



Advent
• ACCORDING TO •
Matthew



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01 O Come All Ye Faithful/We Adore You

*Paul Baloche @2013 Integrity Worship Music | CCLI # 7002117
Music & Lyrics by: John Francis Wade*

Verse 1:

O come all ye faithful
Joyful and triumphant
O come ye o come ye
To Bethlehem
Come and behold Him
Born the King of angels

Refrain:

O come let us adore Him
O come let us adore Him
O come let us adore Him
Christ the Lord

Verse 2:

Sing choirs of angels
Sing in exultation
Sing all ye citizens
Of Heaven above
Glory to God
Glory in the highest

Bridge:

We adore You
We adore You
We adore You, Jesus

02 Joy to the World/ Shout for Joy

Paul Baloche @2013 Integrity Worship Music | CCLI # 7002102

Text by: Isaac Watts | Music by: George Frederick Handel (1986)

Verse 1:

Joy to the world, the Lord is come
Let earth receive her King
Let every heart prepare Him room
And Heaven and nature sing
And Heaven and nature sing
And Heaven and nature sing

Chorus:

Shout for joy for the son of God
is the Saving One
He's the Saving One
Shout for joy, see what love has done
He has come for us
He's the Saving one

Verse 2:

Joy to the world, the Savior reigns
Let men their songs employ
While fields and floods
Rocks, hills and plains
Repeat the sounding joy
Repeat the sounding joy
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy

Bridge:

Jesus
Emmanuel
Oh come let us adore Him

03 O Come Let Us Adore Him

Shane & Shane

Refrain:

Oh, come let us adore Him
Oh, come let us adore Him
Oh, come let us adore Him
Christ the Lord

Refrain 2:

For He alone is worthy
For He alone is worthy
For He alone is worthy
Christ the Lord

Refrain 3:

We'll give You all the glory
We'll give You all the glory
We'll give You all the glory
Christ the Lord

04 Born of God

Justin Jarvis of Jesus Culture

Verse 1:

Covered in flesh and blood You came to us
Nothing of consequence to see
Inside of time and space You laid Your life
Down on a cross to rescue me

Chorus 1:

Jesus born of God
In the flesh
I will not forget
You live, and You died
What a love
What a sacrifice

Verse 2:

Silent You offered up Your body there
Numbered with murderers and thieves
Bearing the weight of what I never could
You stood in my place and set me free

Bridge:

Oh the sacrifice
Oh the peace
You stood in my place and set me free

Chorus 2:

Emmanuel
Emmanuel
Emmanuel
God with us

05 Jesus Son Of God

Chris Tomlin, Jason Ingram, Matt Maher | CCLI Song # 6223539

Verse 1

You came down from Heaven's throne
This earth You formed was not Your home
A love like this the world had never known
A crown of thorns to mock Your name
Forgiveness fell upon Your face
A love like this the world had never known

Chorus 1

On the altar of our praise
Let there be no higher name
Jesus Son of God
You laid down Your perfect life
You are the sacrifice
Jesus Son of God
You are Jesus Son of God

Verse 2

You took our sin You bore our shame
You rose to life You defeated the grave
And a love like this the world has never known
'Cause You took our sin You bore our shame
You rose to life You defeated the grave
A love like this the world has never known

Bridge:

Be lifted higher than all You've overcome
Your name be louder than any other song
There is no power that can come against Your love
The cross was enough
The cross was enough
(The cross was enough)
(The cross was enough)

06 O Holy Night

Adolphe Charles Adam, John Sullivan Dwight, Placide Cappeau @Public Domain / CCLI # 32015

Text by: John S. Dwight | Music by: Adolphe Adam

Verse 1

O holy night, the stars are brightly shining
It is the night of our dear Savior's birth
Long lay the world in sin and error pining
'Til He appeared and the soul felt its worth
A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn'
Fall on your knees, O hear the angels' voices

Chorus

O night divine, O night when Christ was born
O night divine, O night divine

Verse 2

Truly He taught us to love one another
His law is love and His gospel is peace
Chains shall He break for the slave is our brother
And in His name all oppression shall cease
Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we,
Let all within us praise His holy name
Fall on your knees, O hear the angels' voices

07 Come Thou Fount Come Thou King

John Wyeth | Robert Robinson | Thomas Miller | CCLI Song # 4775010

Verse 1

Come Thou Fount of ev'ry blessing, Tune my heart to sing Thy grace
Streams of mercy never ceasing, Call for songs of loudest praise
Teach me some melodious sonnet, Sung by flaming tongues above
Praise the mount I'm fixed upon it, Mount of Thy redeeming love

Verse 2

I was lost in utter darkness, 'Til You came and rescued me
I was bound by all my sin when, Your love came and set me free
Now my soul can sing a new song, Now my heart has found a home
Now Your grace is always with me, And I'll never be alone

