

WELCOME

Well, Merry Christmas, church! If I haven't met you, my name is Chris Martin and I'm the Lead Pastor here at Fathom Church, and I am so glad to be with y'all.

Hey, a big welcome to those joining us online!

- Whether you couldn't get seats
- OR you're still staying at home
- OR you're just visiting with us,

we're so glad you're with us. Let us know in the chat that you're here!

Hey, let's welcome our online friends joining us right now.

Also, just one announcement for y'all tonight. This coming Sunday we're all going to be online, because we're throwing back to the days of quarantine and doing **SLIDE** Fathom-at-home this Sunday, December 27th. We want to give all our staff and volunteers a week of rest, so we've prerecorded worship and a sermon for you, and you can stream that any hour on the hour all morning. 8, 9, 10, 11, and noon. No communion, but please join us for Fathom-at-home this Sunday! **BLANK SLIDE**

INTRODUCTION

Alright! Let's go.

- Some of you, goodness,
- I haven't seen your faces in like a year!
 - For some that's normal...
 - and I'll see you again next Christmas!
- But for many, man, this has just been one of those years!

KIDS WELCOME

To the kids in the room, Hey, Merry Christmas to you as well. We love spending this time with you guys, too!

Now, just so you know,

- I'm not gonna talk long tonight,
 - Merry Christmas!
- And I know you can handle this,
- because I've timed it,
- and my sermon today is literally as long
- as one of your tv shows.

So, just pretend I'm a Puppy-Dog-Pal, or Barbie, or something...alright?

- You can make it through this,
- and then you get to light a candle! Fire!

BIBLES

Alright! If you brought your bibles, and I hope you did, open up to Genesis chapter 3.

- Genesis is the first book of the Bible,
- so even if you're unfamiliar with the Bible
- you'll be able to find that.
- You can open a phone or a tablet,
- or if you're online with us
- you can click that Bible tab on the online platform.
- Genesis 3.

I know there are many of us here today who claim to be Christians...

- but I also know that there are those of you
- who are not Christians,
- or you sort-of are,
- or you used to be,
- like maybe you grew up in something...
- but you're just coming back
- and kinda checking things out again.

But wherever you're coming from, the Christmas story is a story that almost every single one of us is familiar with.

- But one that we can actually become numb to...
- because of its familiarity.

So, my goal tonight is simple: I want to answer one question...

Why did Jesus come? Seems simple enough.

2020

Now, I don't know about you, but I've spent an inordinate amount of time this year looking at a couple websites I never really frequented before.

I've become very familiar with

- the Colorado Department of Health website,
- and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website.

Just never cared too much for those sites...until 2020, right?

But there are three little phrases that are on repeat on those sites, which really can define 2020 for us, but I think actually can help us out with why Jesus came.

I think they help me to understand the WHY behind Christmas. Here are those three phrases:

- **SLIDE KEEP YOUR DISTANCE**
- **SLIDE WEAR A MASK**
- **SLIDE WASH YOUR HANDS BLANK SLIDE**

Those are the phrases we will most remember from 2020.

- BUT, they are also at the very root
- of why 2000 years ago a child was born,
- who we are still celebrating today.

So, I'm calling this sermon **SLIDE THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO COVID...not sure if that's a heresy...**

But, let me make my point by looking at the beginning of Genesis.

BLANK SLIDE

CONTEXT

Now, in Genesis chapters 1 & 2

- God created everything that exists,
- and he creates Adam and Eve,
- and places them in the Garden of Eden.
- And they are naked and unashamed
 - both physically and emotionally, ok?
 - They are perfectly comfortable with themselves.

And God only gives them one rule...

- there's this one tree
- called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
- And they can eat of every tree...except that one.
- Everything is on-limits...except that one tree.

Well, it's all good in the garden, until Genesis chapter 3...

- so, good job Adam and Eve...
- you made it two pages.
- And then things go awry.

Look with me at Genesis 3:1-6...

SLIDE GENESIS 3:1-6

[1] Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made.

He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" [2] And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, [3] but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" [4] But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. [5] For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." [6] So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. **BLANK SLIDE**

EXPLAIN: SIN

This is what is theologically known as *the fall of man*.

