

Series: "GOD WITH US"

For Message: Matt 1:20-23, Luke 2, 1 Peter 1:8-9

Message Title: "God With Us Brings PEACE"

Introduction: Welcome to BMZ CHURCH! Glad you're here as we CONTINUE our WORSHIP SERIES called: "**GOD WITH US**"!

As my NEPHEW JOSH and I shared this WORSHIP SERIES, I hope it brought HOPE!

**"HOPE"** = Verb: *To want something to HAPPEN or BE TRUE.* 2 = **TO EXPECT with CONFIDENCE** ... NOUN: 1a = **EXPECTATION of FULFILLMENT or SUCCESS.** 1b = **SOMEONE or SOMETHING on which HOPES are CENTERED.** Merriam-Webster. Let's FOCUS on that LAST ONE. WHO or WHAT do we PLACE our HOPES IN? **In WHOM or WHAT can we TRUST for FULFILLMENT or SUCCESS?**

Today, as we WRAP UP the ADVENT SEASON and MOVE Towards CHRISTMAS, we need to DECIDE AGAIN whether we will PLACE our HOPE in the WORDS of the WORLD or The WORD of THE LORD. WHO will we TRUST?

TODAY, on this CHRISTMAS EVE, our JOURNEY through ADVENT comes to an END. Advent is that SEASON of EXPECTATION / ANTICIPATION. And on CHRISTMAS EVE, we REFLECT BACK and REMEMBER that HOPE was BORN.

Our THEME during ADVENT has been "**GOD WITH US**" ... IMMANUEL. The SAVIOR who is the ULTIMATE GIFT and BRINGS GIFTS we DESPARATELY NEED ... HOPE ... LOVE ... JOY ... PEACE.

Now, WE "REFLECT BACK" on the COMING of The SAVIOR, BUT the PEOPLE of ISRAEL had WAITED a LONG TIME, GENERATIONS, for a PROMISED MESSIAH (Savior). THIS HOPE was PASSED DOWN for CENTURIES ... and the people CONTINUED to CLING to this HOPE. The PROPHET ISAIAH and OTHER Prophets had PROPHESED about The COMING MESSIAH, call IMMANUEL ... GOD WITH US.

Now, at the BEGINNING of the GOSPEL of MATTHEW, we find THE PROPHESES coming TRUE ... **MATTHEW 1:20-23 = As he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. "Joseph, son of David," the angel said, "do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit. 21And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." 22All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord's message through his prophet: 23"Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, which means 'God is with us.'**"

Now, the CHRISTMAS STORY is NOT a MADE-UP STORY ... it is HISTORY of VERY REAL LIFE and FILLED with WONDER and MIRACLES. It is the PIECE of HISTORY when THE CREATOR of the UNIVERSE CHOSE to INTERVENE in HIS CREATION / HUMANITY ... AS a HUMAN!

As we've gone through these WEEKS of ADVENT, we've FOUND that ...

**The GIFT of Immanuel Brings Us GIFTS:**

JESUS is the ULTIMATE GIFT to HUMANITY (that He created in His image) for our ETERNAL HOPE. We have NO ETERNAL HOPE WITHOUT HIM. But JESUS also BRINGS His LOVE / JOY / HOPE / PEACE ... We saw in this SERIES How He BROUGHT these GIFTS into REAL PEOPLE'S LIVES in VERY REAL WAYS ... and we TRUST He will DO

the SAME for US TODAY! On this CHRISTMAS EVE, let's TRACE our way BACK THROUGH all that it means to have "GOD WITH US / IMMANUEL". Here we go...

### **#1 = Immanuel Brings Us HOPE**

When LUKE tells the HISTORY of JESUS' BIRTH, he begins by TELLING how GOD INTERVENED in the LIVES of ZECHARIAH and ELIZABETH, a PRIEST, and his wife ... an OLDER COUPLE with NO KIDS ... who RECEIVED ANGELIC NOTICE they would have a SON who would be the PROMISED PROPHET to PREPARE the WAY for the COMING MESSIAH. We know him as JOHN the BAPTIST / BAPTIZER / CREEPY JOHN. This brought HOPE into the LIVES of ZECH and LIZ who TRUSTED GOD...

