

Matthew 1:18-25 Early Morning

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[0 : 00] Amen. Please pray with me. God, again, would you give us an increase of your grace that we may meekly hear your word, receive you with pure affection, as we bear forth the fruit of your spirit, your very character, Christ, in us, with us, exercising the same gifts for your glory.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Please be seated. So here we are.

This is the second Sunday of Advent, and front and center, you get the title of this sermon series, which is God With Us.

We're focusing on the incarnation, and today, as you've heard in that first reading, you can see why this is the title of this series as we land on a couple of names of Jesus.

And as we begin this text today in Matthew, and you can turn back to that if you wish, the page number I don't have, because it's actually not in the Bible, but it's 807, so you can go to 808 and then turn back to 808 and then turn back to that page and you'll be at 807.

[1 : 29] But we're going to look at what is kind of traditionally known as the birth narrative, because of course it begins in verse 18 with, now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way.

But these eight verses are actually not the birth narrative that's yet to come. It's more the conception narrative. It's largely about the naming of this child, this God-man who came into the world.

His conception was miraculous for sure, though his birth actually quite normal. But the naming says a lot about the identity and the work of our Lord.

Naming our children is a privilege, but also comes with a little bit of pressure. Naming a child is a blessing, but sometimes comes as something of a burden.

It's a delightful responsibility, but has endless choices. Joseph was relieved of the stress of that, though, in some ways, by the choosing of a name for this child of Mary's.

[2 : 33] While the stress was relieved by the naming of this child, it must have been kind of strange to tell others that name. And the names of this child raises, or maybe even also answers a couple of questions, too, which I want to ask and answer.

Why has this child come? And the second one is, who is this child that's come? So why first, and then who? And I think the names actually answer those questions.

So the naming of this child, this God-man, and I kind of commend to you, actually, the second article of our 39 articles. I won't read that now, but it actually brings together kind of brilliantly and beautifully this God-man coming together, which is conceived here in Mary that we look at today.

So first, Jesus. Why this child? That's his question. But imagine the question came to Mary and Joseph, too.

It's not hard to believe that they had this kind of going on in their mind. The narrative is from Joseph's perspective, as we read it here, not Mary's. And so I wonder if he was asking questions like, how could this have happened?

[3 : 47] Or what did I get myself into? Why on earth is this taking place? Matthew reports, when Jesus' mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit.

And here is the answer to the question, how did this happen? The Holy Spirit is the agent of this conception. And usually, God reveals what is to happen before the event actually takes place.

It's the kind of pattern throughout Scripture and his relationship and the story of salvation of his people. While the birth is yet to take place, the conception is not just by faith.

It's by fact. Mary's pregnant. She's conceived. And Joseph and Mary, like all, would have longed for children, but not like this.

Consumption before consummation is a crisis. Not just personal conscience, but the law would have compelled Joseph to separate divorce from Mary.

[5 : 01] And contemplating this, Joseph planned a silent divorce because it was just. Until this divine revelation comes to him. Now, some of us would like an explanation and a solution by a dream, maybe.

Think of some of your own binds and burdens that you bear on a daily basis, maybe acutely or maybe even kind of chronically in life. Maybe you're in a bind in your own marriage or marital status.

Maybe burdened as a parent or the way you were parented. And we ask questions beginning with why. Why now? Why then?

And sometimes we search the Scriptures. Often we seek wisdom. Other times we long for a sign. That's what we actually heard in the Isaiah reading. But then the person addressed there chose not to test God by asking for a sign.

But we might pay attention to our dreams as well. However, no one could have dreamt this up and made it believable. Joseph takes to heart this word from the Lord by an angel.

[6 : 13] With a message about the cause and origin of the conception, for sure. And it's not only about the cause and origin of the conception, but the name.

You can get lost in the mix of this. It's kind of both and. Conception, but also the name. So, the Holy Spirit tells Joseph, who is not the biological father, what to name this child.

And usually it was the father's privilege to name a child. Since Joseph is not the father, then the true father, capital F, is the one who names this child.

So, this is the answer to the question, why this child? And the answer is, because the child is Jesus.

Or God saves. Matthew reports, Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife. Must have been a lot of fear there. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.

[7 : 18] For he will save his people. And he doesn't stop there. Not just God saves, but he will save his people from their sins.

So, after 400 years of silence, with no utterance of the Holy Spirit to God's people through his prophets. 400 years, nothing but silence. God reveals himself to his people by the Holy Spirit through Joseph, which makes him a prophet.

There was another Joseph in the Old Testament, remember, who was also given over to dreams. But nothing like this one. But Joseph of Nazareth is the prophet breaking the silence this time.

And God's first word to his people is, God saves. And he'll save his people from their sins. And the Jews knew this.