Chorus 1

Come Thou Fount come Thou King
Come Thou precious Prince of Peace
Hear Your bride to You we sing
Come Thou Fount of our blessing
Come Thou Fount come Thou King
Come Thou precious Prince of Peace
Hear Your bride to You we sing
Come Thou Fount of our blessing

Verse 3

O to grace how great a debtor, Daily I'm constrained to be
Let Thy goodness like a fetter, Bind my wand'ring heart to Thee
Prone to wander Lord I feel it, Prone to leave the God I love
Here's my heart Lord take and seal it, Seal it for Thy courts above

08 The First Noel

Phil Wickham/David Crowder

Verse 1:

The first Noel, the angels did say
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay
In fields where they lay keeping their sheep
On a cold winter's night that was so deep.

Chorus:

Noel, Noel
Noel, Noel
Born is the King of Israel

Verse 2:

They looked up and saw a star
Shining in the east beyond them far
And to the earth it gave great light
And so it continued both day and night.

Verse 3:

And by the light of that same star
Three wise men came from the country far
To seek for a King was their intent,
And to follow the star wherever it went

Verse 4:

Then let us all with one accord
Sing praises to our heavenly Lord,
That hath made heaven and earth of naught
And with his blood mankind has bought

09 Silent Night

Text by: Joseph Mohr | Music by: Franz Grüber

Verse 1:

Silent night, Holy night
All is calm, all is bright
Round yon virgin, mother and child
Holy infant, tender and mild
Sleep in heavenly peace,
Sleep in heavenly peace.

Verse 2:

Silent night, Holy night
Shepherds quake, at the sight
Glories stream from heaven above
Heavenly hosts sing Hallelujah!
Christ the Savior is born
Christ the Savior is born

Verse 3:

Silent night, Holy night
Son of God, love's pure light
Radiant beams from thy holy face
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus Lord at thy birth,
Jesus Lord at thy birth.

10 Hark the Herald Angels Sing/King of Heaven

Paul Baloche

Verse 1:

Hark the herald angels sing glory to the Newborn King
Peace on earth and mercy mild God and sinners reconciled
Joyful all ye nations rise Join the triumph of the skies
With the angelic host proclaim Christ is born in Bethlehem
Hark the herald angels sing glory to the Newborn King

Verse 2:

Hail the heaven born Prince of Peace hail the Sun of Righteousness
Light and life to all He brings risen with healing in His Wings
Mild He lays His Glory by born that man no more may die
Born to raise the sons of earth born to give them second birth
Hark the herald angels sing glory to the Newborn King

Chorus:

King of heaven come down
King of heaven come down
Let Your glory reign
Shining like the day
King of Heaven come
King of Heaven rise up
Who can stand against us?
You are strong to save
In Your mighty name
King of Heaven come

Verse 3:

Christ by highest heaven adored Christ the Everlasting Lord
Late in time behold Him come Offspring of a virgin's womb
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see hail the Incarnate Deity
Pleased as man with men to dwell Jesus our Emmanuel
Hark the herald angels sing glory to the Newborn King

11 Glory in the Highest

Chris Tomlin

Verse 1

You are the first, You go before
You are the last, Lord You're the encore
Your name's in lights for all to see, The starry host declare Your glory

Chorus 1

Glory in the highest
Glory in the highest
Glory in the highest

Verse 2

Apart from You, There is no God
Light of the world, The bright and morning star
Your name will shine for all to see, You are the one
You are my glory

Bridge

And no one else
Could ever compare to You Lord
All the earth together declares

Chorus 2

Glory in the highest
Glory in the highest
Glory in the highest to You Lord
To You Lord

Bridge 2

All the earth will sing Your praise
The moon and stars the sun and rain
Ev'ry nation will proclaim
That You are God and You will reign
Glory glory hallelujah
Glory glory to You Lord
Glory glory hallelujah, Hallelujah

12 You Alone Can Rescue

Jonas Myrin, Matt Redman | CCLI Song # 5376377

Verse 1

Who O Lord could save themselves
Their own soul could heal
Our shame was deeper than the sea
Your grace is deeper still

Chorus 1

And You alone can rescue
You alone can save
You alone can lift us from the grave
You came down to find us led us out of death
To You alone belongs the highest praise

Verse 2

You O Lord have made a way
The great divide You healed
For when our hearts were far away
Your love went further still
Yes Your love goes further still

Chorus 2

And You alone can rescue
You alone can save
You alone can lift us from the grave
You came down to find us led us out of death
To You alone belongs the highest praise
To You alone belongs the highest praise

Bridge

We lift up our eyes
Lift up our eyes
You're the giver of life
We lift up our eyes
Lift up our eyes
You're the giver of life

13 How Deep The Father's Love For Us

Stuart Townend | CCLI Song # 1558110

Verse 1

How deep the Father's love for us
How vast beyond all measure
That He should give His only Son
To make a wretch His treasure
How great the pain of searing loss
The Father turns His face away
As wounds which mar the Chosen One
Bring many sons to glory

