

# Call his name Jesus

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[ 0 : 00 ] Faithful to the Lord, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said,

Amen. All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet. The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, which means God with us. When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him, and took Mary home as his wife. But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son, and he gave him the name Jesus.

Amen. Thanks, Naomi. Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, thank you so much for the time that we can have together this morning.

Thank you for your word, the Bible. Please, would you speak to us and show us more about Jesus, your son, that we might know him better and glorify you.

[ 1 : 18 ] We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Good morning. It's nice to see you, particularly if we've not met before. My name is Adam. Before we go any further, I'd love to ask you a question to discuss with the people next to you.

Probably, well, Christmas hasn't quite arrived yet, but I would guess that some of your Christmas celebrations have already started. So I'd love you to ask the person next to you, what's your favourite thing about Christmas?

Might be a Christmas food, or something on TV, or a tradition you have. What's your favourite thing about Christmas? What's your favourite thing about Christmas?

Would anyone be brave enough to share what they said with everyone?

Yeah, Bill? Home Alone. Home Alone, the Christmas movie. Any other? Presents. Presents. Family.

[ 2 : 56 ] Family, yeah. Kate? Sparkling lights. Sparkling lights. There's lots of lovely things about Christmas, aren't there? They warm up our hearts, and Christmas comes at a good time of year.

When it's dark and cold outside, at Christmas, instead we get lights, and warmth, and celebration, and it cuts through the coldness and darkness of winter.

But here's our big question for today. Is Christmas actually just a brief distraction from the coldness and darkness of life?

Or is Christmas more than that? Is Christmas actually a solution to life's darkest problems? For many of us, life can feel like a dark, cold winter.

We face all kinds of serious problems. Family conflict, money troubles, illnesses of those we love. Then there's the problems inside of us.

[ 3 : 58 ] We've thought a bit about already this morning. The sin and the bad habits we hate, but we can't get rid of. Then there's wider things we see on the news. Wars and division and murders.

When problems are this big, when the world is this dark, Christmas can seem nice, but perhaps a bit like a brief distraction, more of an escape than a solution.

A moment of warmth before winter's back, and it's cold and dark again. But here's what our Bible passage tells us this morning. Christmas is not just a brief distraction from life's problems.

Actually, Christmas is where we find a solution to life's deepest, darkest problems. Christmas brings about real, life-changing and world-changing hope.

We're going to see that in today's passage by firstly looking at some of the problems which provide a backdrop to the first Christmas. And then we're going to spend most of our time looking at the two names we get for the baby born at the first Christmas.

[ 5 : 10 ] So first, the problems that provide the backdrop. You'll see in our Bibles that our passage for today comes after this long list of family names in Matthew chapter 1.

Can you see that? It reminds us of the history of the Jewish people. That's the family that's described there. And it's an amazing story. A people chosen by God, living by his promises, who face all kinds of problems, but are looked after by God.

And yet, as we read this long list of family names, it's also a very sad story. Because it goes from the highs of names like Abraham, a man called by God.

A man like David, God's chosen king, to exile. That is where people from across the whole country are kicked out of their land and had to move away.

Even after that, they have a return to their homeland. But it's a pretty mixed success. And since then, for centuries, as we come to our first Christmas, it seemed like it's cold and dark.

[ 6 : 25 ] And God has been silent. By the time of today's passage, the Jewish people are living under the foreign occupation of the Roman Empire. And that was only the latest in a series of foreign occupations.

You might think, oh, they have this amazing history. We get a recap of through the names. But right now, it feels like a long, cold, dark winter. Has God totally abandoned us?

The story zooms in on one man. That is Joseph. Joseph is described as a son of David. He's a descendant of David. That's the high point of the ancient kings of Israel.

And yet, probably for Joseph, his connection to that ancient royal line felt pretty irrelevant most of the time. Joseph was just an ordinary man, living in a time of struggle and darkness.

And here's the Christmas story that you're probably familiar with. Joseph had all kinds of his own problems. He was engaged to Mary.

[ 7 : 33 ] He loved her. And was looking forward to a future with her. And then everything falls apart. Joseph found out that Mary was pregnant. And he's not an idiot.

People 2,000 years ago aren't that naive. He knows how this works. Given that he and Mary have not yet slept together, and Mary is pregnant, that means someone else must be the dad.

Can you imagine how he would have been feeling? The woman he loves is pregnant with presumably someone else's baby. He would be confused, betrayed, heartbroken.