- The serpent, who is the embodied form of Satan...
- the enemy of God...
- sows some seeds of doubt in Eve's mind...
- and she takes the forbidden fruit and eats...
- and gives some to her husband, and he ate.
- And thus...*the fall*.

Now, the word we use for what Adam and Eve did when they ate the fruit...is SIN. And, I know sin isn't a hip word to use in 2020...but that's what the Bible calls it **when we fail to follow to the ways of God**.

And when Adam and Eve sinned,

- it fractured their relationship with God,
- with each other,
- and with the world around them.

POINT 1

Before sin, in the garden, was perfect harmony in all relationships...
But after the fall the mantra could read. **SLIDE KEEP YOUR DISTANCE**.

The original social distancing occurs.

- And the text will say that Adam blames Eve.
- And Eve blames the serpent.
- And they both blame God!

KEEP YOUR DISTANCE. **BLANK SLIDE**

APPLICATION

And we feel that today, right? In relationships.

- Man, Maryse and I have been together for almost 15 years.
- We are as close as each other has in terms of relationships...
- but when we end up in a fight...
 - which even happened this week!
 - Oh, y'all don't ever fight during Christmas?!?
- But it's always because one of us has sinned,
- and it always leads to KEEP YOUR DISTANCE.

Sin has distanced us from each other and from God. But there's more...let's keep reading. Genesis 3:7.

SLIDE GENESIS 3:7-8

[7] Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

[8] And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. **BLANK SLIDE**

POINT 2

There may not be more tragic words penned in all of human history than those we just read.

- They knew that they were naked,
- and so, they quickly try
- to cover themselves with leaves.

And if that's not a metaphor for life...I don't know what is...

You see,

- it's not just physical nakedness that freaks them out.
- Because as soon as they hear God in the garden, they hide.
- They just try to camo up in the trees.

You see, what sin does, is it not only makes us KEEP OUR DISTANCE.

But it also always leads us to **SLIDE WEAR A MASK.**

- It's, *"Don't look at me!*
- *I'm ashamed!*
- *I don't have it all together!*
- *I can't be seen like this!"*

And even to those who are supposed to be a true safe place:

- our family...
- our God...
- We hide from them.
- We WEAR A MASK. **BLANK SLIDE**

APPLICATION

And this is true of all of us. Here's a direct quote from the CDC website: *Wear a mask to protect yourself and others.*

Sounds right, doesn't it?

- *"I gotta protect myself from being seen.*
- *From being fully known.*
- *From being vulnerable.*
- *Cause, what if I'm seen...and rejected?"*

But we'll also hide to protect others.

- From our illness...
- from our mess...
- from our dysfunction.

It's all a game of hide and seek.

TRANSITION

Sin has caused us to KEEP OUR DISTANCE from God and each other...
and it has led us to WEAR A MASK, even with those closest to us.

But there is hope in this chapter. After God finds Adam and Eve hiding, he speaks to the Serpent. Look down to Genesis 3:14

SLIDE GENESIS 3:14-15

[14] The LORD God said to the serpent,
"Because you have done this,
cursed are you above all livestock
and above all beasts of the field;
on your belly you shall go,
and dust you shall eat
all the days of your life.

[15] I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and her offspring;
he shall bruise your head,
and you shall bruise his heel.” **BLANK SLIDE**

EXPLAIN

This is the very first messianic prophecy we have in the Scriptures.

- Because the serpent tempted Eve
- there will be hostility between he and the woman,
- and the offspring of the woman...
 - there's the messianic prophecy...that's Jesus...
- He will have his heel bruised...
- BUT he will crush the head of the enemy.

And that's what leads us all the way to why Jesus came.

Fast forward all the way to the opening chapter of the New Testament.

SLIDE MATTHEW 1:20–21

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.” **BLANK SLIDE**

He will save his people from their sins. How? By crushing the head of the enemy. 1 John 1 puts it this way:

SLIDE 1 JOHN 1:7

[7] But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

BLANK SLIDE

POINT 3

How are we saved from our sins?

- The blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin.
- We need to be cleaned.
- We need to be washed.