Verse 2

Behold the Man upon a cross
My sin upon His shoulders
Ashamed I hear my mocking voice
Call out among the scoffers
It was my sin that held Him there
Until it was accomplished
His dying breath has brought me life
I know that it is finished

Verse 3

I will not boast in anything
No gifts no pow'r no wisdom
But I will boast in Jesus Christ
His death and resurrection
Why should I gain from His reward
I cannot give an answer
But this I know with all my heart
His wounds have paid my ransom

14 Gloria

Paul Baloche, Michael Rossback, Phil Wickham | CCLI # 7045165

Verse 1:

Unto us, a child is born
Unto us a son is given
Wonderful counselor
Mighty God, a prince of peace

Chorus:

Gloria! Gloria!
Glory in the highest
Gloria! Gloria!
Glory in the highest Jesus
Glory in the highest Jesus
Gloria!

Verse 2

Son of God, come to save
Born into a lowly manger
So lift him high
Praise his name
The hope of all the world, our Savior

Bridge:

Holy night Oh holy night
Son of God
Loves pure light
Glory stream from heaven far
Heavens hosts sing Hallelujah!
Hallelujah!

15 God With Us

Jason Ingram, Leslie Jordan | CCLI Song # 6460237

Verse 1

Oh You've come to bring peace to be Love
To be nearer to us
You've come to bring life to be Light
To shine brighter in us
Oh Emmanuel God with us

Chorus 1

Our Deliverer You are Savior
In Your presence we find our strength
Over ev'rything our Redemption
God with us
You are God with us

Verse 2

Oh You've come to be Hope to this world
For Your honor and name
And You've come to take sin to bear shame
And to conquer the grave
Oh Emmanuel God with us

Bridge

You are here
You are holy
We are standing in Your glory (Lord)



WEEK 1

Sunday, November 29

READ:

[1] The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

[2] Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, [3] and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram, [4] and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, [5] and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, [6] and Jesse the father of David the king.

And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, [7] and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asaph, [8] and Asaph the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, [9] and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, [10] and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amos, and Amos the father of Josiah, [11] and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon.

[12] And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, [13] and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, [14] and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, [15] and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, [16] and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.

[17] So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations.

MATTHEW 1:1-17

REFLECT:

Think about all the people who preceded Jesus Christ being born. Reflect on the generations perfectly spaced out: fourteen before David, fourteen before the deportation (exile), and fourteen after the exile. What about God's plans and purposes do these names teach you?

Sermon Notes:

WEEK 1

Monday, November 30

READ:

[1] *In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, [2] "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."*

MATTHEW 3:1-2

REFLECT:

Both the message of John the Baptist, and the message of Jesus of Nazareth were centered on repentance. Repentance is the act of turning from one's sins and turning towards the cross of Christ. Picture a child getting caught doing something she is not supposed to be doing, and upon recognizing her guilt, turning and running into her mother's arms, weeping and asking for forgiveness. Repentance is not merely being sorry, nor is it being upset at getting caught. Rather it is a true sorrow in one's spirit over their sin, and a grace-driven effort in turning away from that sin to face their savior, running into his arms.

Write out some sins that you need to repent of, and then use that list as a starting place to pray prayers of repentance to God. Ask him to help you to fix your eyes upon Jesus, and to forsake the sin you have committed.

WEEK 1

Tuesday, December 1

READ:

[19] *And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."* [20] *Immediately they left their nets and followed him.*

MATTHEW 4:19-20

REFLECT:

Can you even imagine the scene here in Matthew 4? These fishermen were uneducated laborers. They had failed out of Hebrew school. They had taken the trade of their fathers. They were low on the social hierarchical scale of Galilee. But here comes a new, non-traditional Rabbi, and he offers them the opportunity of a lifetime. Where once they were relegated to manual labor, they now had the chance to follow a Rabbi. This was a significant calling. With the words, "follow me," Jesus radically changed these men.

Have you had a similar experience as the one that these men had? It may not have been a face-to-face call from Jesus to "follow", but have you heard a call? The first disciples laid down their nets, their careers, and left everything to follow him. What did you have to leave behind to follow Jesus? Are there things that you still need to leave so that you can follow him all the more? Write some reflections to these questions.

WEEK 1

Wednesday, December 2

READ:

[2] And behold, a leper came to him and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean." [3] And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I will; be clean." And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

MATTHEW 8:2-3

REFLECT:

The words of the leper seem to be both a question and a confession. We see a man who is on the very fringes of society, untouchable in his own city. And we can hear a hint of question, "Lord, if you will..." Will this Jesus actually heal him? But there is also great faith in the confession, "you can make me clean." If the Lord wills it he can make this man clean. He can radically alter his life, forever changed for the better.

