. George Sinclair

[0 : 00] Father, we ask that you would just gently but deeply pour out the Holy Spirit upon us at this time. Pour out the Holy Spirit upon us, that we might be able to hear your word and have your word come, Father, deep within us to touch us at the very center of our lives, our heart, the command center of who we are.

Father, we ask that you might meet with us in that place and that you would, Father, work in our hearts that we would receive, that we are willing and desirous to receive all that you would do in our lives this morning.

And all these things we ask in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. I've had, well, I've had lots of memorable Christmases, but there's been two in particular that I've been thinking about this week as I've prepared for the sermon.

One was a man who, husband and wife, they had a baby. And after she got pregnant, his cancer came back.

But his cancer came back quite badly, quite extreme, quite far gone. And the baby was born.

[1 : 25] And one of the things he really wanted to be able to do, I've had to do this several times, actually. He really didn't want to die before he'd seen his child baptized.

And was also coming up to Christmas. So we made an arrangement with the hospital, which wasn't that hard, of course, because they want to be as helpful as possible.

And I brought him Christmas communion a couple of days before Christmas. And a day after Christmas, I baptized his baby with just five or six of us in the room.

And then a week later, I did the funeral for the fellow. I did a similar type of thing with a wedding as well, actually. A woman who wanted to see her only daughter get married.

And like a lot of marriages, they planned the wedding ceremony about a year down the road. But in the meantime, her cancer came back quite bad.

[2 : 24] And it was becoming increasingly obvious that she wasn't going to make it until the spring. So the couple and I talked. We made some arrangements with the hospital. There was a bigger room that we set aside for this.

They hurried around and got their marriage license. And a couple of days before Christmas, I did the wedding in the hospital. And then I did the funeral a week later.

So there was the wedding, there was Christmas, and then there was a funeral. And, you know, I've been thinking about it a lot this week. Because one of the things I've been doing as I've been in coffee shops is I've just asked people, like, what they plan to do at Christmas.

And you get a wide range of answers. Some people, they tell me all of their Christmas traditions. And they maybe talk with great excitement about going home. But for some people, you ask them about it.

And there's a shadow that darkens their face when you ask them about Christmas. You know, a pause or a hesitation. One young man told me that he sort of had to go home for Christmas.

[3 : 33] But you could tell by everything from his body language and everything about it that he wasn't looking forward to going home. It was the opposite. He was fulfilling a duty to do something that he didn't look forward to.

And there was one young woman who works in one of the coffee shops. And I asked her about her gift buying. And she hadn't bought any gifts.

And it's because she had nobody to buy gifts for. And she found a place to work on Christmas Day. And she just got quiet as I talked to her.

And it's, you know, all you can, you know, when you say something like this in a brief conversation, all you can do is say, wow, that must be a bit hard. Or I don't know if I said very good words or

anything like that.

But, you know, from the way Christmas is portrayed with all the Christmas music and all be home for Christmas and chestnuts roasting on an open fire and all on and on like that.

[4 : 34] It portrays this type of Christmas for people who have intact relationships and good families or good friends and some money and health and houses to go to.

And there's no shadows of deep betrayal or deep brokenness. And it must be especially hard, given the huge cultural pressure towards Christmas, to figure out what to do with Christmas when your life's not like that, when your life is, in fact, very, very beat up and maybe very broken.

And in some cases, somebody else is beating you up. And in some cases, maybe you're the one who beat the person up. It was heartbreaking. I was hearing a friend of mine, and I'll just, this is the last one.

You got the picture. But just this one other thing this week. A friend of mine, I overheard him talking to another person that he saw in the coffee shop that he had been friends with but hadn't seen in a year.

And he asked her about Christmas. And once again, like, the tears came to her eyes. Her marriage broke up in the last year. And her three kids all were married and were going off somewhere else for Christmas.