The Prophet ISAIAH inspired HOPE with his MESSAGE of the COMING KING ...  
**ISAIAH 9:6-7 = *For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His government and its peace will never end. He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David for all eternity. The passionate commitment of the Lord of Heaven's Armies will make this happen!***

700 YEARS LATER, an ANGEL spoke to ZECHARIAH, MARY, and JOE that He was ANSWERING the PRAYERS and FULFILLING the PROPHECIES with He ONLY SON. This was TANGIBLE HOPE for a NATION that thought MAYBE GOD had FORGOTTEN them.

Hope was ALIVE in ISRAEL again! HOPE is ALIVE for US TODAY. FOCUSING on GRATITUDE can RENEW and GROW our HOPE. Recognizing and GRATITUDE for ALL the GOOD GOD has SHOWN US in the PAST INCREASES / REINFORCES our HOPE for the FUTURE.

We can ALL be THANKFUL for the GIFT of The MESSIAH / SAVIOR ... JESUS. He is our ETERNAL HOPE. None of us are mere mortals. We have HOPE for our ETERNITY.

We also RECOGNIZE how GOD has BLESSED US in our LIVES in TANGIBLE and INTANGIBLE ways. When we SLOW DOWN and RECOGNIZE ALL we are BLESSED WITH it brings us HOPE that GOD will CONTINUE to LOVE us Unconditionally, OFFER His GRACE, and CARE for our IMMEDIATE NEEDS. 2<sup>nd</sup> Gift ...

### **#2 = Immanuel Brings Us LOVE**

GOD with US = LOVE. We talked about MARY and JOSEPH. Theirs was a FAIRLY TYPICAL LOVE STORY for its DAY. A young, NOT WEALTHY Couple ENTER INTO the MULTI-STEP process of MARRIAGE in 1<sup>st</sup> Century Israel. They have a GOOD PLAN until an ANGEL SHOWS UP and announces a MIRACULOUS PREGNANCY of the SON of GOD. Their WORLD is ROCKED. Their LIVES will NEVER be the SAME. They WONDER if their RELATIONSHIP will SURVIVE.

Their LOVE STORY was written by GOD HIMSELF, and HE is LOVE. God KNEW HOW to DELIVER TANGIBLE LOVE to JOE and MARY in EXACTLY the WAYS they BOTH NEEDED ... and HE will do the SAME for US. GOD is LOVE. He GIVES His LOVE to US FREELY / UNCONDITIONALLY. And WHEN we OPEN ourselves to it, GOD'S LOVE FLOWS through US to OTHERS.

The APOSTLE JOHN wrote ... **1 JOHN 4:16,19 = *We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love. God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them. [19] We love each other because he loved us first.***

Immanuel / GOD WITH US is LOVE FOR US, WITHIN US, and THROUGH US. The LOVE of GOD is a TRANSFORMITIVE FORCE that CHANGES US. Jesus COMMANDS us to LOVE EACH OTHER and then GIVES us the LOVE to DO IT. And, as we RESPOND to

GOD'S LOVE, we FIND our OWN CAPACITY to LOVE getting BIGGER ... kind of like the GRINCH'S HEART that GREW BIGGER and BIGGER ... *"Three Sizes That Day"* ...

As JOHN wrote, GOD is LOVE and HE LIVES in US if we TRUST HIM ... therefore, we NEED to be TRANSFORMED into BRINGERS and BEARERS of LOVE this Christmas Season and BEYOND. Think CLEARLY about HOW YOU can LOVE your FAMILY, Friends, Neighbors, and CO-Worker ... Then, we are COMMANDED to LOVE Strangers, people who are DIFFERENT from US and have DIFFERENT OPINIONS ... to LOVE our ENEMIES and people who just plain DIFFICULT. Prayer: *"God, you are LOVE. By the POWER of your SPIRIT, LIVE in ME."* God is LOVE and God is WITH US ... Immanuel. Gift #3 ...