What kind of things do you both question and confess? Think about your favorite worship song. Maybe there are truths that you sing that you really wish were fully true in your heart. "I surrender all..." do you? We must live in this tension of belief and doubt, confession and questioning. Write down some thoughts about this.

WEEK 1

Thursday, December 3

READ:

[11] And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" [12] But when he heard it, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. [13] Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

MATTHEW 9:11-13

REFLECT:

Religious ritual is at the heart of the disagreement Jesus gets into with the Pharisees. Their religious ritual prevented them from associating with tax collectors and 'sinners,' who weren't the ruffians and vagabonds of society but simply those who did not observe the Law as rigorously as the Pharisees. When Jesus quotes Hosea 6:6 and speaks of Himself as the physician for the sick and the sinners, He says two things: 1) sinners are not just those who don't observe religious rituals, but everyone (including the self-righteous Pharisees), and 2) God does not desire religious ritual, but the hearts of people to love Him and others.

A religious ritual is not necessarily synonymous with tradition, a Catholic mass, or repetition. Religious rituals are anything done to curry favor with God through outward, external actions but not supported by the internal state of the heart. Are there religious rituals in your life? Spend some time reflecting on activities that you do or actions that you perform for God that may take on 'ritualistic' characteristics. Write out these activities and talk about why your heart does or does not support the religious desire expressed by these actions.

WEEK 1

Friday, December 4

READ:

[32] So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, [33] but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.

MATTHEW 10:32-33

REFLECT:

Jesus tells His disciples that persecution will follow them as they bear witness to Him. His exhortation in vv. 32-33 means that true disciples of Jesus—true followers, true witnesses—will not deny their witness to Jesus Christ. While persecution for the disciples and other believers around the world include torture or execution, we can face belittlement, ridicule, or feelings of intellectual inferiority. Other people look down their noses at a faith and a worldview that makes no sense to them, and, though they are rejecting Jesus, we bear the brunt of their discomfort, dissatisfaction, or outrage.

Where have you experienced persecution? What are you most afraid of when it comes to persecution? Are you afraid of being made to feel a certain way? Are you afraid that someone else will devalue you as a person because of your faith? Write down some reflections or discuss your thoughts with your family about persecution and then brainstorm ways you can approach situations of persecution differently so that you continue to faithfully bear witness to Jesus Christ.

WEEK 1

Saturday, December 5

READ:

[28] Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. [29] Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. [30] For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

MATTHEW 11:28-30

REFLECT:

Rest. It is a novel idea, right? It seems so easy...and necessary! But in our culture of activity and productivity, rest can be hard to come by. Between work, school, soccer practice, dance recitals, band concerts, baseball games, cooking, cleaning, and church, there is often no time for a moment of rest, much less a life that revolves around rest as a major practice. And yet, Jesus says He gives rest. What does that mean? It doesn't mean He literally takes something off of our plate. In fact, Jesus does not make our lives any less harried or frantic. But He does give us eternal rest, a stillness in our soul, a confidence in Him, a solid foundation on which to depend, a constant in a whirlwind of uncertainty. Spend a few moments reflecting on a time when Jesus has given you rest in the middle of a very draining season of life. Give thanks in prayer for the tangible difference that made for you. If you can't think of a time like this, write a short prayer to God asking Him to reveal specifically how His rest changes you in the midst of a busy life.



WEEK 2

Sunday, December 6

READ:

[18] Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. [19] And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. [20] But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. [21] She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." [22] All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

[23] "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall call his name Immanuel"

(which means, God with us). [24] When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, [25] but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

MATTHEW 1:18-25

REFLECT:

Jesus and Immanuel. They are two of the most profound names of the man Jesus in the New Testament. They communicate profound, life-changing, reality-altering truths about who He is and His role that He fulfills on this earth. Jesus means 'salvation' and is a shorter form of a Hebrew name meaning 'Yahweh saves.' Through Jesus all people can come to God and be in right relationship with Him. He rights wrongs. He pays for sin. He defeats evil and sin. He reconciles our broken relationship to God. And Immanuel, 'God with us,' means Jesus does not accomplish salvation far away from us. He is not distant. Instead, He gets into the thick of things and comes to earth. The Lord over the entire universe who created all things resides among humanity, amongst the muck and mire, on earth as it is rather than how it should be.

Take a few minutes to reflect on these two names; write/share some of your thoughts about what they mean and why they are significant. Then reflect on how the combination of Jesus and Immanuel together changes or adds a different perspective to your thinking about Jesus coming to earth.

Sermon Notes:

WEEK 2

Monday, December 7

READ:

[46] While he was still speaking to the people, behold, his mother and his brothers stood outside, asking to speak to him. [48] But he replied to the man who told him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" [49] And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! [50] For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."

