

## Matthew 1:18-23

18 This is how Jesus the Messiah was born. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took place, while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit. 19 Joseph, to whom she was engaged, was a righteous man and did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement quietly.

20 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. 21 And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

22 All 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.'"

As the text reveals, Immanuel is translated as "God with us" in Hebrew.

Sometimes you see it spelled with an E, which is just the Greek transliteration of the title.

God with us. Isn't this what we want more than anything?

If you were to ask what people are afraid of the most, they would say things like death, the unknown, loss, maybe meaninglessness.

But one that humanity has always had is the fear of being alone.

We have a hard time dealing with the idea of isolation.

There is something terrifying about being alone.

The truth is, we are biologically and spiritually wired to need others.

Even more than you know it, you need relationships.

And then in the depth of being alone, any negativity in us is rehearsed and magnified, and because we don't have anyone around us, the result is that we don't have anybody speaking positivity or refuting those negative thoughts.

There are over 100 verses in the Bible that express the idea that God will not leave us, that God is with us, that we are not alone.

God has promised his presence with us from day one.

It is incredibly comforting, knowing that, as flawed as I am and as difficult of a child I know I can be, God not only still wants me to be with him, he wants to be with me, too.

This is a big part of what this series is all about.

God did more than promise his presence, he actually gave it to us, and in a variety of ways.

God walked with us in the garden, and even when we ruined that, he gave us his son in human form to die on the cross so we could be reconciled.

And if that weren't enough, he gave us his Spirit to indwell every believer.

God didn't just say he would be with us, he fulfilled his promise.

And that promise fulfilled is what we are celebrating every year at Christmas.

God became man in the person of Jesus and dwelt among us.

A promise to never leave us alone became fulfillment in Immanuel, God with us.

Every Christmas, people leave their homes and travel to be with relatives, friends, to have a meal, unwrap presents, worship together, celebrate Jesus.

It always worked out for Monique and I that my family did everything on Christmas Eve and her family did everything on Christmas day.

When we got to each respective house, the entire place was prepared and ready.

Presents were wrapped and under the tree, the smells of Christmas food cooking were in the air. The space was ready to receive.

Just a quick question:

- If we wanted to have Christmas at your house this evening, are you ready to receive us?
- If Jesus wanted to stop by in your heart this afternoon, would you be ready for him as well?

Have you ever wondered why Jesus came to earth when he did?

Of all the centuries, God chose 33 years in what seems a random spot in history.

The Bible tells us in [Galatians 4:4](#)

**When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his son.**

I promise you, it was not random. As always, God had a plan.

The time in which Jesus was born found itself in a unique political situation.

- The **Roman Empire** spanned the majority of the known world, and Pax Romana meant it was relatively safe to travel across massive territories, and that travel happened on Roman roads that were the best the world had ever seen.
- Unified government and commerce meant that people were connected like they never had been before.
- On top of that, because of the conquests of Alexander the Great, the majority of the known world spoke Greek, which meant the message of the Gospel could be understood almost everywhere.

It meant that as the New Testament was being written in Greek, vast numbers of people, more than the world had ever seen before, were able to understand it.

No other era in history other than pre-Tower of Babel history had there been such linguistic unity across the Earth.

Yet there were also spiritual reasons.

There were many prophecies that were fueling a spiritual hunger for God to move, almost as if the world was ready for a savior.

Multiple Jewish prophetic timelines were converging as well such as

Daniel 9, Micah 2, Isaiah 7, even Genesis 49.

Daniel predicted the Messiah would arrive before the destruction of the second temple, which is precisely what happened in AD 70 under Titus.

The reason Jesus came to earth when he did is simple: **humanity was ready to receive him.**

***What about you? Are you ready to receive him?***

And I know most of you might think I mean salvation when I say that, but it is exponentially more than just salvation alone.

On a daily basis, **are you living your life in such a way where Jesus could make a home in what you've prepared for him?**

Have you set the atmosphere in your life that is inviting to Jesus? To the Holy Spirit?