Back then, in that culture, an engagement was legally binding in a way that engagement isn't for us today. And so to cheat in an engagement, or to break off an engagement, was a legal and a publicly devastating matter.

Joseph had the legal right to effectively divorce Mary for cheating on him. And he had the right to publicly shame her. Notice what he does do.

[ 8 : 46 ] Did you see in verse 19? Because Joseph, her husband, was faithful to the law and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

Joseph simultaneously cares about the law and he is compassionate and kind to Mary. He loves justice and mercy. Does that remind you of anyone?

But still, Joseph has this massive problem and we've thought already his whole country, his whole people have this massive problem. They're the kind of problems that are like when you have them, you basically can't think about anything else.

You imagine an affair in your family or a terrible diagnosis you're worried about or worried about your country's instability. those kind of problems are the ones that you can't really stop thinking about at any time.

And so then, if Christmas is just a brief happy day, it's just kind of a distraction at best from the problems that seem so deep. But Christmas is not just a brief distraction from life's problems.

[ 10 : 03 ] Instead, Christmas is the solution to life's deepest, darkest problems. We see that in verse 20 when something extraordinary happens.

One night, Joseph had a dream, but not like any ordinary dream. This is a dream from God. Verse 20, 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.

In this moment, despite the problems, the darkness, the confusion, God speaks clearly. God brings this explanation. Joseph, don't be afraid to take Mary home as your wife.

Mary has not betrayed you like it would seem. I've not abandoned you like it might seem. What is conceived in her is from God, the Holy Spirit.

And this news changes everything. Joseph's heartbreak isn't just a personal tragedy. In fact, it's part of something much bigger.

[ 11 : 15 ] Joseph and Mary's lives are going to be part of a story through which God brings a solution to the whole world. In the darkness, God speaks with this message of a baby that is going to change their lives and change the world.

And as we see that, we're going to look at the two names which are given of this baby in our passage. And together, these two names show us just how big God's solution is to our darkest problems.

Now, names often have a meaning. That is true in our passage. Do you know, that is also true in the world of Pokemon?

Now, I've got a little short quiz for you. I want to chat with the person next to you. And here are some Pokemon on the screen. And here's the question for you. Can you work out why they have their name?

So it has their name and a picture. Can you work out why they have their names? Talk with the person next to you for a minute. Thank you.

[ 12 : 51 ] Thank you.

Because he has fire, so he can like char stuff. Yeah, and what about the chimp? Do you have any idea? Yeah, he's like a chimp, a monkey, and he can char stuff with a flame.

What about Snorlax? Does anyone else have a guess? He snores. He's the sleepy Pokemon. He snores and he relaxes. And what about the last one, Raichi? That's quite hard.

Now, it might be a bit easier if you know a translation of the name. In Japanese, the word rai means thunder, and the word chu means squeak, like a mouse.

So you could call it thunder squeak or thunder mouse. Names often have a meaning. And actually, if we have a translation of names, it makes it even easier for us to see their meaning.

[ 14 : 15 ] And did you look at the first name that the Christmas baby is given? In verse 21, the angel says to Joseph, 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.

The name comes with a bit of an explanation. What will Jesus do? He will save his people from their sins. You might notice in your Bibles that the name Jesus has a little F next to it, a footnote.

If you follow that down to the bottom of the page, it says this. Jesus is the Greek form of Joshua, which means the Lord saves. And so, like with Raichi, we have a translation.

Jesus could translate to Joshua. And what does Joshua mean in Hebrew? The Lord saves. So what is Jesus' name? It's that he's our saviour.

His name means the Lord saves, because he will save his people from their sins. Now here is why that is such good news.

[ 15 : 24 ] We might have lots of different problems in life. We do have lots of different problems in life. But sin is the deepest, darkest problem we have.

Sin is the fundamental problem behind all of the other problems in the world. We might see our problems as kind of various isolated things.

But underneath them all is sin. It is the reason we hurt each other. The reason why we're so frustrated with ourselves. It's even the reason why the natural world seems out of balance.

Sin is the deepest, darkest problem we have. I just imagine you are carrying a backpack. And every time you sin, every selfish choice you make, every lie you tell, every time you are unkind to someone else, every time you ignore God, it's like adding a piece of rubbish into this backpack that's on your back all the time.

The backpack is horrible. It's heavy. And it stinks. The things we've done wrong, we kind of carry them around with us.

[ 16 : 42 ] They weigh us down. And no matter what we can do, we can't get rid of this horrible, stinking, heavy backpack that's on our shoulders. Then one day, and we've thought about this the last few weeks as we've gone through Advent, one day each of us will have to stand before God and turn this backpack out and show to him all the things that we've ever done wrong in life, all the horrible, stinking things we carry around with us.