MATTHEW 12:46-50

REFLECT:

Jesus ignores the requests of His mother and His brothers. Is it ok to be rude to your family and to disregard their wishes? No. Rather, Jesus is communicating something about the Kingdom of God and, more specifically, the family of God. The follower of Jesus now has an expanded family; all those who do the will of the Father are brothers and sisters. Families can be tricky. For some, families bring up memories that are fond, but for others, those memories can be painful. For those of us who remember families in this way, the Family of God is a place for 'family' to be redeemed, for the kind and loving actions of brothers and sisters and fathers and mothers in Christ to shift the associations of family from hurt and pain, to love and care.

In your mind, what are the best ways that a family can treat each other? How has the family of God treated you in that manner? How can you, given the way you are wired and the gifts you have from God, act as a family member towards other people in Fathom Church or in your community outside of church?

WEEK 2

Tuesday, December 8

READ:

[44] *"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.*

MATTHEW 13:44

REFLECT:

Jesus talks about the Kingdom of God and there are two pieces to this puzzle. One, there is a joyous desire for the Kingdom of God. When we see a glimpse of it, we are overwhelmed by how good it is, and how right it is. In a world where many times we see examples of how creation is NOT supposed to be (with evil, pain, and suffering), glimpses of the Kingdom reveal the world as it is intended to be, with people living in right relationship with God and reflecting His glory to the world around. Two, the Kingdom requires sacrifice. The man in the parable gives up all of His possessions in order to obtain the field of treasure. The Kingdom of God requires us to give up attachments to the world around us, and this is sometimes painful and very countercultural because we devalue things the world values above all else.

Do you see the joy of the Kingdom? Do you see a vision of life where everything else pales in comparison to the joy found as part of the family of God? Spend a few moments reflecting on your vision of the Kingdom. What does it look like? How do you live your life in ways that either conform to this vision or conform to something else? In addition, search your heart and see if you are still holding on to some of your 'possessions.'

WEEK 2

Wednesday, December 9

READ:

[28] And Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." [29] He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. [30] But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me." [31] Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

MATTHEW 14:28-31

REFLECT:

This passage is one of the more famous pictures of Peter in the New Testament. Such great faith to walk on water at the command of Jesus! But he begins to sink into the water, crying out to Jesus to save him from certain death. Peter so quickly takes his eyes off of the prize that is Jesus Christ. At first glance, we might be perplexed that this happens, but when we think about our lives, we may be more similar to Peter than we care to admit. How many times have we clearly seen Jesus at work in our own lives or in the lives of someone dear to us, yet so quickly afterwards we get distracted from our faith in Christ by some situation we find ourselves in? The immediate circumstances draw our eyes from the Lord and we begin to lose our confidence in Jesus because the wind and the waves look bigger than He.

Take a few minutes to write/share a time when you were distracted by the wind and the waves of your immediate circumstances and your confidence in God was drowned out by the immediate crisis. Then ask yourself the question, why did I focus more on the waves than on Jesus? How can you remember, in future times with wind and waves, that Christ is Lord and He is bigger than anything that comes your way?

WEEK 2

Thursday, December 10

READ:

[10] *And he called the people to him and said to them, "Hear and understand: [11] it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person."*

MATTHEW 15:10-11

REFLECT:

"But what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person." What comes out of our mouths? This is not a legalistic evaluation of the specific words that come out of our mouths: if we say a cuss word, we're defiled, but if we don't, we're in the clear. No... Rather, what is the picture of our heart that is being painted by our words? Is the underlying theme one of self-righteousness where we consistently reveal that we believe ourselves to be in better standing than those other 'sinners,' or of anger where every comment or response is tinged with an edge of bitterness or hatred?

Just as a projector takes the internal workings of a DVD and projects them externally for others to see and hear, so our mouth projects our internal workings externally for others to see. What do others see projected from your mouth? Does it defile you? Or does it reveal the cleanness of your heart through your relationship with God? Take a few moments to reflect on your own life in the space below. Also, if you feel up to it, ask someone who knows you well to offer some pointed yet redemptive words about what they see projected from your mouth.

WEEK 2

Friday, December 11

READ:

[13] Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" [14] And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." [15] He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" [16] Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

MATTHEW 16:13-16

REFLECT:

This passage might look a little different if it were to happen today:

"Who do people say Jesus Christ was? Some say He was a great teacher. Some say He was a man to be emulated. Some say He was a man of love. Some say He was a religious guru, like the Buddha or Mohammed. But who do you say that He is?"

Peter says Jesus is the Christ/Messiah (Hebrew for Savior and Liberator of all of God's people from outsiders' rule and King of His people, Israel), the Son of the living God (a divine title for Jesus). This is a profound revelation to Peter from the Father, as the following verses reveal. If an unbelieving neighbor asks you the question, Who do you say Jesus is?, how would you respond to them? Write out your answer below in your own words.

WEEK 2

Saturday, December 12

READ:

[19] Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not cast it out?" [20] He said to them, "Because of your little faith. For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you."