If you go back and reread and Matthew 1, and also in Luke 1 where God speaks to both Mary and Joseph, you might find something interesting. I did. **Luke 1:28**

**And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!"**

Blessed is εὐλογέω - from "good" and "word." Eulogy.

Highly favored is χαριτώ - highly favored from being receptive to God's grace

So who is Mary?

Someone a good word is spoken about, who is favored as a result of their engagement with God's grace.

**Matthew 1:19**

**Joseph, to whom she was engaged, was a righteous man**

Righteous is δίκαιος and means "approved by God."

So who is Joseph?

Someone who God declares approved because of his fervent desire to do God's will.

So with Mary and Joseph, we don't just have two random people that got selected out of the sea of humanity or just because they were descendants of David.

You had two people whose hearts were turned to the Lord, who genuinely desired to do God's will.

Two people who walked with God to the best of their ability and longed to honor him with everything they did.

They were people of high character who genuinely loved God.

God didn't choose a random couple.

He chose two people whose lives we're ready to receive Jesus.

So again, let me ask: Are you creating an atmosphere in your life that is ready to receive Jesus and what he has for you?

"Well preacher, I'm not Joseph, and my wife ain't no Mary either."

I understand, but as we lean into Christmas, I wanna share with you a few ways we can create an atmosphere for God to dwell with us.

He won't come uninvited. Remember Revelation 3:20

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock

Here are 3 ways we can set the atmosphere in our lives for Immanuel.

We set the atmosphere through:

## **1. Relationship**

Any relationship starts by getting to know someone.

So just for a little bit of fun and more importantly, a litmus test:

How would you describe your relationship with Jesus?

- Are you in a committed covenant relationship with him? AKA marriage?
- Would you consider yourself in a committed relationship, but without covenant, meaning you're not all in through thick and thin?
- Are you dating? You're in, but available for a bigger better deal?

- Are you just friends? Neither all in or all out?
- Do you know of him but haven't taken the time to get to know him?
- Do you know him and want nothing to do him?
- Or are you a perfect stranger?

Most people don't invite strangers in.

All of those options are indicators of your intent when it comes to a relationship with Jesus, but what is his intent?

**John 3:16-17**

16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. 17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

When it comes to a relationship with Jesus, what he's done on his end is to go from heaven to earth, live a sinless life, die on cross for your sins, in your place, be raised again, so that you could experience his life, invited you in to his family through believing in him as Lord, and having the constant power and presence of God Almighty dwelling in you through the Holy Spirit on a daily basis.

***What are you doing on your end?***

Imagine someone could see the totality of your relationship with Jesus.

Would they think you are creating an atmosphere for God's presence through your relationship with Jesus by your words and actions?

If the answer to that is anything but yes, you are creating that atmosphere through your relationship with him, then what do you need to do to fix it?

I know I sound like a clanging symbol, but this is done through reading, praying, and engagement with the church body.

When it comes to praying, stop over complicating it.

Praying is simple. You just talk to God like you're talking to a friend.

There is no formula. There is no right and wrong way to do it.

You don't have to hold back. Just communicate with God.

When it comes to reading, you don't need somebody to teach you how to do it.

Just read it. Start in Matthew 1 and read a chapter a day.

Get a translation you can understand, like the New Living Translation.

I even got one of these Bibles specifically for people with ADHD. It helps.

When it comes to engaging with the church body, just do it.

Don't just show up 5 minutes after worship starts and leave during the altar call.

Stay. Hang out. Go to lunch with somebody.

Join a serve team. Get in the men's or women's chat and engage.

You know how to start up a relationship with a friend or a love interest.

It's the same with Jesus. You spend time with them. It's that simple.

"Preacher, you're just talking. I need a Bible verse."

James 4:8

Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.

Listen, I'm not trying to be mean.

I'm just saying that the reason you don't have the relationship you want with Jesus isn't because of Jesus. It's you. "It's not me, it's you!"