[5 : 45] And she was going to be completely and utterly alone. So she was going to drive 1,500 kilometers to be with her elderly mom so she wouldn't be all alone on Christmas. And it's just very hard, isn't it, for people who don't live perfect lives, sometimes with this pressure on secular Christmas.

And one of the things for us who are here who are Christians is this cultural pressure and this cultural narrative about what Christmas should be like, chestnuts roasting on an open fire, I'll be home for Christmas, and on and on and on like that.

It starts to affect us so that we start to actually, that becomes our picture or image of what Christmas should be as well. And we lose sight of the fact that sadness and betrayal and heartbreak are actually right at the very essential parts of the Christmas story according to Christians.

So we're going to look at that. If you turn in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 1, Matthew chapter 1, what we've been doing last week and this week and this Sunday, and I'll do it again tomorrow, those of you who will be here at Christmas Eve or you can listen to it online later, and I'll do it on Christmas morning as well.

I'm looking at the four Bible stories that tell us about Christmas, the original stories that tell Christians about what Christmas is. And last week we looked at Luke's first story, this week we're looking at Matthew's story, tomorrow I'll look at Luke's second story, and on Christmas morning I'll look at John's story.

[7 : 20] And what we're about to read, just to try to put it in a bit of a place for you, it's actually interesting even if you think about who's writing this story and recounting this story. It's written by a man who for the first 30 or 40 years of his life, well maybe not for the first 30 or 40 years of his life because he was a kid for part of that, but for the first parts of his adult life would have been viewed as a terrible man, absolutely terrible man.

He would have been viewed as a traitor, a betrayer, because he was a Jewish man who worked for the occupying powers, and the whole point of his role with the occupying powers is because he was Jewish, he knew how Jewish people lied and how they told the truth, and he knew where they would hide money.

So his responsibility was that the Romans would say, we want to get this many amount of taxes from the Jewish people in this area, and it was his responsibility to make sure that he got that amount of money.

And the thing about it is, as long as he got that amount of money, they didn't mind if he got 20,000 shekels or 50,000 shekels more, that all went in his pocket. So he would have been viewed as a person who was betraying his own people, a traitor to his own people.

And not only that, he did it for greed. And so he would have become quite wealthy by taking money from hard-working Jewish people to give it to the Romans, and the rest he would keep to himself.

[8 : 46] He would have been viewed as a very, very bad man, but one day he met Jesus. In fact, if you go in the other Gospels, or even here, and you find out about it, it's actually, it's not even so much that one day he had a spiritual awakening all by himself, he was curious about Jesus, but

Jesus saw him and called him even while he was a very bad man.

And it is that man who we now know of as Matthew as the author of this Gospel, so he would have been an eyewitness of much in this story, and the parts that he wasn't an eyewitness about, he would have known eyewitnesses, and hence we have this true story, one of the four stories about Christmas, and it begins like this, chapter 1, verse 18.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph before they came together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit, and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.

And we just want to pause right here for a second and just realize what exactly is going on here. Joseph and Mary are engaged, and Joseph discovers that Mary is pregnant.

And Joseph knows that he didn't make Mary pregnant. And Joseph is not a stupid man. In those days, yes, they didn't have flush toilets, and they didn't have iPhones, and all of that, but they knew how babies got made.

[10:21] And Joseph knew that Mary was pregnant, and she told him a cockamamie story, which nobody would believe.

And it's sort of there with a bit of a, almost with an ironic thing here when it says, with child from the Holy Spirit. And you can just very, very well picture that all around the neighborhood, all around the community, all around the region, people would say, yeah, there's Mary.

She's pregnant, but it's with the Holy Spirit. And they'd put a mocking tone, or maybe they'd roll their eyes again, because everybody knows that that's not how babies get produced.

You don't get babies by the Holy Spirit. It's not some type of category. They weren't gullible. They weren't stupid. And Joseph here has thought, and it's been publicly announced that he's going to be marrying Mary.