MATTHEW 17:19-20

REFLECT:

If we only had faith like a grain of mustard seeds, we could move mountains! So where has all our faith gone? The biggest disservice to this verse is to place the emphasis on the wrong syllable...or the wrong person. Many read this to say, if I only had that much faith, I could do amazing things! Faith is a quantifiable object that, if we have enough of it, we can perform miracles. The direction of faith tends inward, away from God. But true faith means that a person recognizes and grows more confident in the power and person of God. The greater we trust that God is who He says He is, the greater confidence we have that He can do whatever He desires through us, if we only would surrender to His will and leading in our lives.

Take several minutes to reflect on your faith. When a challenge comes to you, how do you exhibit faith? Do you focus on the faith that you do (or do not) have, trying to convince yourself or God that you have enough faith for the particular situation? Or do you focus on the object of your faith, Jesus Christ, knowing that He is all-powerful and all-wise, and trusting that He is the worker of miracles?



WEEK 3

Sunday, December 13

READ:

[1] Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, [2] saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." [3] When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; [4] and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. [5] They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:

[6] "'And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for from you shall come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel.'"

[7] Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. [8] And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him." [9] After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. [10] When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. [11] And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. [12] And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

MATTHEW 2:1-12

REFLECT:

The story of the wise men who travel from afar in order to find Jesus is well known. We hear it every Christmas and no nativity scene is complete without the three men from the east. But this story as it is told and portrayed often leaves one very important character out: Herod. In several places throughout the story (vv. 1, 3, 9) Matthew calls Herod a king. He has authority and carries political weight in the culture during that time period. People came to pay him homage and to give him gifts in hopes that he would look favorably on them. But the wise men come bearing gifts from a far land, not for Herod, but for the King of the Jews. Herod would have done well to join the wise men in worship, but that was not his intent. He could not see outside of his own prideful self-centeredness. He stands in stark contrast to the wise men, who joyfully give Jesus gifts and worship Him. Literally, the words used here are that the wise men "rejoiced a great joy exceedingly." In other words, they jumped as high as they could and celebrated as hard as they could when they actually were able to meet Jesus.

What joy does Jesus bring to your life? Spend a few minutes writing down how you are joyful because you know Jesus Christ, the King. Share some of the joys you have because of knowing Christ with those in your family or close friends at some point today.

Sermon Notes:

WEEK 3

Monday, December 14

READ:

[1] At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" [2] And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them [3] and said, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. [4] Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

MATTHEW 18:1-4

REFLECT:

The disciples fixate their attention on the kingdom of heaven, but not on the nature of that kingdom. Instead, they are worried about their rank and power within the kingdom. So when they ask Jesus to identify who exactly will be the greatest in the kingdom, His answer was quite startling: a child. Children can sometimes be overlooked, especially when grownups are having an 'adult' conversation that kids wouldn't understand, you know, like politics, theology, or something like that. Jesus, however, does not overlook children, but holds them up as a model of humility for others to emulate.

How does Jesus see humility in the life of a child? How is that humility different from what we see of the disciples? What is an example you have seen of child-like humility in the life of someone around you?

WEEK 3

Tuesday, December 15

READ:

[24] Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." [25] When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?" [26] But Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

MATTHEW 19:24-26

REFLECT:

Why were the disciples so astonished to hear that entering the kingdom of God as a rich person was so difficult? Rich persons were those of influence in 1st century Judaism and their riches were seen as a direct blessing from God! Jesus says the riches, though, are actually a barrier that can keep the rich from coming to God. There are many barriers in addition to money or possessions that prevent people from coming to God. And everything we try to save ourselves, give us meaning in life, or create stability cannot accomplish anything in the end (v. 26)! But it IS through God that salvation is possible. And it IS by the hand of God that a rich man can enter the kingdom of God.

What are some barriers you see in the culture, or ones you may have tried in order to give you satisfaction, meaning or security in this life? Briefly reflect on what changed your mind, or the process of how your mind is currently being changed about what brings you satisfaction and security.

WEEK 3

Wednesday, December 16

READ:

[25] But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. [26] It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, [27] and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, [28] even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

MATTHEW 20:25-28

REFLECT:

What do you do when you have authority? How do you treat others whenever you have power over them (physical size, job ranking, etc.)? Those who are not part of the kingdom use it for their own purposes so that they are the ones who benefit. Those who are a part of the kingdom, however, do things differently. They use their position, their power, and their authority for the benefit of those around them, specifically those who have no power--those on the margins or fringes of society. It is a kingdom turned upside-down. And it is initiated by the greatest of all, the Son of Man, Jesus Christ. He is the very example of upside-down kingdom living, the most powerful God serving the very least of all humanity.

