

Rejoice! God Is With Us

Message 02 in the series "The Weary World Rejoices"

1. The Christmas story tells us how God became one of us and lived with us.

"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. 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. 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. And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.' All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord's message through his prophet: '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."' When Joseph woke up, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded and took Mary as his wife." Matthew 1:18-24 (NLT) (See also Isaiah 7:14)

"So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son." John 1:14 (NLT)

Rejoice! Because Jesus came at Christmas, we know God wants to be with us!

"Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure." Ephesians 1:4-5 (NLT)

Rejoice! Because Jesus came at Christmas, we know God understands us.

"This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most." Hebrews 4:15-16 (NLT)

Rejoice! Because Jesus came at Christmas, we can understand God!

"Throughout our history God has spoken to our ancestors by his prophets in many different ways. The revelation he gave them was only a fragment at a time, *building one truth upon another*. But to us living in these last days, God now speaks to us openly in the language of a Son, the appointed Heir of everything, for through him God created the panorama of all things and all time. The Son is the dazzling radiance of God's splendor, the exact expression of God's true nature—his mirror image!" Hebrews 1:1-3a (TPT)

"Philip said, 'Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.' Jesus replied, 'Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and yet you still don't know who I am? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father!'"
John 14:8-9a (NLT)

Rejoice! Because Jesus came at Christmas, we can have a personal relationship with God.

"God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners... So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God." Romans 5:8,11(NLT)

2. Through a personal relationship with Jesus, God will always be with us, not just at Christmas.

"Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Matthew 28:19-20 (NLT)

"I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you. He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive him, because it isn't looking for him and doesn't recognize him. But you know him, because he lives with you now and later will be in you." John 14:16-17 (NLT)

Rejoice! Because God is always with us, we don't need to be afraid of anything!

"God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline."

2 Timothy 1:7 (NLT)

"...the Spirit who lives in you is greater than the spirit who lives in the world." 1 John 4:4b (NLT)

Rejoice! Because God is always with us, we can always count on Him to guide us.

“No, I will not abandon you as orphans... When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth.” John 14:18a, 16:13a (NLT)

“If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you.” James 1:5a (NLT)

Rejoice! Because God is always with us, we have the power to live life abundantly regardless of our circumstances.

“God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.” Philippians 2:13 (NLT)

“I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid.” John 14:27 (NLT)

3. **We must each decide whether or not we want to be with Jesus.**

“He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him. He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God.” John 1:10-13 (NLT)

Rejoice! We can surrender our lives to Jesus today.

“God says, ‘At just the right time, I heard you. On the day of salvation, I helped you.’ Indeed, the ‘right time’ is now. Today is the day of salvation.” 2 Corinthians 6:2 (NLT)

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Connect Group Questions

1. Have you experienced God's presence lately? If so, when? Where?
2. Read Matthew 1:18-25. What do you think Joseph and Mary understood about Jesus being “Immanuel”?
3. Discuss the following ways our lives were impacted because Jesus came into the world as a baby and grew up in a sinful fallen world just like the rest of us. (John 1:14)
 - We know God wants to be with us! (Ephesians 1:3-5)
 - We know God understands us. (Hebrews 4:15-16)
 - We can understand God! (Colossians 2:9, Hebrews 1:1-3)
 - We can have a personal relationship with God. (Romans 5:8-11)

Which of these statements impacts you most? Why?

4. Discuss the following reasons why it matters that God is ALWAYS with us through the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28:20, John 14:16-17)
 - Because God is always with us, we don't need to be afraid of anything! (2 Timothy 1:7, 1 John 4:4)
 - Because God is always with us, we can always count on Him to guide us. (John 14:18, 16:12; James 1:5)
 - Because God is always with us, we have the power to live life abundantly regardless of our circumstances. (Philippians 2:12, John 14:27)

Which of these reasons brings comfort to you at the close of 2020?

5. Read John 1:11-13 & Matthew 7:13-14. Why doesn't everyone want a relationship with Jesus?
6. Spend some time as a group praying:
 - For protection from Covid-19 this Christmas and that vaccines will be effective and distributed rapidly and efficiently
 - For healing of those who have Covid-19
 - For comfort for those who are grieving the loss of loved ones this Christmas
 - That the Good News of Jesus would be proclaimed clearly and boldly this Christmas
 - That we would be ambassadors of hope, peace, and joy