

IMMANUEL – GOD WITH US – FEAR NOT
Luke 2:1-20
for December 24, 2020 / Christmas Eve 2020 B

Over this past month I have witnessed, been hit with, amazed at, and pondered on, how the angels announcement tonight: **“Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.”** is truly seen in the concrete.

Last week, we would have had our traditional Christmas Children’s Program. Which is great, and highly enjoyed by the congregation. COVID had hindered that, this year... and yet, COVID couldn’t stop the message. Sunday school families were invited to video participate in tonight’s Christmas Eve service. So many stepped up joyfully to present their portion of Scripture. And from what I hear, these families had an awesome time, they had fun finding ways, and dressing up, and being in fitting spaces, to share the story of Jesus’ birth. You just saw the fruits of their labours. It was great, and the Lord was working through those words of: **“good news of great joy that will be for all the people”** Hearers and proclaimers were touched, and are rejoicing, yet again, because they know that we need: **“Fear Not!”** for Christ the Saviour was born.

Over the weeks, I’ve spent time with someone whose life is drawing to a close... and yet they are unafraid. They’re ready, when the Lord is ready. They’re ready because they know what lies ahead. Throughout their life, Christmas time, and the message of Mary’s Son, the Son of God who was born in Bethlehem has been heard again and again. They know that Jesus’ birth was to unfold the Good News: **“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”** And so for this person, they hold that Jesus was born... FOR THEM, so they need not fear.

Over these weeks, besides the ill person living their faith in trust, I have watched friends,

family, and neighbours rally around this same ill person, for as long as they can... while they can... to encourage and uplift them, and their spouse. For so many, I know that it's their Christian faith in action, inspired by the Holy Spirit, driven by a love that we have seen for ourselves this very night, the love of the Father for us, that drives a desire to help, strengthen, encourage, pray for, bring joy, hope, and peace, to a broken world, and broken lives. It's this love of God that inspires, and causes all believers to encourage... FEAR NOT! Because we know that we are loved, and are being seen through all things.

This year, COVID may have hindered our family and friends from gathering and celebrating the holidays as we usually do in our homes. But that desire to gather, connect, and unite is driving us to find ways to stay close. Cards, letters, phone calls, face-time, zoom, these are just some of the ways we're touching base and sharing joy together.

As for our church family and hearing the Christmas Account once again. While we may not be celebrating this Holy Night in-person because of COVID, thanks to facebook we are still celebrating as a family of God. The celebration continues, because Jesus still came 2000 years ago, and He continues to come, even now, in our midst, in our lives, touching us with a peace, and a release, that we so desperately need to FEAR NOT!

Isaiah the prophet wrote: **“Behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call His name Immanuel (which means, God with us.)”**

“God with us...” how wondrous a phrase we need in these days, and every day. Tonight, Immanuel, **“God with us...”**, in the midst of life is personally inviting each one of you to leave the stresses of the day here, leave the tensions built up here, leave the confusion of all you see and hear, here, and leave your guilt over sins in thought, word, and deed, those times when we've fallen short of what God desires with Him, and with one another. We're invited to confess them, and then leave

them here at the foot of the cross as we behold the Christ child in the manger.

Because you see, Immanuel, Jesus, was born of Mary to bring rescue, release, restoration, and a new life so you would know: **“a peace that passes all understanding.”** A peace that is for you because: **“God is with us.”**

The angel’s proclamation: **“For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.”** it tells us that now we don’t have to carry life’s burdens alone, because in fact, we can’t... not alone. Alone, they just crush us with; guilt, despair, confusion, and surrender. But, **Immanuel – “God is with us.”** is the great Good News of this night, and our lives.

Jesus was born in Bethlehem to bear our sorrows and iniquities, for us, and replace them with release, hope, joy and peace. Jesus came in flesh, to live for us, walking our life in this broken world, knowing our joys, and our struggles, knowing our fears and our sorrows. There is not one thing that has, or is, or will happen, in your life that our Lord isn’t fully aware of, understanding of, and supplying what you need, as you need it, enough for the day, renewing again daily. The Bible is clear: **“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.”**

And you see, knowing us so intimately, God is now bringing what you need; forgiveness, and healing – one way or the other, and the strength to bear through the difficulties. He is filling your emptiness with His love and presence and those He places in your life to ease the heartache of feeling alone. This happens because, Immanuel has come, **“God is with us.”**

Tonight, the stage has been set for your life and your eternal life. From birth to the cross, all unfolded as needed to secure our salvation. From Jesus’ perfect life to His innocent sacrifice in death on a cross at Calvary, God’s plan was fulfilled in **“Immanuel – God with us,”** To rescue and save us. Sins have been paid for and covered in the blood of Christ, death has been defeated of it’s

sting. And Jesus' victorious resurrection means that victory is held out for all who would repent and believe, so that resurrected victory in heaven eternally would be ours.

Because of the Babe of Bethlehem, Jesus... Immanuel... God with us, the result is: FEAR NOT! Whatever may come. **“FEAR NOT!... Immanuel... God is with us!”**

Tonight, what you have heard is a life giving, life affirming, life changing time for YOU. Whatever you're going through, whatever life has thrown at you, **“Immanuel, God with us”** ... is with you, surrounding you with an unending, unconditional love, a love that promises to never leave you or forsake you. That's what Immanuel means for you tonight and all year long.

Let the angels' announcement be to you, in your ears and on your heart tonight: **“For unto YOU is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”** Immanuel, has come to YOU... for YOU.

In the days ahead, live as the shepherds did: **“And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child... And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.”** Tell the world “Immanuel – God with us” has come.

AMEN