

Emmanuel God with Us

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[0 : 00] Welcome to our service this evening. And as we come together around the Word of God, let us seek His blessing upon His Word.

Let us pray. Eternal and ever-blessed Lord, as we come before Thee in this act of worship, we acknowledge Thine own sovereignty over us.

We acknowledge that Thou art the Lord who reigns forever and ever, and that our times are in Thine own hands. And we give thanks that Thou art working out Thine own eternal purpose to the glory of Thine own name.

And as we come before Thee, O Lord, at this hour, we would seek that Thy Spirit would enlighten our understanding and open our hearts to Thine own Word, that we may be led into the Word, and that the Word may be lodged into our hearts, and that it may bring forth evidence in our lives.

We give Thee thanks for the great privilege that Thou hast given to us when we can meet around Thy Word to meditate upon Thy Word.

[1 : 27] And we acknowledge, O Lord, that without Thee we can do nothing. We acknowledge that we are dependent upon Thy Spirit to enlighten our understanding and to apply Thy Word to us.

We pray, O Lord, that as the preaching of the Gospel goes forth this night, that it may go forth in the power and demonstration of Thine own Spirit, in convicting and converting, and in the upbuilding of Thine own Church.

We give Thee thanks, O Lord, for the protection that Thou hast given to us over the past year from the virus that has brought such devastating changes into families and into communities.

Remember, O Lord, those families and communities who have been touched with this virus, the way that it has changed our lives.

But we pray, O Lord, that we would come in humility of mind and of heart, and that we would come to a place of confession of sin and to a place of repentance, acknowledging, O Lord, that we have sinned against Thee, acknowledging, O Lord, that we need that grace of repentance, to sorrow over our sin, and to seek refuge in Christ alone.

[3 : 01] We give thanks, O Lord, for that great invitation that we have in Thy Word to come with boldness and confidence through the merits of Thy Son to a throne of grace, in order to obtain mercy and to find grace to help us in our time of need.

As we reflect over the past months, we give Thee thanks, O Lord, for all the tokens of Thy goodness and kindness to us.

As those months have reminded us that we live in a changing world, a world that brings changes into communities and families.

But we give thanks that our hope tonight is in the unchanging God, the God who is the same yesterday, today and forever, the God whose hand of grace is still to our sinners, such as we are.

We pray for our homes and our families. We pray for our young people and our children. We pray for those who have come to elderly years.

[4 : 16] We pray, Lord, for those who are lonely. We pray for those who are in hospital and in care homes, and those who mourn, for whom this year has seen changes within their homes and families.

every year brings its own changes. But we give thanks, O Lord, that Thy mercy to our sinners changeth not, and for all those who will draw near to Thee and seek Thy mercy, that Thou wilt in no wise cast them out.

We give Thee thanks, O Lord, for Thy people, for those whom Thou hast redeemed. We give thanks that Thou in Thy mercy hast led forth Thy people, that Thou hast guided them in Thy strength, and that Thou wilt continue to guide them until they pass over.

All those that Thou hast purchased by Thy blood, that Thou wilt guide them and strengthen them and encourage them until the time that they will pass over into the mountain of Thine own inheritance, which Thou hast made for Thyself and Thy people to dwell in.

O, we give thanks that we have that living hope through the Gospel. We pray, O Lord, for all nations of the earth. We pray for all Thy servants who have gone forth with the Gospel.

[5 : 50] O, may they know the unction of Thine own Spirit upon them. And, O Lord, we seek that Thou would remember us in Thy mercy in the days and in the months that lie ahead, if it be in accordance with Thine own sovereign will.

We pray, O Lord, that Thou would accompany Thy Gospel with the power of Thy Spirit. And we pray that we would see many coming to repentance, that we would see many coming to put their trust in Jesus Christ, many coming to know Thy salvation and the joy of Thy salvation.