And now she's showing, and everybody knows she's pregnant. And at first they might have thought that Joseph did it, but Joseph, by the look on his face, it was obvious to everybody that he didn't do it.

[11:24] And his heart would have been broken. He was betrayed. She cheated on him. And you know what would be so hard for Joseph is that not only did she cheat on him, and maybe that could just be overlooked, maybe that could be something that he could just swallow and deal with, but she got pregnant.

And babies, you know, they last. And that would have only broken his heart. That would have only broken on his heart.

Quite a few years ago, in a different church, I got a call on the day of a wedding rehearsal from the bride-to-be.

She had been married once before, and her husband, her and her husband were alcoholics, and while he was drunk, he cheated on her, and all, and their marriage broke up.

She actually became a Christian and found Jesus actually, AA led to her becoming a Christian because she realized that there just wasn't a higher power that would help her.

[12:46] She came to realize it was Jesus, that he was in fact the higher power, and she became a Christian. And while she was in AA, she met another guy, and they decided to get married.

And I get this call, and she said over the last month, she said, George, you might not pick up on it, but I was an alcoholic, and I was a drug user for a long time, and I start, over the last month, I started to see little hints that he was using again, and that he was drinking again.

Just little things, George. You might not notice it, but there's just little things that I noticed, and she started to tell me some of the little things that she'd noticed. And she was telling me because she was worried that he'd started drinking again and he'd started doing drugs again.

And she said, George, after my first marriage broke up, I made a vow as I started to work towards being sobriety, that I would never, never, ever, ever be married to an alcoholic or a drug addict again.

And I think he's using. So this is a very, very long call. In the morning, towards the end of the call or halfway through the call, we came to the conclusion we had to postpone the wedding.

[14:01] And so it was really hard for her, crying on the phone, and talked about the mechanics, and in fact, we did postpone the wedding.

He was furious, but it also became obvious over the next few days that what she had suspected was correct. He had gone back to using drugs, and he had gone back to alcoholism, and it was heartbreaking for her that the man that she thought she would spend the rest of her life with, that their marriage was going to have to be called off.

And you could well imagine in a similar type of thing here what was going on with Joseph. The very heart of the Christian story is heartbreak. The Christian story, the Christmas story, the biblical Christian Christmas story, is heartbreak.

And Joseph isn't rash. He's trying to just sort of process it all, and he's not rash.

And because he's not rash, because he wasn't a hothead, God does something very surprising.

Let's see what happens in verse 20. Verse 20, But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

[15:27] She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins. That's what the angel said.

And then Matthew comments, all this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which means God with us.

Just sort of pause here for a second. You know, one of the things, why a dream? This is just me speculating. This isn't God. It doesn't say in the text, why a dream? You know, I've been thinking about this a lot, obviously, because I knew I was going to preach on it.

And this time, as I've been thinking about it, I wonder if the reason that God appears to Joseph in a dream, you know, some of us, when we're really betrayed, when we're really distraught, we can't think of something without crying.

Or we can't even think, period. Our mind just goes round and round and round and round and round. We are just so depressed, so unable to make any type of decision, so just, that some of us, if you're at all like me, you can have times in your life where your mind not only races, but also doesn't seem to move at all.

[16:44] How can that happen, that it can both race and not move at all? And then when you finally do think, all you can think of is crying? And it might be that the only way that God could get Joseph's attention was when he was sleeping.

I don't know. Heaven will find out. We'll ask God, why did you do it that way? But he did it that way. And it's really remarkable.

God speaks to Joseph through the angel. And he, what happens, and this is what happens in all the Bible, this is what you have to understand about the Christian faith, is that it's not just that God does something and then just leaves it alone, but God does something and explains what he's doing.

He helps us to understand the meaning of what he's doing. And often, he not only tells us what he's done or what he's doing or what he will do, and he tells us what it means, but he often tells us how we should respond as well.

And so, that's what God is doing here. In the story we looked at last week, we found out how God spoke to Mary and how it was that she agreed that she would allow the Most High God, his presence to overshadow her and the Holy Spirit to come upon her.