And that's the final phrase for us tonight: **SLIDE WASH YOUR HANDS.**

- Sin causes us to KEEP OUR DISTANCE,
- and to WEAR A MASK,
- and the only way to deal with that sin
- is to WASH YOUR HANDS...
- and that's why Jesus came. **BLANK SLIDE**

APPLICATION: JUSTIFICATION

The Bible makes it clear

- that in order to be washed,
- to be cleansed of our sin...
 - to use a big theological word:
- we need to be justified...
- we need to be washed by the blood of Jesus.

But we often seek our justification elsewhere.

- We try to find it in our abilities,
- or our looks,
- or our careers,
- or our finances,
- or our marriages,
- or, God help us, even our children.

But like we've already said, those have all been tainted by sin as well.

- We try desperately to clean ourselves up
- by any means possible,
- and yet, we are constantly unable.

And that brings me to James A. Garfield.

- Two things you weren't expecting to hear from me today:
 - Genesis 3,
 - and President Garfield.

ILLUSTRATION: GARFIELD

James A. Garfield, our 20th president, was one of four US Presidents who have been assassinated.

- On July 2nd, 1881,
- as he was leaving Washington for his summer vacation
- President Garfield was shot twice by Charles Guiteau.

Garfield was carried back to the White House,

- and doctors told him that he would not survive the night;
- but the next morning,
- his vital signs were good
- and doctors began to hope for recovery.

Now, the chief attending physician to the President was a man named Doctor Willian Bliss.

- Now, Bliss managed to keep the president alive
- for 79 days after being shot...
- but most historians and medical experts
- believe that Garfield probably
- would have survived his gunshot wounds.

You see, Bliss, like many American doctors of the day,

- did not believe in the need for cleanliness to prevent infection.
- And so, he often inserted his unsterilized fingers
- into the wound to probe for the bullet.

And Garfield's autopsy discovered pneumonia in both lungs and a body that was filled with pus due to uncontrolled infections likely because of unwashed hands.

Charles Guiteau was hanged for the assassination and is famously quoted as saying: *"I deny the killing...I admit the shooting."*

The saddest part of this story is that another Doctor named Joseph Lister,

- 16 years before Garfield's shooting,
- had proposed a theory
- that germs were actually to blame for the causing of infections,
- and that by simply washing one's hands...
- doctors could save the lives of numerous patients.

The solution was available...they just needed to wash their hands!

CONCLUSION

And so do we, church.

The only way to survive this thing is to be washed.

And try as we might, there's no other way to be saved from sin.

The Gospel According to COVID is:

- KEEP YOUR DISTANCE...
- WEAR A MASK...
- WASH YOUR HANDS.

But the Gospel According to Matthew reads:

SLIDE MATTHEW 1:21

[21] She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." **BLANK SLIDE**

This is why Jesus came! To save his people from their sins. The question is this: are you a part of his people?

- You see, if you are a follower of Jesus...
you don't have to KEEP YOUR DISTANCE.
 - No, the Bible says you have been reconciled to God!
- If you are a follower of Jesus...
you don't have to WEAR A MASK.
 - Because you are fully known...
 - naked again, as it were.
 - You are fully known AND fully accepted by him.
 - So, throw that mask in the trash!
- And if you are a follower of Jesus...
YOU don't have to WASH YOUR HANDS.
 - Because he washed them for you!

That child who was born

- would grow up to be a man...
- who would die on a cross...
- and would wash us with his blood,
- cleansing us from all our sin.
- Undoing the curse of Genesis 3.

Do you know this Jesus?

- Do you know that this is why we celebrate Christmas?
- If not, you can know him...
- you can accept him...
- you can follow him...
- all you have to do is pray to him and say,
- *"Jesus, I give you my life."*

This Christmas, the solution to all the mess of 2020 AND to our mess as well...is Jesus.

Let's pray. **LYRICS SLIDE W/PADS**

CANDLES

Well, we're going to sing in response to this message, and during the very last song, we're going to light our candles. So, I when Amanda gives us the go-ahead, I'll start my candle, and then you can light yours off of mine, and pass it down your rows. Please tip your unlit candles into the lit ones, parents, help out your kiddos. And we'll lift them up during the last chorus of the last song, just be careful not to burn our ceiling!

Love you church, let's stand and sing.

RESOURCES USED:

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_A._Garfield
- Grudem, Wayne. Systematic Theology.
- Lusko, Levi. *Wash Your Hands*.