We ask, O Lord, that Thou would continue with us now for the moments that we are together around Thine own Word, that Thou would bless Thy Word to us, that it may be a means of strength and encouragement to us in the way.

We give thanks to Thee, O Lord, for the provision of Thy grace through Thy Son, Jesus Christ. And we pray, O Lord, that Thou would bless all those who wait upon Thee at this hour.

Bless our Queen and the Royal household. Bless those who are in government over us. Grant them wisdom, we pray Thee. And we pray, O Lord, that Thou would bless us now as we come to wait upon Thee.

[7 : 24] And all that we ask for the forgiveness of our many sins is in Jesus' name and for His sake. Amen. Let us now read the Word of God as we find it in the New Testament in the Gospel according to Matthew, chapter 1, and reading at verse 18.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise. When, as His mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.

Then Joseph, her husband, being a just man and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away purely. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.

And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is God with us.

Then Joseph, being raised from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife, and knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son, and he called his name Jesus.

[9 : 08] Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born king of the Jews?

For we have seen a star in the east, and are come to worship him. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.

And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Judah.

For out of thee shall come a governor that shall rule my people Israel. Then Herod, when he had proudly called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.

And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, Go on such diligently for the young child, and when ye have found him, bring me word again that I may come and worship him also.

[10 : 18] When they had heard the king, they departed, and, lo, the star which they saw in the east went before them, till he came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down and worshipped him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts, gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way. And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word.

For Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.

Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceedingly wroth, and sent forth and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coast thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men.

[11 : 45] Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, In Ramah was there a voice heard, lamentation and weeping and great mourning, which were weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.

But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph and Eve, which said, Arise and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel, for they are dead, which sought the young child's life.

And he arose and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel. And so on, may the Lord bless unto us the reading of that portion of his word.

Let us now, with the Lord's self and blessing, turn back to chapter 1 of the Gospel of Matthew, and we shall read verse 23.

Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is God with us.

[13 : 02] At this time of the year, the main focus of many people is on the fact that Jesus was born into this world.

what we call the incarnation, or God manifest in the flesh. Now, there are two both narratives given to us in the Gospels.

There is one by Matthew that we have read, and there is another one by Luke. Tonight, we are going to consider Matthew's account.

The birth of any child into this world is special, but the birth of this child was truly a remarkable event.

It was an incredibly unique moment, an incredibly unique event. There is a virgin who is pregnant by the agency of the Holy Spirit.

[14 : 02] she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. The child's conception was unique. An angel appears to prevent a young man from setting aside an unwed mother.

Then Joseph, her husband, being a just man and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away, approval. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.

The child's conception was unique. There is something that never happened before and has never happened since. Here we have a unique conception and a unique birth.

David in Psalm 51 says, Behold, I was shaped in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. But this child was sinless.

That cell out of Mary that was to be developed into the body of this child was cleansed from sin. Mary, his mother, remained sinful, but this portion that she transmits to her son has been delivered from sin.

[15 : 36] Therefore, her child was born sinless. Then the angel picks the name of that child and declares that he will be the saviour.

Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins. a unique conception, a unique birth, a unique child.

Now, when we come to the Gospel of Matthew, we must remember that it was written by a Jew and for Jewish readers that was living in Palestine.

Therefore, Matthew lays particular emphasis on the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy. The words and so was fulfilled form a recurrent theme throughout the Gospel.

Here, Matthew immediately records for us, now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet saying, behold, a virgin shall be with child and shall bring forth a son and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is God with us.

[16 : 56] Now, as I said, the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies are a recurring theme that Matthew brings to our attention. There in chapter 2, we have in verse 5, in the words of the chief priests and scribes that they said unto Herod in Bethlehem of Judah, for thus it is written by the prophet, and thou Bethlehem in the land of Judah are not the least among the prophets of Judah, for out of thee shall come a governor that shall rule my people Israel.