And believed it. Which is no small thing after these 400 years. Just think for a moment in your own times of maybe despair or depression or desperation.

[8 : 26] When your prayers aren't answered the way you want. When your efforts bear forth little or no fruit. Instead of God being a fortress for his people, he seemed to be like a fortress to his people up to this point.

But they were sustained until this great moment. And that was the moment that God's people were waiting for.

His spoken word. Now God saves. In other words, or in another word, singular, just plain and simple, Jesus.

The word save, though, you must admit, is a bit lost on our culture. You must fail to appreciate it because of the way it's used.

But just think about how it's used in our culture. This word saves. We're worried about our data. So we save it. There was one tech company who said, Jesus saves.

[9 : 33] You should save too. Or we watch the MLS, hoping the goalie does or doesn't save the shot. Or we turn to our medics to save our lives or our loved ones.

Is there something worse than losing your data? A goal? Or a life? Jesus comes to save us from our sin.

And this is a matter of life or death. He comes because he knows we can't save ourselves and need his saving grace. So that's the first thing.

Jesus. Why did he come to save us from our sins? The next name is Emmanuel. Who is this God-man?

So we know why he came, but who is this? So we're told that Jesus has this other name. There are many names for the God-man Jesus.

[10 : 33] Lots of them, which I won't go through the list right now. And they capture other kind of things. But this other name, which he fulfills, is Emmanuel. Emmanuel. And so we read in the text, 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. So Matthew tells us what Jesus means.

He tells us what Emmanuel means. And this is a really unique name. Do you remember anyone else in the Old Testament who went by this name?

We had the Isaiah reading this morning. Jesus also is the name Joshua. So we have that, which is pretty unique. But it's not unique like this name, right?

There was Joshua of the Old Testament. That was actually a pretty common name in some respects, but not Emmanuel. Only kind of two times is it used, in chapter 7 Isaiah and chapter 8 as well.

[11 : 37] But there are other ways that it's kind of described. In Psalm 14 we read, There they are in great terror, for God is with the generation of the righteous.

But it's interesting. He's coming to be with the generation of sinners this time. Exodus 3 we read, But I will be with you, and this shall be a sign for you, that I have sent you.

When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God. This is God's revelation to Moses in Exodus. Never before did God reveal his name in this way, though you must admit the Yahweh word is really similar, though not exactly like Emmanuel.

2 Corinthians 13 reads this way, The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

There's this witness that comes through in the word Emmanuel, that God is with us in Jesus. So God saves us not from a distance now, but because he is with us and for us.

[12 : 51] Yes, he saved his people before he was with us. At this birth, this conception, Emmanuel with his creation like never before, now in the flesh, with his people.

Now in the carnation, God saves his people by his birth, his life, his death on the cross, because he is with us.

That's who he is. The with us kind of God like no other. Emmanuel is totally here. Even though his own didn't know him, they didn't recognize him, they didn't accept him when he came.

So what does it mean that Jesus is Emmanuel? Emmanuel. Well, with us, he forgives and frees his people from our sins through his life and his death.

Not only just by declaration, taking his word for it, but now by demonstration. Demonstration with us on the cross and his death and resurrection.

[13 : 58] Emmanuel is with us in our separation as a substitution for our sin. He's with us. So it means that he frees us, he forgives us, but he also has fellowship with us and friendship with us as Lord.

Person to person, God is with us like never before up to this point in Scripture. Though you and I don't see him face to face, of course, of course, the sending of the Holy Spirit means that he is with us.

So this is Emmanuel. It's who he is. He's forgiving. He's freeing. He gives us fellowship and his friendship. He's with us.

Emmanuel and Jesus. Today's prescribed gospel lesson was different than this one, and I want to read it because the witness is described in this too.

It says, Jesus said to his disciples, there shall be signs in the sun and in the moon and in the stars and upon the earth. Distress of nations with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring.

[15 : 14] Men's hearts failing them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth. For the powers of heaven shall be shaken.

And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads for your redemption draweth nigh.

This is, of course, about the second coming. Today's text is about our Lord's first coming. He drew nigh then. He'll draw nigh again.

God was with us then. He's with us now by the Holy Spirit. He'll be with us again as this text describes because he's Emmanuel and he saves us from our sin.

And so there is a power in the name of Jesus because of the nature of him as Emmanuel. In this Advent, we're reminded that our Lord drew near and he'll draw near again.

[16 : 22] Our Lord is drawing near again as we declared in the lighting of the candle. Our Lord and Savior draweth nigh. O come, let us worship. O come, let us worship.

And so he saves us. Not from disaster, not from suffering, not from catastrophe, but something worse. Our sin, which separates us as we sometimes war against a God.

But it is Emmanuel. It's Jesus who comes and does for us what we can do for ourselves because he's with us as our Savior and our Lord. and speak to you in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.