Every sin, every regret, every mistake, every shame, laid out before God. He is holy and just and he will be angry when he sees it because he cares about our lives and how we treat each other.

The Bible explains that sin, this horrible, stinking backpack of all the wrong we've ever done, is our deepest, darkest problem.

Our sin separates us from God. It divides us from one another. It is this heavy, stinking burden on our backs. And so while we have all kinds of various problems, in fact, those problems are just symptom of this deepest, darkest problem.

Sin and God's judgment against them. Sin and God's judgment against them are the root cause of all the things that we find to be problems in life. Sin is the root cause of all that's wrong.

[ 18 : 18 ] And so why is Jesus' name such good news? Because the Christmas baby will be called Jesus. And that means the Lord saves because he came to do what we couldn't.

That is, save us from our sins. Jesus came to take this heavy, stinking backpack off our shoulders. Later, if you keep reading in Matthew's Gospel, you will read times where Jesus can say to people, your sins are forgiven.

The question is how? Where do the sins go if we couldn't get them off ourselves? Here's the thing. Jesus never committed any sin. So he has no backpack full of rubbish on his shoulders. And he can take ours for himself. On the cross, Jesus takes all our sin, that full, heavy, stinking weight of all we've done wrong, on his own back.

He faces God's just anger for it. But now that backpack of rubbish that is sin is nailed to the cross, punished there and left there.

[ 19 : 35 ] So the name Jesus is amazing. It means the Lord saves. It means that he will save us from our sins. It means you and I no longer have to carry around this heavy, stinking weight of sin on our backs.

Jesus takes it. So we can have forgiveness and freedom and life with God. Perhaps you know what it feels like to have that gross, lingering burden of sin on your back.

I know I do. The name Jesus is good news because it reminds us that he can save us from our sins. He can take the horrible, stinking weight off your shoulders so that your sin and the guilt of it does not belong to you anymore.

So Christmas is not just a brief distraction because it reminds us and it is about Jesus, the one who will save us from our sins.

Jesus, the Lord saves. He will save us from our sins. It's our first name. And then in the next part of our passage, we hear the second name for this baby.

[ 20 : 54 ] Look at verse 22. All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet. The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and they will call him Emmanuel, which means God with us.

I want you to imagine you are in a city and you're walking down a dark alleyway at night. It feels pretty unsafe to be there.

And you can see a couple of figures up ahead. They look like trouble. They're gangsters. They come up to you and shout at you and demand your money and your phone and you feel trapped and helpless.

It's dangerous. And then suddenly, you hear the blazing siren of a police car. The bright lights flash and the police car zooms around the corner.

The robbers, the gangsters flee. Help has arrived. The police are here. For you, this is relief. The police are with you.

[ 22 : 01 ] You've been saved from danger. For the robbers, it's a warning. They're about to face the consequences of living like there aren't any police. Our second name, Emmanuel, is a bit like that.

It means God with us. For those who are facing problems and long for God's help, it is incredibly good news.

But for those who want nothing to do with God, it's a bit of a warning. God is real and he's showing up. Matthew, the writer of this gospel, tells us where the name comes from.

It's an ancient prophecy in Isaiah. It was a prophecy given to the Jewish people at another time when they were under threat from foreign occupation. In that crisis, some people were asking for God's help to save them.

And yet others were turning to foreign nations, abandoning any hope of a rescue from God and rejecting him, trusting in others.

[ 23 : 11 ] Into this situation, God spoke through the prophet Isaiah, promising that a miraculous child would be born and his name would be Emmanuel, which means God with us.

It is good news for anyone who wants God's help and knows that they need him. And it is a bit of a warning to those who are acting like God isn't there or are ignoring him.

Emmanuel means God is real and he's showing up. He is with us. Like in Isaiah's time, so in Joseph's time, the name would have probably felt similar.

Under Roman occupation, many Jewish people would have felt like God had abandoned them.

Perhaps some were hoping that he would help. Perhaps others were beginning to give up.

But then, in the moment of silence and darkness, the angel from God has a message. God is with you. I want you to discuss one more thing with the person next to you.

[ 24 : 16 ] Imagine that you are in Joseph's shoes. You feel like you're in darkness. There are serious problems. But you are hoping, you are waiting for God to help.

And suddenly, you get the message, God is with you. He himself is coming into the world. If you were Joseph, how do you think you would feel?