How do we steward power, authority, or position? Do we use it to further our own goals and achievements, or do we use the position we're in or the power we have to further the kingdom of God in some way? What is one example of a way that you can use power for the benefit of someone else? Challenge yourself to think of one way, and then to actually put it into practice over the next several weeks. Pray about it, write it on a note card, post in on a fridge or a mirror, and follow through.

WEEK 3

Thursday, December 17

READ:

[9] And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" [10] And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, "Who is this?" [11] And the crowds said, "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee."

MATTHEW 21:9-11

REFLECT:

We may look at this passage and say to ourselves, "It looks like the people of Jerusalem knew who Jesus was! How did they so quickly abandon Him?" And at first glance, it does seem like they knew who Jesus was: Son of David is a Messianic title, Jesus seems to be sent with authority from the Lord, and Hosanna is a word that has Messianic connotations. But this all hinges on who the people thought Messiah was and what He would be sent to do. They believed Messiah would offer them political salvation by eradicating Roman rule and bringing all of Israel back under a theocracy with God ruling as their king (just like in the early OT!). But that was not the Messiah Jesus came to be, so when He suffered and died on the cross instead of raising an army in victorious rebellion, all those who were shouting Hosanna! quietly slipped away from Him.

How often do we expect Jesus or God to do something in a specific way? When do we set up the rules for how God can work, or what specifically He would do if He were good/just/merciful/gracious/any other attribute? Reflect briefly on any time where you have created an image of God in your mind for how He works, but then He has done something to challenge your view/belief about what He is like.

WEEK 3

Friday, December 18

READ:

[36] "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" [37] And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. [38] This is the great and first commandment. [39] And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. [40] On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

MATTHEW 22:36-40

REFLECT:

Love God and love others. Those two short commands are the foundation for all of the Law and the Prophets. They are integral to the life of the one who follows God. What does it mean to love? Our culture believes love is a feeling, a welling up inside oneself of an overwhelming emotional response to another person or thing. It just happens, and we can do nothing to stop, change, or start it. But the way the OT and NT approach love is different. Love does not primarily come as an uncontrollable emotional response, but as a decision, a resolve, and a commitment to pursue someone else. Loving God and loving others is a commitment; it is a decision we make and follow through to fruition. Love is primarily the holistic pursuit in word and deed of God and others. This does not negate or eliminate the emotional response by any means, but love is not only made up of it.

When you stop and think about it, what does love look like to you? If love means orienting your life around the holistic pursuit of God and others, then this means it is a lifestyle. How do you orient your lifestyle towards loving God and others? Spend a few minutes writing out ways you already do this, or another way that you could do this.

WEEK 3

Saturday, December 19

READ:

[25] *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. [26] You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean.*

MATTHEW 23:25-26

REFLECT:

The Pharisees have clean outsides but dirty insides. Their hearts and minds do not match how they portray themselves to those around them. In our culture driven by social media, what people see on Facebook or Instagram or Twitter almost never fully reveals what truly is going on inside. Like the Pharisees, we do not show to others our dirty, grimy details. But Jesus says to clean the inside, and one of the first steps towards cleaning and healing is a combination of confession and vulnerability.

Confession to God is primarily where healing and forgiveness occurs, but they also happen in confession to others. The lie that surrounds confession and vulnerability is that if I reveal my inner self, then others will not accept me but will reject me. The lie is that confession and vulnerability will garner more pain and hurt than if I just bottle it all up inside of me. The truth is that confessing to God and to people who care about you will give you freedom, forgiveness, reconciliation, accountability and care. The risk is worth it. Take a few minutes and write down what you need to confess with vulnerability. Think of someone who loves and cares about you, and confess to them before God so that you might begin to walk with cleanness on the inside.



WEEK 4

Sunday, December 20

READ:

[13] Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." [14] And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt [15] and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt I called my son."

[16] Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men. [17] Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah:

[18] "A voice was heard in Ramah,
weeping and loud lamentation,
Rachel weeping for her children;
she refused to be comforted, because they are no more."

[19] But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, [20] saying, "Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead." [21] And he rose and took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. [22] But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee. [23] And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, that he would be called a Nazarene.

MATTHEW 2:13-23

REFLECT:

Herod continues his rampage of rebellion in chapter 2. What was hinted at in the narrative with the wise men now comes completely to the forefront: he has no desire to worship the king of the Jews, but wants to eliminate his (and his sons') future political rival. He deviously and sickeningly slaughters all the male children in Bethlehem from birth up to toddlers. In the midst of this evil, God provides. He warns Joseph through a dream that Bethlehem is no longer safe and that he must take his family away to Egypt to protect them.

How has God protected or provided for you? Has He given you a dream, or spoken prophetically through another person? Has He tangibly and visibly directed your life either towards a benefit or away from danger? Write a few sentences about how you experienced God's direction and/or protection.

