



GOD *up close* and *personal*

01 God WITH us

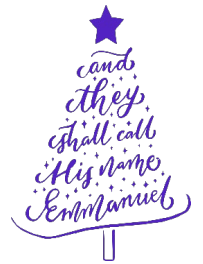
The following document is a rough copy of Pastor Drost's sermon notes

from December 9th, 2018

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✚ Our stage image says... **“And they shall call His name Emmanuel”**

These are the words of one of the greatest Old Testament prophets, the prophet Isaiah. He started to prophesy around 750 years BC (before Christ) during the reign of Ussiah king of Judah.



750 years before Jesus is born! This prophet says these words:

“The Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel.” Isaiah 7:14

“...the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel.”

Fast forward about 750 years to a place called **Nazareth** and we find this humble carpenter called **Joseph** who is betrothed to a virgin called Mary. But he finds out that she is pregnant. He knows he's not the father because they had not had sexual relations yet (they were just engaged to be married) so he concludes that she has been unfaithful with another man. He decides to quietly call the marriage off when an angel appears to him in a dream and tells him, **“Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.”**

And then Matthew, who is telling us the story in the Bible says:

This is to fulfilled what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name **Emmanuel**,” which is translated, “God with us.”” Matthew 1:23

This Hebrew word used by Isaiah means: **“God with us”** Jesus is God coming to us, up close and personal! EMMANUEL = GOD WITH US (God seeking us!)

Jesus is God's love chasing us with this eternal desire to have a close and personal relationship with us. So great was His love that He came to us taking on human form and walking with us, eating with us (our food!), getting hungry and thirsty like we do, walking our dusty streets, getting hot and tired, working with human tools, feeling human emotion, anger, pain, disappointment, the rejection of family and friends, falsely being accused, laughed at, abused, facing death...

EMMANUEL! God with us! GOD!!

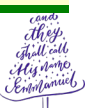
✚ Again, Isaiah writes... a few verses beyond our opening statement (**“And they shall call His name Emmanuel”**) he says...

“Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end.” Isaiah 9:6–7a (NKJV)

This **child** (this EMMANUEL) that is **born INTO OUR WORLD** is the “Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty (powerful) God”!!! That is absolutely fascinating!

✚ The Bible starts out like this...

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” Genesis 1:1



When we consider the vastness of the universe it boggles our minds!

Dr. Peter Edwards explains the size of the universe and says that using the Hubble telescope we can calculate that “the visible universe contains around 100 billion galaxies. Each one of those galaxies contains about 100 billion stars. That means the visible universe contains something like 10,000 million million million stars. That means there are more stars in the visible universe than there are grains of sand on the earth.

God created it all! Then it goes on to say...

“And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.” Genesis 1:3

God speaks it all into existence! John tells us that that “word” that speaks it all into existence is (none other than Jesus)...

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.

He is “with” God and He “is” God!

All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.” John 1:1–3 (NKJV)

Then John says...

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” John 1:14a

Wow! The God that made all things, the God that spoke into existence the billions of stars and galaxies, the God that said “let there be light”, and there was light, the God that formed humans becomes human and walks the very earth He created; He takes on flesh and comes to us! **Emmanuel, God with us!**

The question is “why?” ... why did he come to us? Jesus told us why!

“He came to seek and to save that which was lost.” Luke 19:10

Lost! Lost! ...He came to find us! To seek us! And save us!

✚ The human story starts in Genesis (The first three chapters of the Bible) with Adam and Eve.

- In chapter one, God forms them in His image and breathes into them the breath of life and they become a living soul.
- God places them in a beautiful garden called Eden. He offers them the tree of life but warns them not to eat of the tree of Good and Evil.
- Then in chapter 3, Satan comes in the form of a serpent to tempt Eve and talks to her **enticing** her to eat of the tree of Good and Evil.

So the woman took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband and he ate. Then their eyes were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. Then they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, “Where are you?” Genesis 3:6–9



- There are these theology debates over whether the story of the garden of Eden is a literal story or an allegory. Did the serpent literally talk to her? Was the forbidden fruit a real fruit (an apple) or a metaphor for sin and disobedience?

We will let the theologians debate these questions but, for this morning I will treat it as **the story of all humanity**.

- This is my story, it's your story, it's our story, it's the human story.

**It's story of God desiring to have a relationship with us, to talk to us, walk with us, spend time with us...
But we mistrust Him and rebel against Him.**

We walk away from Him! And we get lost!

- I often get asked, "Why does God allow evil in the world?" A better question is this, "Why do I allow evil in me?" You see, the evil is not just in the world, evil is inside of me, inside of you, inside each of us! **We have all eaten of the tree!** Not only do I live in an evil world, a sinful society—I am sinful.

I'm not just a passive victim of a sinful world system; I am a perpetrator of sin.

We all are. That's why we all need a Saviour.

- **Then shame comes in!** "they knew that they were naked"

Shame is emotional and spiritual nakedness!

It's that sense deep inside that something is not right in us.

"So they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves."

We try and cover our shame! With walls of fear and walls of hostility. We try and cover what is wrong with us in many ways.

John Powell wrote a book called Why Am I Afraid to Tell You Who I Am? In it, he writes about how we are afraid to tell people who we are because if they saw "the real me," they might reject us. We would be exposing what is defective, broken, dirty, disgusting, or inadequate.

So we put on fig leaves and hide our shame.

I have fig leaves. You have fig leaves.

- Some cover their "nakedness" (their shame) with status, awards, degrees, intellectualism, clothing, style, materialism, work, addictions.
- A husband hides the coldness of his heart from his wife behind his newspaper, his TV program, his job, his pursuit of more success.
- Blaming others is a huge fig leaf. If you can blame your spouse, your church, your boss, the government, your sickness, then you don't have to own your own nakedness. That's exactly what Adam and Eve did in Genesis 3: **Adam blamed Eve, Eve blamed the devil.**
- Religion can become nothing more than a big fig leaf. A way to cover your secret shame.
To look like you're not naked.
- "Fig leaves" come in many different shapes, but they all have one thing in common:
They are self-made attempts to cover our inner shame and nakedness. Ways to hide!



- **But God loves us, He wants us, and He comes to find us. He chases after us! God misses us! He desires us! He notices our absence and He wants us back?**

He's asking the question, "**Where are you?**"

ILLUSTRATION: I'm not sure if you're like me but I have my favourite socks.

What is it about socks, often one gets lost... So I look for MY missing sock (My favourite sock):

Did it fall behind the hamper? Did Cookie (my dog) steal it?

Maybe it got left in the drier! Then, in desperation, I get on my hands and knees and look under the bed...

Jesus is the love of God getting down on His hands and knees, stooping down on planet earth to find us...

EMMANUEL (God WITH us) Seeking us, chasing us!

"Where are you?"

He's still asking that question today.

Illustration: Doing my Bible reading but not present...

- Sometimes we are in church but far from Him...
And He whispers, "Where are you?"
- Sometimes days go by and our thoughts are far from Him...
And He whispers, "**Where are you?**"

God misses us? He notices our absence, and He desires to have us back?

He wants to be EMMANUEL to us, God WITH us!

God, up close and personal!