So let's create an atmosphere for God's presence by engaging in relationship with him.

We set the atmosphere through relationship, and through:

## 2. Repetition

The more you do x, y, or z, the more comfortable you get.

This Christmas, one of you out there is going to get your kids a hoverboard.

You are going to convince yourself that you are an expert and give it a try.

**TikTok video.** Public service announcement: Don't.

But the more you do it, the better you get. Like this: **TikTok**

***Why do we expect the second video results with the first video experience?***

We do this in our faith as well! ***You only reach pro level through repetition.***

Look at a **Luke 22:39**

**Then, accompanied by the disciples, Jesus left the upstairs room and went as usual to the Mount of Olives.**

As usual. That means often repeated. That's repetitive.

SONGS: "If you're happy and you know..." "The stars at night, are big and bright..."  
Repetition.

You know how prayer gets easier? Repetition.

You know how reading the Bible gets easier? Repetition

Do you know how your relationship with Jesus gets better? Repetition.

These things constantly repeated help you get to a place where when God comes to you and says, "Mary, you've conceived by the Holy Spirit and will give birth my Son," or, "Joseph, don't be afraid to marry her, she's supernaturally conceived the Messiah," you can submit to God's will, no matter how insane it sounds.

***Do you want to create an atmosphere for God's presence? Relationship, then repeat.***

We set the atmosphere through relationship, repetition, and lastly, through:

## 3. Revelation

This one might sound a little strange to you, but let me explain.

The closer you get to Jesus, the more revelation you get not just of his will, but of who he is, who you are, and what his plan is for you.

You know what else?

You get a better understanding of what those things are in you that need to be adjusted so you can make room for him.

Luke 10:38-42

38 As Jesus and the disciples continued on their way to Jerusalem, they came to a certain village where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. 39 Her sister, Mary, sat at the Lord's feet, listening to what he taught. 40 But Martha was distracted by the big dinner she was preparing. She came to Jesus and said, "Lord, doesn't it seem unfair to you that my sister just sits here while I do all the work? Tell her to come and help me." 41 But the Lord said to her, "My dear Martha, you are worried and upset over all these details! 42 There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it, and it will not be taken away from her."

Both of them wholeheartedly believed in Jesus as the Messiah, and that is why this account in the Gospels is so relevant here.

I know you've said yes to Jesus, and that's great, but the way we continually prepare a place in our hearts for Jesus is by understanding what's the most important thing in that moment.

For Mary, creating the environment in her heart was more important than creating an environment in her home.

That doesn't mean the home isn't important, but Jesus ministered from boats, shorelines, mountains, steps, anywhere, but what was most important was the space Mary was preparing in her heart for what Jesus wanted to do.

Think back to the story of the birth of Jesus.

Joseph was a righteous man, meaning he followed the law, he had a relationship with God.

But rather than publicly shame her and even punish her like the law said, he chose to protect her by quietly calling off the engagement.

Was Martha wrong for preparing a physical place and Joseph wrong for not following the law in how to deal with Mary?

No, but there were more important spaces that needed to be prepared, like Martha's heart and a godly home with a committed mom and dad for Jesus.

The stronger your relationship with Jesus gets and the more you repeat the things that build that relationship, the more revelation you're going to get.

And that revelation is going to bring attention to things in your heart that are keeping you from creating an atmosphere for God's presence.

So look at your life right now.

**What are those things that are keeping you from creating that atmosphere that's ready for Jesus to come and his will be done?**

WRAP

Do you know why Jesus was born in a manger?

There are some super technical reasons that have to do with the sacrificial lamb, but will save that for another day.

The simple reason is because there was no room in the inn.

Little did the innkeeper know that the savior of the entire world could have been born on his property.

Instead, there was no space for Jesus.

What about you?

Is there space for Jesus in your life? And if not, let me simply encourage you with the same words Jesus spoke to Martha:

There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it.”

It's Jesus. How do you need to respond today?

Let's pray.