Sermon Notes:

WEEK 4

Monday, December 21

READ:

[37] Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? [38] And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? [39] And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' [40] And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

MATTHEW 25:37-40

REFLECT:

The people who are welcomed into the Kingdom of God in this passage are those who have shown love through the caring for other people. They have been changed by God in the innermost parts of their being and as a result of that change have begun to love others tangibly through feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and visiting the sick/imprisoned. What is interesting, though, is that the King does not say that the righteous people loved others and then loved God. They were not separate acts of kindness and service. Instead, the righteous people loved God through their love of others. They did not know they were connected (loving God and loving others), but they are inseparably connected. Loving others is a manner of expressing one's love of God.

How do you love God through your love of others? How has He uniquely created you to see the needs of others and to love them as an expression of your love of God? How have you experienced the love of God through the love of others in your own life? What has been the most powerful expression of God's love through His people for you in the past week?

WEEK 4

Tuesday, December 22

READ:

[39] And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."

MATTHEW 26:39

REFLECT:

This verse ranks as one of the most vulnerable and powerful expressions of Jesus' humanity in all of the Gospels. Jesus knows the trajectory of His current path and the torture, suffering, and death He will endure in the hours to come. He pleads and implores the Father to take away the cup of suffering. This is not a calm, pietistic prayer, but an impassioned and raw pleading with the Father. Jesus ends His prayer, though, with the most profound words of all: not as I will, but as you will. In those eight words, Jesus reveals the essence of His divinity merged with His humanity. Instead of continuing to implore the Father to conform to Jesus' desires and to act as Jesus wants Him to, the Son of God acknowledges that what is best is determined by the Father. He relinquishes control and surrenders to the will of the Father.

This is hard, but it is imperative for us to see and to emulate. In the most raw and most vulnerable and most frightening time of Jesus' life, He relinquishes control and completely surrenders the trajectory of His life to God the Father, knowing that He knows best. What are you holding on to today? What uncertain or frightening situation is driving you before the Father in prayer to say, "Lord, take this from me!"? Know that He knows what is best and He will guide you and sustain you through anything that He asks you to go through. It will not be easy. It will not feel good. But it will be what is best. Take a few moments to release, relinquish, and surrender that cup of suffering to the Father right now.

WEEK 4

Wednesday, December 23

READ:

[18] And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. [19] Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

MATTHEW 28:18-20

REFLECT:

The Great Commission is a summary of the mission of God on earth through His people who are now known as the Church. Go and make disciples. This is our task. This is our mission. This is everything that we have been commanded and exhorted to do. And it has two components: baptizing and teaching. There is repentance, a profession of faith, and submission to the authority of Jesus Christ which all lead to baptism. Then there is a continuation after faith of learning the commandments of Jesus and living a life of obedience. This is the mission of the Church. This is our mission. And it is not just the mission of Fathom Church. It is not just the mission of the churches in Denver. It is the mission of every church in the world. Show people who God is, teach them to live more like Him.

How does the mission of God as seen in the Great Commission energize you? How are you challenged and encouraged to live life in response to Christ's words to His own disciples that have been passed on through generations? What changes in your mind and heart about the role you play in the mission of God? What can you do to join God's mission in this world?



CHRISTMAS EVE

Thursday, December 24

READ:

[18] Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. [19] And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. [20] But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. [21] She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." [22] All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

[23] "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall call his name Immanuel"

(which means, God with us). [24] When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, [25] but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

MATTHEW 1:18-25

REFLECT:

Today is Christmas Eve! Tonight we anticipate tomorrow's celebration of Christ's birth. And as we read the birth narrative according to Matthew again, let's not pass over the miraculous events that take place. Let's not make mundane what is so profound. As we anticipate tomorrow's celebration, take a few minutes and reflect on your relationship with Christ. How has He made a difference in your life? How are you different because of the small, miraculous child who was born to Joseph and Mary two thousand years ago? This could be a physical difference (freed from an addiction), an emotional difference (freed from hatred or bitterness), a spiritual difference (forgiveness from sin, or feeling a purpose in life) or something else. Give thanks for the role that He plays in your life and for His willingness to humble Himself by coming to earth.



CHRISTMAS DAY
Friday, December 25

READ:

[5] But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. [6] He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. [7] Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you."

MATTHEW 28:5-7

REFLECT:

Today's text fits more easily within an Easter devotional rather than an Advent one, but the events that happen at the empty tomb are just as important to celebrate because they are the culmination of Jesus' birth on earth. Jesus' birth brings Him into the realm of humanity. Jesus' life identifies Him as a human being, one of us. Jesus' death pays the debt no human being could ever pay. And Jesus' resurrection defeats all sin and evil.

As you celebrate Jesus' birth today, whether with family or friends, focus on His act of humbling Himself to be born as a child. But the foundation of our joy today is not His birth, but the series of events within human history that His birth began. Let us give thanks and celebrate His birth, life, death and resurrection today. In the space that follows, write a brief prayer that celebrates and gives thanks to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit for the redemption that is possible through the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus.



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