[18:11] And she agreed that the Most High God would do a miracle of creation within her womb so that the Most High God himself would enter his own created order as a zygote in the womb of Mary.

And that's what we heard last week. And now we see God telling Joseph, what do we see again? He says, actually that crazy, cockamamie, eye-rolling story that's the butt of jokes, it actually is true.

That which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit in verse 20. And she will bear a son and you shall call his name Jesus. Why will you call his name Jesus?

Jesus is the Greek version of the Greek, the English version of the Greek version of the Jewish word Joshua, which was actually pronounced Yosef, somehow or another became Jesus, but it means God saves.

And this particular baby, lots of Jewish boys were called Joshua or Jesus back then, but this particular baby is going to be called Jesus because he actually is the one who will save his people from their sins.

[19:29] Jesus. And so, God says, as this boy grows, I want his name, his very name to mean exactly who he is and what he'll do.

And then, Matthew, because Matthew's written this after, after he's left his life of being a betrayer of his people and a traitor to his people and a man filled with greed and debauchery and he's left all of that because he met Jesus and he's been one who saw, was with Jesus on the night before he was betrayed in the upper room and he was with Jesus in the garden when Jesus prayed out loud asking the cup to be taken from him and he was one of the ones who fell asleep and didn't hear all that Jesus had to say and he was the one who was there when the soldiers captured Jesus and he was one of the ones who ran away and he was one of the ones who wasn't actually there when Jesus got crucified because he was hiding, because he was afraid and he was one of the ones who knew that Jesus actually died on the cross and he was one of the ones who knew exactly where Jesus was buried and he was one of the ones who on that Easter Sunday

Jesus appeared to in a locked room in his resurrected body to tell him that the grave is empty that all of my words of saying that I would rise from the dead I would die on the cross and I would rise from the dead here you see me I did die on the cross I did rise from the dead the tomb is empty and Matthew would have seen Jesus he would have seen him and been able to touch him and hold him and he would have spent 40 days with Jesus and he saw Jesus ascend from heaven and he would have had all those years of being taught by Jesus including that time after Jesus' death and his resurrection before his ascension and so Matthew who was taught by Jesus he adds that not only is Jesus the one who would save his people from their sins but he adds in verse 22 all this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and they shall call his name Emmanuel which means God with us and what Matthew is saying here is that there is one Lord there is one God who truly exists who truly speaks and the same Lord who spoke over 600 years earlier through the prophet Isaiah prophesying that there would be a time when there would be a man who would walk among us and he would be God with us and the same Lord who spoke 600 years earlier is the same Lord who has just spoken to Joseph through the angel who says this baby is going to be from me he is God who saves and it's the same God who speaks to the angel who spoke 600 years earlier and this is such a profound comfort for those of us who are Christians because the Lord God does not act on a whim he does not flip coins to figure out what he wants to do next it isn't as if he makes a promise or a prediction and then down the road he said dang I didn't foresee that happening or dang I wish they'd made that other decision gosh I have to come up with a plan B or plan C or plan D or plan E he's not caught by surprise by events the same Lord who can speak 600 years earlier is the same one who speaks because the things which he has said have been accomplished and so it is when we read his word it is the same Lord who speaks and we can trust it a person this week asked me in a conversation why I should believe anything like this and I said the resurrection changes everything the resurrection changes everything that's why you believe it