### **#3 = Immanuel Brings Us JOY**

Let's go back to the FIRST CHRISTMAS and the JOY of Mary's Cousin, ELIZABETH. When JESUS CAME ... STILL in the WOMB ... Elizabeth, and her SON (Still in the WOMB), JOHN, they KNEW that IMMANUEL would bring JOY. They EXPERIENCED it ... **LUKE 1:44 = *When I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb jumped for joy.***

Elizabeth's JOY was CONTAGIOUS, and it did NOT take LONG for MARY to begin PRAISING GOD after this ENCOUNTER with LIZ.

JOY is LIKE THAT ... it SPREADS. Another DISCIPLE, PETER, UNDERSTOOD the JOY that came with IMMANUEL / JESUS. After Jesus' DEATH, Resurrection, and ASCENSION, Peter WROTE ... **1 PETER 1:8-9 = *You love him even though you have never seen him. Though you do not see him now, you trust him; and you rejoice with a glorious, inexpressible joy. 9The reward for trusting him will be the salvation of your souls.***

That KIND of JOY is ROOTED in The SAVIOR. That JOY does NOT DEPEND on one's CIRCUMSTANCES. So, as JOSH said last week ... we CHOOSE JOY. No matter WHAT is going on IN our LIVES ... I CHOOSE JOY. I KNOW who WINS in the END.

Christmas is CHARACTERIZED by JOY, because JESUS has COME. And we KNOW He is COMING AGAIN. He LOVES us and HOLDS our ETERNITIES ... God SENT His Only SON so that WHOEVER BELIEVED in HIM would NOT PERISH (Hell) but have ETERNAL LIFE (Heaven). Jesus = The WAY / TRUTH / LIFE ... ETERNAL JOY. Gift #4 ...

### **#4 = Immanuel Brings Us PEACE**

In a few minutes, we'll sing SILENT NIGHT, but I'm NOT so SURE that FIRST Christmas in Bethlehem was so SILENT or PEACEFUL. Mary giving BIRTH in a STABLE after a FRANTIC SEARCH for LODGING in a CROWDED CITY. Shepherds ... somehow, I DOUBT they were hanging in the FIELDS with SHEEP all NAPPING close BY singing KUMBAYAH around a FIRE. They were LIKELY SHEPHERDING / Protecting the SHEEP ... WOLVES? Leopards? STORMS?

Maybe the MEN were COMPLAINING about having to WORK another 3<sup>rd</sup> SHIFT. At least we KNOW that when the ANGELS showed UP, there was NOT much PEACE. The Shepherds were TERRIFIED! Until the ANGEL spoke ... *"I bring Good News that will cause GREAT JOY for ALL."* Then ... **LUKE 2:14 = *"Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased."***

I want us to PAY ATTENTION to this for a MOMENT. This is NOT about WORLD PEACE or LACK of FIGHTING or GREAT COUNTRIES or ... This is PEACE in THIS LIFE to Those with WHOME GOD is PLEASED. In WHOM is God PLEASED? Those who TRUST HIM and HIS PRINCIPLES and LIVE LIKE IT.

This is the PEACE of SHALOM which was deeply INGRAINED in the Ancient Jews. This is about COMPLETENESS of SAFETY, WHOLENESS, and FULFILLMENT. It is INTERNAL ... NOT DEPENDENT on External Circumstances.

Jesus WARNED us there would be TROUBLE and Disasters and WARS and Rumors of WARS as the EARTH continues to SPIN. BUT God OFFERS us a PEACE that PASSES our HUMAN UNDERSTANDING AMIDST the STORMS of LIFE ... IF WE will TRUST HIM.

Again, it is the PEACE of being RESTORED to GOD and KNOWING WHO WINS in the END. A PEACE as we KNOW we will LIVE ON FOREVER SOMEWHERE. The PEACE that COMES ONLY through TRUSTING GOD WITH US / IMMANUEL / The Holy Spirit.

Anyone NEED some PEACE? Anyone been LOOKING for PEACE in the WRONG PLACES? It sounds CHURCHY, but we're in CHURCH. The answer is ... JESUS.

