

- “Immanuel” – “God with us” – God steps for the first time into history. He personally intervenes. There are no messengers this time – it is God himself. John in the opening chapter of his majestic Gospel puts it like this: *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us* – for 33 years God was indeed with us.
 - No longer can we shake our fists at God and say he has abandoned us or does not understand – he does – Jesus his son walked this earth 2000 years ago, he knows what it is like to be happy, to be sad, to be bereaved, to be ill, to be let down, to be rejected – he can identify with each and every one of us.
- 2.3 ‘You are to give him the name Jesus’ (Matthew 1:21)
- God chose a very special name for his Son *Jesus*. In Jewish society it was always the man who gave the child its name which is why God needed to speak to Joseph and tell him what name to give his Son: ‘*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.*’ (Matthew 1:21)
 - Jesus’ name means ‘*The Lord saves*’. In naming his son Jesus, God was announcing to the Jews that he had heard their prayers and was coming to their rescue.
 - The Jews were really looking for a King and a return to a period some 100 years earlier when they ran Israel.
 - But as is so often the case when we pray for something God gives us so much more than we ask.
 - God was about to give to Israel a King – not an earthly King but a spiritual King who would fight spiritual battles, take spiritual territory and defeat spiritual enemies. This would be a King who would come and establish a spiritual rather than an earthly kingdom.
 - What God wanted to announce to the Jews and the world by naming his Son Jesus was that the *child conceived of the Holy Spirit* had come to rescue not only his chosen people the Jews from their sins but also ‘*all people*’, people like us.
 - In our preparations for Christmas: in the writing of cards, the buying of presents, the putting up of trees, the purchase of special food – many of us have forgotten along with the rest of humanity what message God was sending in naming his Son Jesus. What was God’s sound bite that day? – it was ‘*a rescuer has been born to you*’
 - That first Christmas Day was utterly remarkable when Jesus stepped into history – but three days after His death on a cross Jesus is raised to new life with the result that his modern day followers serve a living God- one who by his Holy Spirit is resident in everyone of his followers. The apostle Paul writes in his first letter to the Corinthians: *Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?* 1 Corinthians 6:19
 - So we live in a special time – no longer is God remote – “*God is with us always.*”- he is *Immanuel* forever.
- 3. Questions to consider at home**
1. Why does God appear to Joseph in a dream?
 2. Does God answer the prayers of his people concerning a ‘Messiah’ someone who will save them from Roman occupation?
 3. How do Old and New Testament times differ?
 4. What deep desires do you and your church have for God to change your neighbourhood, your country and our world?
 5. A friend of yours says that she loves Christmas because it is all about children, families and giving and receiving presents. How would you respond?

Matthew Street 25th December 2021



The Parish of Peasedown St John

Matthew 1:18-25 - Immanuel ‘God with us’

Passage, Talk Notes and Questions

Please feel free to take these talk notes home with you and you may wish to find some time during this week to consider the questions below.

1. Talk Passage – Matthew 1:18-25

[18] *This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. [19] Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. [20] But 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. [21] 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.[22] All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet: [23] “The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel”—which means, “God with us.”[24] When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. [25] But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.*

2. Talk Notes

2.1 Introduction

- What have you been looking forward to this Christmas?
 - Many children have been dying for this day to come.
 - For others of us it may have come all too quickly, catching unawares.
 - And yet for others of us it may be a special time as we get together with members of our extended families that we rarely see.
 - There were probably mixed expectations for Mary and Joseph too as the day of Jesus’ birth approached. Mary was giving birth to her first child and Joseph was about to become a father.
 - But in the heart of every Jew living at this time there was another expectation that God would bring forth a leader like Moses and rescue the Jews from the oppression of Roman occupation.
 - Are we expecting God to move in our lives? Maybe we are suffering from some illness or having difficulties at work or in our families. Do we harbour like the Jews of Jesus’ day some deep desire for God to change our neighbourhood, our country and our world? Are we praying for change?
 - The Jews of Jesus day certainly were and God was going to give them so much more than they asked for.
 - At the heart of Christmas are two important words ‘*Immanuel*’ and ‘*Jesus*’
- 2.2 *They will call him Immanuel*—which means, “*God with us.*” (Matthew 1:23)
- But on that first Christmas Day, God was about to do something even more special. The Jews had been longing and praying for a ‘Messiah’, a leader, someone like Moses or Elijah. God had told them in a prophecy given some 800 years earlier through Isaiah that God was going to be with them: ‘*The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel*’ (Matthew 1:23)
 - They, like us interpreted that to mean that God would be with them as he had been in the past. Throughout the whole of the Old Testament God had been ‘*with them*’ – sending leaders, prophets and signs. God had intervened miraculously on many occasions – BUT on that first Christmas Day it became personal.

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