

20241222 Immanuel: God with us – Ps Bijoy

Matthew 1:18–25:

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. 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. 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. 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." All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will be with child and will 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 had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

God is the Almighty One. But he is also Immanuel. If you want a balanced picture of God, you've got to place those two names side by side (juxtapose). He is God Most High and He exists outside time and space. He is also Immanuel- God with us.

God entered space-time 2,000 years ago in a tiny village outside Jerusalem called Bethlehem. Galatians 4:4 says, "When the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive the full rights as sons." Jesus was subject to the same spiritual laws that govern all of us. He was also subject to the same physical laws that govern the universe.

It's easier for us to accept that Jesus was fully God than that he was fully human. But we underestimate the humanness as well as the divinity of Jesus. Here's one of them: For the better part of 30 years, Jesus worked as a carpenter. Hebrews 4:15 says he was tempted just like we are, but he never gave into temptation. He suffered like we do—*more* than we do. We don't serve a scar-less God. We serve a God with scarred hands and feet and side and back. According to Isaiah 52:14, Jesus was scarred beyond recognition.

Philippians 2:6 says Jesus "made himself nothing." He "humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!" God put skin on. He became touchable and approachable. Think about this: The Omnipresent One downsized to the confines of a human womb. The Omnipotent One became a helpless baby that had to be fed and nursed and burped. He became nothing. Why? He became nothing so that we could become something. It's all about trading places or trading spaces. Second Corinthians 5:21 says, "He who knew no sin became sin for us so that we could become the righteousness of God." In other words, Jesus makes us a deal we can't refuse. He says, "Give me all of your sin. I'll give you all of my righteousness. And we'll call it even." He came to our place. He took our place. And he invites us back to his place. That is the gospel in a nutshell.

The greatest gift a parent can give a child is the present of presence. That is what kids crave. I always loved being around my dad. Kids crave their parent's presence. A.W. Tozer said that "most Christians are theological Christians." He said they are attempting the impossible. "They're trying to be happy without a sense of the presence." How sad, the greatest gift God gives us is the present of presence. Jesus said, "I will be with you always, even to the end of the age." The Holy Spirit is our 24/7 counsellor. He is always with us. Before you got up this morning and after you go to bed tonight, he will be interceding for you.

The best experiences are lacking when we experience them by ourselves. The greatest experiences are shared experiences. That is why the Almighty One became Immanuel. Maybe this is over obvious, but the Almighty One became "God with us" because he wanted to be with us. Here is an amazing thing, God wants to spend eternity with you.

Revelation 21:3 says, "I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.'" He came to our place. He took our place. And he invites us back to his place.