

Unwrapping the Gift of Salvation: The Gift of God with Us

Matthew 1:23

It is hard to say which element of the Gift of salvation that God gave us in Christ, is the BEST.

I think we will just have to each decide which element means most to us as we continue unwrapping our gifts this week.

Last week as we unwrapped Matthew 1:21's promise of forgiveness we saw Christ's amazing, complete and final forgiveness. That is our first gift we are unwrapping this Christmas.

This week as we look onward to Matthew 1:23 we see the amazing second gift God gave us in Christ. This may be the most remarkable gift of all: it is the Gift of God with us.

God Visits Us

Christmas is about God who visits us by sending "the Dayspring from on high," a heavenly sunrise, to provide the critical care that sin-darkened humans need because we are headed to destruction (Luke 1:78-79).

As Matthew unfolds the Christmas story, we can see more and more of God's plan to come and rescue lost humanity. In Matthew 1:21 we learn that Jesus came to "save His people from their sins," which was God meeting our first and greatest need—**forgiveness**.

Next, we see that all the rest of the critical needs we have in our lost and fallen condition are compressed into the truth in Matthew 1:23 our second greatest need—**regeneration**.

When Jesus came as Immanuel, "God with us," this was a declaration that God would regenerate our sinful, desperately wicked hearts; otherwise, our holy God could never live within any of us.

From the divine vantage point as explained in the Bible, Christ's death is only for the guilty, the hopelessly stained, and helplessly lost. It is in recognizing that condition in ourselves that we will find Jesus, and God's everlasting grace.

God Offers the Only Rescue from Hopelessness

All humans have soul-threatening needs. If you pay attention to the messages God gave about His purposes in sending Jesus to the Earth you will find that every one of us needs:

- Forgiveness of sins (Matthew 1:21).
- Regeneration so that a holy God can dwell within us (Matthew 1:23).

God living within us became possible, as John tells us, when the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. Please turn onward to the Gospel by John, which was specifically written to introduce us to what it really meant that God was now with us on Earth.

Look with me at John 1:14-18 (NKJV):

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. 15 John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.'" 16 And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. 17 For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.

We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and only Son, Who came from the Father, full of Grace and Truth. So we can say that just as was promised in Matthew 1:23:

God Is Here!

Turn onward with me through more of the Gospel by John in your Bibles, as John explains what it means that God is here.

God is here in Jesus the Word: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). Jesus is the Word, and as we listen to Him, He brings the direct communication from God into our lives as the Word of God.

God is here in Jesus the light: "This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe" (John 1:7). He is the ultimate revealer. The Gospels use "light" thirty-six times. There are four essentials of human life: light (or all would die), air, water, and food. Christ is called "the light of the world" (John 8:12); "the bread of life" (John 6:35), the Breath of Life (John 3:8), and Water of Life (John 4:10; 7:37). In other words, **Jesus is the very light we need to continue existing!**

God is here in Jesus the Lamb of God: "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29b). Jesus is the sacrifice God accepts on our behalf!

God is here in Jesus the Son of God: "And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God" (John 1:34). Jesus is the ultimate expression of God!

God is here in Jesus the Messiah: "He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah' (which is translated, the Christ)" (John 1:41). Jesus embodies all the promises of God!

The lesson John is giving to us is that:

When You See Jesus You See God

The writer of Hebrews goes on and explains to us that Jesus is not only God with us, Jesus is the exact representation of God. Listen to how we are to understand Jesus as the ultimate expression of God, as you follow along with Hebrews 1:1-3:

“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, 2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; 3 who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.” (Hebrews 1:1-3, NKJV).

The Christmas Promise of God with us is just a reminder to us that:

Christ's Old Testament Name was Everlasting Father

Turn back to the Old Testament promise of Christ's coming that we find in Isaiah 9:6.

The symbolic use of the word “father” was an ancient Hebraism for “possessor of.” Notice that in Isaiah 9:6 the Messiah is described as both a Son (“unto us a Son is given”) and a Father (“His name will be called . . . Everlasting Father”).

Jesus became a child in time (through the incarnation), but He is the Father (and possessor) of eternity. This means several basic things:

God is here in Jesus as the One who provides the strength of God's everlasting arms: “The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms; He will thrust out the enemy from before you, and will say, ‘Destroy!’ ” (Deuteronomy 33:27).

God is here in Jesus as the One who inhabits and possesses eternity: “For thus says the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: ‘I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones’ ” (Isaiah 57:15).

God is here in Jesus as the One who is the eternal provider: “He said to me, ‘It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son’ ” (Revelation 21:6-7).

Christ's New Testament Name Reveals Our Father

Jesus reveals God's eternal presence with us:

“[Be] teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).

