

SLIDE YEAR END GIVING

Well, Merry Christmas, church!

\$52,511 Year End Giving + \$10,000 Thailand Missions Support

INTRODUCE CHRISTMAS SLIDE

If you have your Bibles, and I hope you do,

- please grab them and turn to Matthew chapter 1.
- You can open a phone or a tablet to Matthew 1,
- or you can use one of the hard-backed black bibles
 - under every single chair.
 - You'll find Matthew 1 on page **807**.

INTRODUCTION: KIDS

I'm so thankful you would spend some of your Christmas Eve with us.

- My name is Chris Martin, and I'm the Lead Pastor here.

And to the kids in here,

- I'm so glad you're spending Christmas Eve
- with us in here today.
- And I'll keep this short...well, short for me.
 - And I know you can handle it,
 - because I timed my message,
 - and it's just as long as one of your shows.
- So, I'll talk a little bit,
- and then we'll sing a little more
- and then we'll light some stuff on fire, deal?

INTRODUCTION: NOSTALGIA

Now, many of you I know well,

- but many, on a Christmas Eve, I don't know at all.
- That's just the nature of Christmas Eve at a church.

So, if I don't know you, a little bit about me.

I wasn't raised going to church, so,

- growing up, my family ONLY went to church on Christmas. Ok?

And so, for me, Jesus was wrapped up in Christmas nostalgia.

- Jesus was right up there with Charlie Brown
 - buying that jenky little tree...
- Jesus was in the same category for me as Santa was...
- Jesus was in the same category as going to the mall to buy presents for people...

Listen, if you're younger in here...

- back in the 1900s...
- there used to be this place called the mall!
 - It was a place of magic and wonder!

Hey, do you remember when we actually gave people real gifts?

- This was before you just lazily gathered Amazon links...
- This was before you could give...
 - the least personalized gift...
 - in the history of the world...a gift card...
 - it's the modern equivalent of giving cash!
 - Could any less thought be put into this gift?

But for me, Jesus was totally nostalgic...tradition...Christmassy...

But then, in high school something began to change in me.

And I'm a bit of a skeptic by nature...but I had questions.

- Questions about God...
- Questions about Jesus...
- Questions about why my life felt hard...
- And questions about how a 2000-year-old Jewish Rabbi
 - could possibly have anything to do with my life!

BUT over the course of the next couple years of my life,

- Jesus began to work his way into my life.
- And the questions that I had about him...
 - well, they actually had good answers to my questions.
- And who I thought Jesus was...changed.

TRANSITION

So, for our short time tonight, I want us to engage with Matthew 1.
To see what the Bible says about this Jesus Christ.

Matthew 1. Verses 22-23:

SLIDE MATTHEW 1:22-23

[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).

RECAP

So, this Christmas we've been doing a short series on those three words:

- GOD...WITH...US...

And we've taken each word to look at who Jesus actually is.

- So, two weeks ago we looked at GOD,
 - and we talked about **SLIDE** **GOD: CHRIST'S DIVINITY**
 - Jesus is divine.
 - He's God.
 - He's not just a prophet,
 - or good moral teacher...
 - he is actually divine!
 - He's the second person of the Trinity...
 - Co-eternal with the Father...
 - Creator and sustainer of all things...
 - Has always been...
 - Will always be.
- And then last week we took US...
 - and we talked about **SLIDE** **US: CHRIST'S HUMANITY**
 - Not only was Jesus divine, but he was also human!
 - He was born like us.
 - He grew up like us.
 - He had a body like us.
 - He had a mind like us.
 - He had emotions like us.
 - He felt all the feels that we feel.

- And eventually he died...
 - His body ceased to function...
 - just like each and every one of us will, one day, die.
 - Merry Christmas!

But tonight we're tackling the word WITH...

- God WITH us, and we're looking at
- **SLIDE WITH: CHRIST'S INCARNATION**

The word incarnation literally means "the act of being made flesh".

- And the incarnation is where the divinity of Christ
 - meets the humanity of Christ.
- It's when God the Son...put on flesh!
 - Remaining what he was (divine),
 - He became what he was not (human).

So, this is what Christians believe:

that Jesus was both fully God and fully human,

- Which the philosopher Soren Kierkegaard famously called
- "*the ultimate paradox*"

And the reason why these three doctrines are so important:

- is because our interpretation of WHO this Son is,
- will drastically affect HOW we think of God.

And AW Tozer said this:

SLIDE "*What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.*" ~ A.W. Tozer

TRANSITION

So...

- when you think about God...
 - when you think about Jesus...
- what comes to your mind?

Because you can't rightly FOLLOW God...

if you don't rightly THINK ABOUT God.

And honestly, growing up, I just thought about God incorrectly!

POINT: FROM US

You see, for the longest time I thought that God primarily wants something

SLIDE FROM US

That he wants something FROM US.

So, I thought of God sorta like Grandpa God.

- You know, he's "*the man upstairs.*"
 - But he's like super old...
 - he's like forever old!
- And he's totally out-of-touch with the world...
 - he can't get on the internet...
 - he's not sure about our TV shows...
 - and he hates our music...
 - and he hates kids playing in his yard...
 - and he dresses weird...
 - and he smells different.

But every Sunday,

- he turns up his miracle ears...
 - (you see what I just did there)
- and just Jazzy Scooters over to the edge of heaven,
- and listens to his people sing at church.
 - But he's out of touch...
 - and he's out of date...
 - and he just wants us to DO WHAT HE SAYS!

He wants FROM US.

- He wants you to be good...
- And he wants you to go to church...
- And he wants your money...
- And he wants you to feed the hungry...

Man, that's what I thought!