Chapter 2, verse 15, in the appearance of the angel to Joseph, to take the child and mother and to go into Egypt, there it is said, and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet saying, out of Egypt have I called my son.

And again in verse 17, regarding the massacre of the children, then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy, the prophet saying, in Ramah there was a voice heard, lamentation and weeping and great moaning, which are weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.

And again in verse 23, and he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken of by the prophet, he shall be called a Nazarene.

Now, why does Matthew lay so much emphasis on the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy? Well, the primary purpose of Matthew was to show that the Jews, that Jesus was the Christ, that he was the king of Israel, that he was the one who had been promised to their forefathers.

[18 : 51] Now, coming nearer to our text, the words of our text, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which, being interpreted, is God with us, was spoken by the prophet Isaiah, and we find it in Isaiah chapter 7 and verse 14, where we read, Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign.

Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and call his name Emmanuel. Now, the context of this prophecy is that it was made during the reign of an evil king of Judah by the name of Asa.

In the early part of his reign, two neighbouring kings, Pekah, who was king in Israel, and Rezzian, the king of Aram, or Syria, invaded Judah, marching towards Jerusalem, which was the capital city of Judah.

And when Asa and the people heard of it, they were afraid, and his heart was moved, and the heart of his people, it says, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind.

And although Asa was an evil king, yet God sent his prophet Isaiah to offer him a gracious blessing. And Isaiah came and he gave to the king the words of the Lord, showing that the evil plan of the other two kings would not prevail, that the invasion would fail.

[20 : 31] The words of the Lord, but through the prophet to the king was take heed and be quiet, fear not, neither be faint-hearted, for the two tails of these smoking five brands, for the fierce anger of risen with Syria and the son of Ramali, because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Ramaliah have taken evil counsel against the saying, let us go up against Judah and Vexit, and let us make a breach therein for us, and said a king in the midst of it, even the son of Tabeleah, thus saith the Lord God, it shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass.

Now I say I knew that the king would probably be very cynical of the words of the Lord, so he added two thoughts, first, if you will not believe, surely you shall not be established, or in other words, if you do not stand for him in your faith, he will not stand at all.

And secondly, he offered a promise, ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God, ask it either in the depth or in the height above. The prophet asked the king to ask of the Lord for a sign and that the Lord would give him the sign so that he could be sure that he will be delivered from the invasion.

Of course, the king wanted no part of Isaiah or a sign, for he said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord. Instead, the king had his own plan, which was to appeal to the greatest power of his day, the king of Assyria.

But notice how he couched his words in religious jargon, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord. The Lord had already resolved to give the king a sign, but the king would have nothing of it.

[22 : 30] Instead, he was going to care for his own destiny without God. Isaiah replied that whether the king wanted a sign or not, he would receive one.

The Lord himself shall give you a sign. Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Emmanuel.

Now, this particular sign has been understood in a number of ways. First, there are those that understand it as a direct prophecy of Jesus Christ.

Others understand it as a prophecy of an event which took place in the days of Asa. And others understand it as a prediction of events, one that took place in the time of Asa, but which also anticipated what would finally be realized in the birth of Jesus Christ.

However, we shall look at that text tonight based on the traditional view that this prophecy directly foretold the coming of Jesus Christ.

[23 : 41] Christ. And this view is supported by the other messianic predictions that is found in chapter 9 and 11 of Isaiah.

And of course, it is cited by Matthew here in the New Testament. Asa, the king, represented the house of David.

Now, he has faced the divine challenge to trust, and he has failed. he has rejected the offer of a sign, but a sign he will have.

It will not be one of divine favour towards the existing representatives of the house of David, for they are going to be judged. But it will be a sign that points to the Lord's covenant commitment.

Though the king has refused to trust in the Lord and has exposed himself and his people to divine judgment, yet after that judgment is imposed, there is still the promise for the house of David.