I mean there's more to it than that but that's why that's why you believe it so what's Joseph's response well that comes up in these next few verses which are really important then we'll just draw out a couple of the implications of this whole story so when Joseph verse 24 when he woke from sleep he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him he took his wife but knew her not until she had given birth to a son and he called his name Jesus you know once this whole sermon began with the problems of betrayal and the problems of unhappiness and the problems of sadness and we gloss over this very very quickly but what Joseph did is Joseph embraced stigma and he embraced being terribly thought of by his family his friends his neighbors his co-workers and his communion and he embraced the stigma and the eye rolling and the name calling that would be with him until he died because we know from other sources that Joseph died before Jesus died and rose from the dead it might very well be that after after the resurrection that some people in Bethlehem came up to Mary and maybe with tears said we feel so bad we called you names for decades now we know that what you said is true and Mary may have got to experience that but Joseph never did he never did he was one of two crazy people oh yeah babies come by the Holy Spirit pigs fly you know and he would have embraced that he would have embraced all the stigma and all the name calling that would have gone along with it this past week

I got to go to a school elementary school play for performance for Christmas my one of my grandchildren was in it two of my grandchildren when I got Louise and I went to it and it was a great great play wonderful people it was way out in the country it was good to spend time with rural people and just be in the midst of it and of course all the kids were cute my grandkids were cute of course and the whole play was around of course the true meaning of Christmas and the whole point of the play was that there had been a huge storm that had come and all of the kids were going to be

stuck in the school over Christmas with the teachers not the play it was the ongoing thing of all the music and everything like that and of course the whole point was to bring us up to the end with what the true meaning of Christmas is and what the true meaning of Christmas is of course is to be with your friends to be with your loved ones It's not to be at the mall, it's not to be shopping, it's to be with your loved ones.

[26 : 59] And, you know, it was a very, very, very well-told tale of what, in our secular culture, in Canadian culture, there's two types of Christmases.

There's the bad Christmas, which we sort of practice but we think we should feel mildly guilty about. And the bad Christmas is just eating to excess, drinking to excess, shopping to excess, buying all sorts of things that we don't need and giving them to people we don't necessarily like and using money we don't have.

All just to make people we don't like happy. And then on the other side, there's, you know, the real meaning of Christmas, which is, of course, being with your family and your friends and chestnuts roasting on an open fire and I'll be home for Christmas and all of that type of stuff.

And, you know, the hard thing about that story and even with that play, I was thinking about how hard would it be for a child who's being bullied in that school to be locked in that school over Christmas.

That's what, I have a weird mind. That's what went through my mind. Because you know that in every elementary school, there are kids who are bullied. Right? Every elementary school, there's kids who are bullied.

[28 : 10] And you see, there's no place for that really in this secular narrative of Christmas.

There really isn't. And so that's why the Christmas, the Christian story of Christmas is so powerful. And we as Christians need to, in a sense, almost shut our ears to chestnuts roasting on an open fire and I'll be home for Christmas and all of that stuff and be to remember the Christian story and to be reconnected to it and to recommit to it and to rejoice in it and to live out of it.

If you could put up the first point, Andrew, that would be very helpful. In the mess and complexity of real life, Jesus is God with us. See, when you look at the story, there's all this mess.

There's all this complexity. There's a very, very good reason. We're not going to be looking at it. Well, Jonathan might look at it a tiny bit on the 6th of January.

But I don't know. I think his focus will be on something else. But it's because of ostracism and the crowds that Mary and Joseph probably don't have a place indoors to have the baby.

[29 : 36] Like, it's probably social ostracism. I mean, there's crowds. There'd be, you know, face-saving excuses. But it's probably ostracism. Their life was complicated and their life was messy.

And that's why the name of Jesus is so powerful. In the mess and complexity of real life, Jesus is God with us. You see, the fact of the matter is that all of us, maybe some of us don't have a very messy or complicated life right now.

Maybe some of us are in a season of life where it's very simple. But just wait. Just wait. It's coming. It'll get messy. It'll get complicated. Just wait. And at Christmas, we can remember Jesus is God with us. I mean, in the mess and complexity of Mary and Joseph's life.

And more than that, in the sin. You know, this is an old cultural reference. Some of you won't get it. But remember the original Matrix film. And the machine.

[30 : 43] There's this powerful scene in the Matrix film where it looks like the first one where it's like a machine. Sorry. I'm putting you to sleep with it. For those of you who have seen the movie, maybe you'll remember this bit.