He was out to get something FROM US!

POINT: FOR US

And then I started getting interested in him...

but I thought God was primarily about doing stuff **SLIDE FOR US**

Like, Jesus came to do something FOR me.

- To make me happy.
- To make my life good.
- To give me my best life now.
- To give me whatever's in my heart.

And, if I'm honest...

- And I know this is church...it's no place to be honest...

But if I'm honest, I wanted Jesus for what I would get out of it.

- It was really, *"Jesus, what can you do for me?"*
- How is Jesus going to make my life better?

You see...

- My parent's marriage was in trouble,
 - so, I wanted him to fix that.
- And I didn't know what to do with my life,
 - so, I wanted him to guide me in that.
- And I wanted to meet the right girl.
- And I wanted to FEEL morally that I wasn't a 'bad person'.

So, I thought, *"Jesus came to do some good stuff FOR me. I'll try Jesus."*

POINT: WITH US

And hear me, both of those premises are PARTIALLY true.

- God does want FROM US.
 - He challenges us to change!
- And God does want FOR US.
 - He does make our lives better! Yes!

But the doctrine of CHRIST'S INCARNATION tells us that...

- ultimately...primarily...
- God is all about being **SLIDE WITH US**

God wants to be WITH US.

And this is a theme in the entire Bible.

EXAMPLES: WHOLE BIBLE

So, for the rest of our time, I'm gonna take us through the entire Bible,

- and show us that what God wants,
 - more than anything else,
- is to be WITH US.
 - It's really only gonna take like 6 minutes...

PATRIARCHS

First, in Genesis...the first book of the Bible.

This is God's covenant with his people Israel:

SLIDE GENESIS 28:14-15

[14] Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed. [15] Behold, I am **with** you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

MOSES

Next, Exodus...

From the burning bush, God says this to Moses:

SLIDE EXODUS 3:11-12

[11] But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?” [12] He said, “But I will be **with** you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.”

PROMISED LAND

From Moses to his successor, Joshua.

SLIDE JOSHUA 1:9

[9] Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is **with** you wherever you go.”

KINGS

On to the kings, and King David.

You might know this one...

SLIDE PSALM 23:4

[4] Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil,
for you are **with** me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.

PROPHETS

Along with the kings come the prophets.

From Isaiah 41...

SLIDE ISAIAH 41:10

[10] fear not, for I am **with** you;

be not dismayed, for I am your God;

I will strengthen you, I will help you,

I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

GOSPELS

So, the whole scope of the Old Testament...

- speaks of God's desire to be WITH US.

And this continues in the New Testament!

When Jesus calls his disciples we find this:

SLIDE MARK 3:14

[14] And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be **with** him and he might send them out to preach

And then, Jesus predicts the coming of the Holy Spirit:

SLIDE JOHN 14:16

[16] And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be **with** you forever,

- And after Jesus' death and resurrection,
 - right before he ascends to heaven
- he gives his disciples the great commission where he says:

SLIDE MATTHEW 28:19-20

[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.”

EARLY CHURCH

And even after Jesus is gone...the early church in Acts 4:

SLIDE ACTS 4:13

[13] Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been **with** Jesus.

And even at the end of the Bible, in Revelation we find this:

SLIDE REVELATION 3:20

[20] Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat **with** him, and he **with** me.

CONCLUSION

SLIDE W/PADS GOD WITH US

So, I'm going to invite the worship team back up here.

But I want you to see this clearly.

All through the Bible, what is God trying to do?

- He's trying to be WITH US.
- He wants to be WITH you.

And Jesus is the way God ultimately accomplishes this!

That's the good news of Christmas!

The good news of Jesus Christ...

is that the God of the entire universe is interested in YOU.

- Your dreams
 - Your fears
- Your joys
 - Your sorrows
- Your successes
 - And your failures

He's interested in you!

- He doesn't primarily want something FROM YOU...
- or to do something FOR YOU.
- He primarily wants to be WITH YOU!

This is what Christmas is about. This is what Jesus is about.

ENDING APPLICATION

And listen, 30 years ago...

- I was sitting in a church...
- on a Christmas Eve...
 - just like some of you might be...
- just checking off another box on my nostalgia list for Christmas.

And I didn't know it...

- but God was after me...
- he was wooing me...
- he wanted to be WITH me...

And some of you today,

- you're here,
- and you're a Christian...
- You're WITH him already.
 - And I think today the Lord is going to encourage you
 - and build you up
 - and send you back out
 - to keep walking with him.

But some of you are here...and listen...

- whether it's nostalgia...
- or that's just what you do on Christmas...
- or someone you know invited you...

- or maybe your world is a mess...
 - and you're just looking for something...
 - anything...to hold onto this Christmas...
 - so, you thought you'd give that church thing a try.

For whatever reason...here you are!

And I want you to hear one thing...

- it's the message of the whole Bible.
- It's the real message of Christmas:
 - God wants to be WITH you.

And if that's resonating with you AT ALL tonight.

- I want to invite you back.
- In 2023, I want to invite you to come back to church...
 - don't wait until next Christmas.
- Like, come back,
 - and let's tackle your questions,
 - and your doubts,
 - and your hurts,
 - and your mess,
 - and whatever it is that you've got.
- Let's get after it together.

[23] “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall call his name Immanuel”
(which means, God with us).

Merry Christmas!

Let’s pray.

CANDLE INSTRUCTIONS

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, 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 song, just be careful not to burn our ceiling!

Love you church, let’s stand and sing.

RESOURCES USED:

- Chandler, Matt. *The Advent of Joy*.
- Grudem, Wayne. Systematic Theology.
- Tyson, Jon. *Emmanuel*.