[24 : 50] That promise that we read of in 2 Samuel chapter 7, where we read, and thy house and thy kingdom shall be established forever before thee, thy throne shall be established forever.

as a line is doomed to judgment, but the destiny of David's dynasty will be assured through a miraculous divine intervention.

The Lord's commitment to his covenant people will not fail. The Lord's commitment to the house of David will not fail.

The king's rebellion and refusal to trust the Lord and having rejected the offer of a sign, he's judged.

Nevertheless, God's redemptive plan through the house of David is not frustrated. God's covenant promise, his redemptive plan will be fulfilled through the house of David.

[26 : 07] You see, the future of God's promise of salvation did not depend on us, on the king of Judah. But the future of God's promise of salvation will be fulfilled in a most extraordinary way.

The prophet here says, behold, and in the biblical sense, the prophet is calling attention to a matter requiring the closest attention.

Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Emmanuel. Matthew tells us that the angel told Joseph that Mary would bring forth a son and thou shall call his name Jesus for he saved his people from their sins.

Joseph is told to name the child Jesus. But here, she, the mother, the virgin, is told to name the child.

This duty falls upon her to name her child Emmanuel. Emmanuel. I think this shows us her awareness of the significance that was attached to her son by naming him Emmanuel, God with us.

[27 : 31] there is no doubt that this child is the same one spoken of in chapter 9 where it says, for unto us a child is born and to us a son is given and the governor shall be upon his shoulder and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end. Upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever.

The seal of the Lord of hosts will perform this. And again in chapter 11 we read, and there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse and a branch shall grow out of his roots.

Oh, the future of God's promise of salvation through the house of David did not depend upon King Asa. Emmanuel, God with us.

There is a sense by which God is always with us. We can never run away from his presence. The psalmist writes down for us in Psalm 139 that and it brings before us that we cannot go anywhere away from the presence of God.

[29 : 01] We can ignore God, we can deny God, we can curse God, but he never disappears. God is omnipresent, he is sovereign, he is over all things in heaven, earth and even in hell itself.

But here Matthew says that by the birth of Jesus God has done a new thing. He has entered human history in a new way.

Emmanuel, God with us. God in the person of his son has condescended to be likened to those whom he came to save, yet he is without sin.

For as much then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same. He came into this world in the likeness of sinful flesh.

In the gospel of John we are told in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God. And then we are told and the word was made flesh and dwelt among us.

[30 : 21] Paul writing to the Galatians in chapter 4 says, But when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth a son made of a woman, made under the law.

And to the Philippians he says, that this child, that this man made himself of no reputation and was made in the likeness of men.

Emmanuel, God with us. Great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifest in the flesh.

It reminds us that Jesus Christ did not first come into being in Bethlehem. He already existed as the second person of the Trinity, the pre-existent eternal Son of God who was there with the Father and the Holy Spirit before the foundation of the world.

He came from another world where time does not exist, where everything is eternal. This indeed was a unique child.

[31 : 38] He was the Son of God and continued to be the Son of God even when he became the Son of Mary. In his person he is perfectly divine and at the same time perfectly human.

He is lying down in a manger looking so helplessly dependent upon his mother to wash him and to feed him and at the same time he is the upholder and the one who sustains the world including his mother.

God with us.

God with us. The birth of Jesus was a fact. The incarnation was real and true.

Jesus did not take unto himself the appearance of a body. The babe in the manger was not in the appearance of a body. He literally had a human body and a human soul.

[32 : 52] Luke tells us, And the child grew and walked strong in spirit, filled with wisdom and the grace of God was upon him. And then he says, And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man.

Emmanuel, God with us. He is one with us in human nature. There are other places within the Gospel of Matthew where this principle is applied.

God with us. In chapter 18 verse 20 we read, For where two or three are gathered together in my name, then am I in the midst of them.

we often quote this verse to give us assurance that God hears us in prayer. But within the original context, Jesus had a specific prayer in mind.