And the person who's embodying the machine. And he says with a sneer because he has the star sort of captured. And what he hates, he hates being in that world, that imaginary world.

The smell, the sweat, the stink of it. And he says it was such scorn. But Jesus is God with us.

Amidst the smell, amidst the stink, amidst the brokenness, amidst the shame, amidst the sin, amidst the coming death, amidst the happiness and the joy and the accomplishments, amidst empire and wars and battles, Jesus is God with us.

And the whole story is so wonderful because the story shows that Jesus is God with us without crushing us, without turning us into blanks. And this whole truth that Jesus is God with us, he's with us because he's for us.

[32 : 01] He's with us and he won't betray us. He's with us and he won't abandon us. And he's with us to bear our sin. And he's with us to bear our shame.

And he's with us to bear our accusations. And he's with us to be our righteousness. And he's with us to be our justification. So that the terrible weight of trying to justify ourselves all the time can be borne by him.

Because it is so hard to bear the weight of always trying to justify yourself. When life is messy and complicated and sweaty and smelly and stinky.

And Jesus is God with us. The second point. In the mess and complexity of real life, Jesus is God's provision to save.

Save sounds so extreme. You know, I don't watch most of the Netflix comic specials. I watch sometimes. I watch them sometimes. But you can just, I can guarantee you, if I was a comic, I'm coming out on the stage.

[33 : 09] And if my opening line was, are you saved? What would be the response to the crowd? Complete, exactly right. Overwhelming. Ho, ho, ho. Falling over with laughter.

Are you saved? Ho, ho, ho, ho. Overwhelming. It's a very corny word, isn't it? It's a very precious word. You know, I know of a person.

This was in another church. And the two people, they were sort of engaged. And they were living together. And he cheated on her.

He cheated on her quite a few times. She finally found out about it. She confronted him. And what was his response? His response wasn't, oh, I'm so sorry. You know, honey, I want to be.

No, no, no. His response was accusation. His response was the clenched fist. His response was the bared teeth. The going forward.

[34 : 07] The attacking her character. The going after her and going after her and going after her and going after her. And he just got harder and harder and harder and harder. And many of us have known people like that.

I know that sometimes in my job I have to confront somebody for having done something wrong. And I can tell within one second whether the person is going to be penitent or whether they're just going to come after me with both fists clenched.

And the fact of the matter is, is that the Bible portrays the story that us human beings, when we turned our back on God, and we sought to be God's ourselves, our response was not one of instant, God have mercy on me.

But of hiding, of accusation, of doubting, of the fist, of the bared teeth, of the pointing finger, of the self-righteousness.

And our hearts became so hard that only God himself could save us. The word saved is a profound...

[35 : 27] It reveals our heart. It reveals our heart. It reveals our heart. It reveals our heart. As to whether we will continue in the hardness of our heart, or whether our hearts might possibly be broken, that we might repent and turn to the one who is God with us, who is the one who saves us, who is God's provision to make us right with him.

And in the mess and complexity of real life, Jesus is God's provision to save. He is the one who lived the life we could not live, and paid the penalty we could not pay.

This week I was sharing with a fellow that the entire Christian faith is a response to news. That it's not good advice, it's not good rituals, it's not good laws, it's not good institutions, it's news of what God has done for us, that we could not do for ourselves, and could never do for ourselves.

And we see that so perfectly illustrated here. Joseph is not crushed.

He believes what God has said. He acts in obedience. I mean, now he's viewed as a hero, even though he would have died without knowing that any of that was true.

[37 : 02] If you could put up the final point, Andrew. So here's a, you know, this, if you sort of do a bit of a summary, this probably isn't perfect, and people who are Old Testament scholars, you know, if you just look, you look at the Ten Commandments, and how they talk about the Sabbath, and you look at the Old Testament, and how they talk about the different laws, there's a basic type of pattern, in terms of why it is that we remember things, why it is that we would have something like Christmas, why it is that we would tell these old stories over again, and enter into them, is that in celebration of his birth, we're to remember with others.