If you were Joseph, hoping for God's help with all the problems, how would you feel? Take a minute with the person next to you. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 26 : 21 ] Thank you. Perhaps it's like when you have hurt yourself or you're just stuck in a problem and a kind parent comes to help you and look after you in a way that you couldn't help yourself.

When Joseph gets the message, God is with you, it is amazing news. He's coming for you. And what's most amazing is he's not just sending a message. He's not just transferring money. He's not even sending someone else to do the job for him.

God is coming himself and he's coming in this baby. That is so astonishing. When you think about it, the world that God chooses to enter, the way in which he chooses to enter.

He comes into a sin-stained world. He comes as a baby. Remember our backpack. Every person carries this horrible, heavy, stinking load of guilt and regret and shame of all the sin they've done wrong.

We have this horrible, stinking sin and it creates separation between us and God. The world is stained by that. We see evidence of it everywhere.

[ 27 : 49 ] And yet God chooses to enter that world. That is what makes Emmanuel so amazing.

God doesn't stay distant. He's not so disgusted with us that he utterly abandons us.

He doesn't shout from afar to fix your own problems. Instead, he shows up. When we couldn't fix our problems. When we were utterly helpless. God comes to help us, to save us, to be with us himself.

The good news is, God being with us is not just a temporary visit. After the baby Jesus is born, he grows to be an adult and dies on the cross.

But after his death, he rises again. And he says to his followers, I will have to leave you physically, but I will stay with you spiritually.

And so as Jesus rises to the heavens to rule over all the world from heaven, he sends the Holy Spirit so that from now on, God will be with us forever.

[ 29 : 01 ] And so when we remember the name Emmanuel, we do remember Jesus and how God came to be there specifically in him in the past.

And now we remember that God has come to be with us from then on and forever. For you, if you have trusted Jesus for your salvation, God is with you right now.

No matter the darkness or difficulty in life, God is with you. For all the struggles and all the shame, we're not on our own.

What a difference it makes when you're stuck and helpless and embarrassed and someone says, I'm with you. I care about you. I'm here for you.

In the person of Jesus, God came into a sin-stained world and he came to be with us. He does not remain far away, but he comes into a world of darkness and problems.

[ 30 : 08 ] Emmanuel means God with us. What have we seen today? Christmas might at times feel just like a temporary distraction from life's problems.

We're in winter now. After Christmas, we'll remember we're in winter again. But that's not all.

Because Christmas is actually a solution to life's deepest, darkest problems.

God doesn't leave us in our sin. He doesn't leave us on our own. God sends his son to fix our deepest, darkest problems. The name Jesus, whenever you hear it this Christmas, remember, it

means the Lord saves.

Because he saves his people from their sins. Jesus takes on himself the heavy, stinking weight of all our sin. And instead gives us forgiveness.

And whenever you hear the name Emmanuel this Christmas, remember, it means God with us. In a dark, difficult world, God himself comes to be with us.

[ 31 : 19 ] He enters our sin-stained world as a baby. Do you see the difference that this could make to life? Rather than problems being totally overwhelming and consuming and helpless.

Suddenly you think, oh, I can handle this. Not because of myself or how able I am. But because I know what God is like.

And that he's on my side. He is the one who saves his people from their sins. He is the one who is with us. It makes such a tremendous difference.

The fun bits of Christmas. The things that warm our hearts and bring light to a dark season. They are nice. They can just be a bit of a distraction from life's problems.

But actually, Christmas provides a solution to our deepest, darkest problems. So I hope this Christmas you remember those two names.

[ 32 : 21 ] Jesus and Emmanuel. They tell us who this Christmas baby is. He takes us in a way. He is God with us. I hope you enjoy this Christmas.

I hope you remember those two names. Jesus and Emmanuel. For this season. And for the rest of your life. Father, thank you so much for sending your son.

Thank you for sending Jesus, Emmanuel. Thank you for what a difference it makes to life. That we might be saved from our sins.

Thank you for what a difference it makes to life. That you are God with us. And please help us this Christmas to remember Jesus, Emmanuel.

And Father, please help us to remember that. Always in the future. We thank you and pray in Jesus' name. Amen. We are going to finish together by singing one last song.

[ 33 : 35 ] O come all you faithful. I'd just love to draw your attention to the last verse of this. Which says this. Yea, Lord, we greet thee.

Born for our salvation. And perhaps this morning you can sing that knowing that for yourself. Jesus has been born for our salvation.

And let's stand and sing together. O come all you faithful.