It is in the context of church discipline. When a Christian persists in sin and will not repent, when the church leaders deal with such rebellion, they are assured of the Emmanuel principle that God is with us to maintain the purity of the church.

[34 : 09] All power is given unto me in heaven and on earth. Emmanuel, God with us. And in chapter 28, in what we call the great commission to the church, we read, All power is given to me in heaven and on earth.

Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.

Amen. Emmanuel, God with us. In the Old Testament, this Emmanuel principle was in the Garden of Eden, where God had fellowship with Adam, but then sin disrupted that fellowship and man was driven out from the intimate fellowship that he knew with God.

But again we see this Emmanuel principle in the building of the tabernacle, where the Lord said, and I will dwell among the children of Israel and will be their God, which we know was a foreshadowing which was fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

But the ultimate fulfillment was seen by John in his vision, as we read in Revelation chapter 21, and I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them and be their God, Emmanuel, God with us.

[35 : 52] What great comfort it is for us tonight to know that God does not say from a distance, but that he draws close to his covenant people, that in Jesus it is Emmanuel, God with us.

His presence is not confined to his days on earth, it continues to be a reality in the experience of the believer. Remember how in the upper room Jesus knew that in a short time his visible presence on earth would come to an end, and he knew that it would cause confusion and bewilderment in the minds and hearts of his disciples, that it would set them on a path of fear.

Their beloved master, for whom they had left all things, was going to lead them. Their world was beginning to collapse around them. They were undoubtedly bewildered, perplexed, confused, and filled with anxiety.

And how often when we are worried and anxious and bewildered and perplexed and confused, what are we to do? In the midst of the uncertainty about the future, what are we going to do?

Well, here at that hour, he wanted to reassure them, and he wanted to seal his love to his own people who were in the world, and he told them, I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you, or I will not leave you as orphans, I will come to you.

[37 : 35] If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with them. He is not abandoning them.

In fact, he is going to continue ministering on their behalf at the father's right hand, interceding for them, watching over them, but comforting them with his presence through the Holy Spirit, even when they cannot see him.

Emmanuel, God with us. We all live with conflict, and we live with disappointment, and pain, and tragedy, severe trials, death, and he is with us.

Emmanuel, God with us. Whatever anxiety, perplexity, or struggle that we may have, he is there in a way that is far better than if he were visible, because now he is not hindered by the limitations of a physical body like he was in the days when he was on earth.

earth. The writer to the Hebrew encourages us to come into the very throne room of God in prayer, because he is there before us.

[38 : 54] Let us therefore come boldly into the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Emmanuel, God with us.

And what a great comfort for us tonight, as we look towards 2021, that in Jesus, it is Emmanuel, God with us.

That if we put our trust in Jesus, that it is Emmanuel, God with us. and whatever disappointments, whatever pain, whatever tragedy, whatever severe trials may come upon us, that if we put our trust in Jesus, that it is Emmanuel, God with us.

May the Lord bless our thoughts. Let us pray. Eternal and ever blessed God, we give thanks unto thee for all the promises of thine own word, and that they have been sealed for us in Emmanuel, that they have been sealed for us in Jesus Christ through the shedding of his blood.

We give thee thanks that whatever disappointment or pain or tragedy or trials that may confront us, that if we trust in Jesus, that we have this assurance that we have Emmanuel, God, with us.

[40 : 40] we pray, O Lord, that thou would encourage thy people, that thou would strengthen thy people. We give thanks unto thee, O Lord, for thy protection over the year that is about now to end.

And we seek, O Lord, that it may please thee to protect us and to be with us, to guide us, to lead us, to encourage us in the gear that is set before us, if it be in accordance with thine own sovereign will.

O Lord, we pray that thou would be mindful of our needs, for thou knowest our needs better than we know ourselves. And praise be to thy name, that thou art able to meet with all our needs out of the riches of thy grace, through Jesus Christ, that we may go forth from this day forward, in the strength of Emmanuel, God, with us.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore. Amen.