In celebration of his birth, we are to rejoice with others. In celebration of his birth, we are to recommit with others. And in celebration of his birth, we are to feast with others. See, you can see how Canadian Christmas, secular Christmas, has bits and pieces of all of that. Only it has bits and pieces of it, without Jesus and without God. It has the feasting. It doesn't really have anything to remember, and the recommitment is, and reconnecting is with other, your family, if you can.

But this story is, it's told so that we remember the story once again, because it's so easy to forget. But we always, you're doing exactly what it is that we should do, is we remember it with others, not just by ourselves, but we remember it with others.

With other Christians, we remember the story. With others, we rejoice, we sing praise, we just are thankful for Jesus, and what he did. And with others, we recommit to Jesus, we recommit for what it is that he did, we recommit to understand, that even when our lives get very, very messy and complex, that Jesus is God with us, that he saved us, that he will not abandon us, that he will not betray us, that he's unfailingly our savior, that he has begun to save us, he will continue to save us, he will bring us to a completion of salvation, because he is the one who saves, it's not something that we do with ourselves.

[39 : 01] And after we've done all those things, we feast, and we feast with others. It's just an exhortation as we close. Some of you this Christmas might be very, very, very, very battered and bruised.

And, it just might be that, it is what you need to just be by yourself. I'm not going to tell you how to grieve. You know, the Bible doesn't tell you how to grieve, how to process things. You can sort that out for yourself.

So the one thing I would just say is to, to remember, to remind you that the devil always likes to keep you isolated. So come and gather with other Christians, and if, if other celebrations and feasts are good, then you should consider doing it.

Just remember always that the devil will always tell you to keep yourself isolated, whereas the gospel is always drawing you into the Trinity, and into the people formed by the Trinity.

And the other thing is, is that in your feasts, remember others, look around, invite others to come and be with you. I mean, that's the biblical pattern. Don't just feast by yourselves, or just with two or three of you.

[40 : 06] Open your eyes, and look around, and invite others to join. Maybe it's the single man across the street who doesn't have any family. Maybe it's somebody here in this church, but to invite others.

Just before we pray, I'm going to show you a video. One of the things we do at Christmas Eve and Christmas morning, as I intersperse the sermon with videos, and let's just pray. And then, Andrew, as we're praying, you can get the video lined up.

So let's just stand. Father, we ask that you would gently, but deeply pour out your Holy Spirit upon us. Gently, but deeply pour out your Holy Spirit upon us. Bring, Father, this Christmas story, the Christmas story, the gospel story.

Bring it close to our hearts. Father, you know, those of us who are, maybe this story is, this sermon has brought up, the fact that we are the ones who've betrayed. We are the ones who have cheated. We are the ones who have broken. Father, we thank you that we can bring our sin to you. We thank you that Jesus has paid for our sin.

[41 : 13] And we ask, Father, that as we're gripped by the gospel, that you will show us how to amend our lives, and how to apologize, and how to make, how to seek reconciliation. Father, for others, maybe we have been betrayed.

We are broken. We are alone. And Father, we ask that you would turn our hearts to Jesus as well. And Father, for those of us, we are in a wonderful season of life, and we are healthy, and our family is good, and we have a great family.

And Father, thank you so much for those of us who can say that. And we ask, Father, that you help us as well to remember Jesus, to recommit to him, to celebrate his birth, to feast, not only with ourselves, but with others, that you might grant us generous and open hearts, and hearts that notice the one who is alone, that you would so shape us by the gospel, that we would always notice the one who is alone, and that we would walk across the room to them.

Father, deliver us from our shyness and our hesitation, to make us your people gripped by the gospel, living for your glory. And we thank you for Jesus. And all these things we ask, and God's

people say, Amen.
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.