### **#5 = Immanuel is JESUS**

Jesus is The NAME above ALL NAMES ... the CENTER of it ALL ... The REASON for the SEASON. Jesus CHANGED EVERYTHING for HUMANITY ... **LUKE 2:6-7 = *And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. 7She gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them.***

LUKE leaves this VERY UNDERSTATED. The CREATOR of the WORLD and ALL HUMANS came HUMBLY ... Human, Infant, Poor, Vulnerable, Physically Dependent ... God WITH US as ONE of US. HUMBLE, but TRANSFORMING. Jesus Coming LITERALLY CHANGED the WORLD. But, WHY? Why would GOD DO this for US??

I believe, as GOD TAUGHT in the OLD and NEW Testaments that JESUS came AS a POOR, VULNERABLE, DEPENDENT, LOWLY (Bethlehem / Nazareth) CHILD to a POOR, VULNERABLE, DEPENDENT, LOWLY COUPLE ... with FIRST ANNOUNCEMENT to POOR, VULNERABLE, DEPENDENT, LOWLY SHEPHERDS ... BECAUSE ... They are the ONES JESUS CAME to SAVE! The ONES His HEART BREAKS for.

What you DO to the LEAST of THESE, you DO to ME ... (Matthew 25) ... and our ETERNITIES DEPEND on it... Where your TREASURE IS ...

Thinking about INVESTMENTS in ETERNITY ... LIVING Righteously (God's way), we have OPPORTUNITY to STORE up some HEAVENLY TREASURES. We've DONE it in the PAST. Let's DO it AGAIN ... **Show: INTERHOPE VIDEO ... "JOY!"**

All Given between NOW and End of Year will be MATCH-GIFTED.

Let's PRAY Together!

Next Steps: *Memorize 1 Peter 1:9*

*Read 1 John 4*

*I will attempt to offer hope, love, joy, and peace this week.*

## Hosting (Closing)

HEY, it has been a GREAT DAY here at BMZ... Glad you've been here with us!  
In a moment, we are going to RECEIVE the OFFERING so please take this time to finish COMPLETING any information.

- Or NEXT STEPS on your CONNECTION CARD (**FULLY FILLED OUT!!**)
- AND when our ushers come around to RECEIVE our OFFERING
- You can drop that card in the offering basket.

### **IF you are a First-Time Guest with us today**

• We are so glad you joined us ... And we have a GIFT for you.  
It's this book "**UNSHAKABLE**" and it's at the BACK TABLE / By the DOORS...

- all you need to do is **HIT "SEND"** your COMPLETED Connection Card

+++++

- I just want to remind you ... STEWARDSHIP is DISCIPLESHIP ... we RECEIVE an OFFERING EVERY Sunday BECAUSE it's BIBLICAL ... AND it HELPS us GROW in our FAITH!
- STEWARDSHIP VERSE ... **1 JOHN 4:19 = We love each other because he loved us first.**
- FIRST of our EARNINGS go back to the ONE who Blessed us in the first place! That's why WE/I do Automated Giving! I get paid ... the TITHE comes OUT FIRST!
- God's plan for BUILDING His Church was through TITHING and GIVING of the FOLLOWERS ... Share the GOOD NEWS! To REFRESH OTHERS!
- As Developing Followers of Jesus Christ, WE need to KNOW what the BIBLE says about GIVING ... NOT just what we THINK it should say.
- **MONEY is a HEART ISSUE.** And GOD wants what is BEST for your HEART! Listen, if GOD LOVES US so much that HE is willing to GIVE UP His OWN SON FOR US, WHY would GOD LEAD us ASTRAY in FINANCES?! USHERS ...
- NEXT WEEK: **END of YEAR MESSAGE on SCREEN!**

*"Truth without Grace is Fundamentalism (Brutality). Grace without Truth is Sentimentalism (Hypocrisy)."*

*Special thanks to Andy Stanley, Warren Wiersbe, Nelson Searcy, and R.A. Pegrum for outlines and ideas for this worship series*