Jesus reveals God's everlasting consolation:

“Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace . . .” (2 Thessalonians 2:16).

So how can we take this truth of God with us out of here today in a way that can help, encourage, and transform our daily lives? By:

Knowing “God With Us” Today

The blessing of “God with us” started at Christmas, but triumphed at the cross and the empty tomb. After Resurrection Day Jesus said, “I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20b).

For the three and one-half years of the Gospels, Jesus’ followers could know the wonder of God with them and have any need met—*if they could find Him*.

That means that Jesus Christ, God the Son Who is with us—is now available anywhere, anytime, and to anyone!

Therefore, any sin can be forgiven; any doubt can be overcome; any sadness can be comforted; any disappointment can be stopped; any fearfulness can be arrested; any loneliness can be ended; and any defilement can be cleansed.

Today, we *know* that Christ is alive! So think about Christ being constantly available within you to help your fears, doubts, pains, and temptations. He is only a prayer away—so call upon Him!

To help us know what “God with us” means today, we have the New Testament record. Now this is one of the amazing truths about the way God’s Word works. Matthew introduces us to Christ’s coming to be God with us; and the Gospel by John illustrates it.

If we just limit our examination to one event in each of the twenty-one chapters in the **Gospel by John**, we can understand how Jesus was meeting people right where they were—just as He wants to do in your life today.

Seeing & Experiencing God with us

The Gospel by John is God’s Way of illustrating what life is like when God is walking about and available in people’s everyday lives. What Jesus did in each person’s life that He touched, one-by-one, is what He can do anywhere, anytime, and for anyone today.

As we read through these verses, I encourage you to pause and think about what Christ wants to do in your life personally. Jesus is standing by each of us right now waiting for us to ask for His help. He follows us all through our days, ready and standing by to respond. Look what Jesus can and will do if we ask Him:

In John 1:46-49, watching Nathaniel sit and think under a tree, ***Jesus answered his questions.*** The Lesson for us is, because Jesus is God with us: **You can bring all your questions about the future to Jesus.**

In John 2:9, attending a wedding, ***Jesus rescued the servants when the wine ran out.*** The Lesson for us is, because Jesus is God with us: **You can bring your emergencies big or small to Jesus.**

In John 3:2, waiting up, ***Jesus explained salvation to Nicodemus*** when he slipped to Christ's side in the dark. The Lesson for us is, because Jesus is God with us: **You can bring your spiritual struggles, even your doubts about salvation, to Jesus.**

In John 4:18-19, sitting on the well, Jesus ***revealed His true identity to a seeking woman*** overflowing with sins. The Lesson for us is, because Jesus is God with us: **You can bring your past, present, and future sins to Jesus.**

In John 5:6, approaching the paralytic lying on the ground, ***Jesus healed him when he was hopeless and helpless.*** The Lesson for us is, because Jesus is God with us: **You can bring your limitations, weaknesses, besetting sins and all to Jesus.**

In John 6:17-19, coming across the waves to a storm-tossed boat, ***Jesus quieted the fearful disciples.*** The Lesson for us is, because Jesus is God with us: **You can bring all your fears to Jesus.**

In John 7:37-38, crying out for anyone who thirsts to come to Him, ***Jesus promised to give "rivers of living water".*** The Lesson for us is, because Jesus is God with us: **You can bring your longings to Jesus and find in Him complete satisfaction.**

In John 8:3-11, looking into the heart of the adulterous woman who stood stained by her sins, ***Jesus showed her mercy and forgiveness.*** The Lesson for us is, because Jesus is God with us: **You can bring your deepest stains to Jesus.**

In John 9:6-7, finding the blind man in his darkness, ***Jesus opened his eyes.*** The Lesson for us is, because Jesus is God with us: **You can bring your confusing times to Jesus.**

In John 10:9, opening the door to a safe and secure home for lost sheep, Jesus offers us safe pasture. The Lesson for us is, because Jesus is God with us: **You can bring your longing for security to Jesus.**

In John 11:25-27, defeating death and its hopelessness at the grave of Lazarus, ***Jesus offers us new life.*** The Lesson for us is, because Jesus is God with us: **You can bring your fears about death to Jesus.**

In John 12:3-8, accepting the worship of Mary who so deeply loved Him, ***Jesus received it as a sweet fragrance.*** The Lesson for us is, because Jesus is God with us: **You can bring your love and pour it out upon Jesus.**

In John 13:5-15, confronting His disciples with their dirty feet and hearts filled with pride, ***Jesus washed away their sin.*** The Lesson for us is, because Jesus is God with us: **You can bring your besetting sins to Jesus for His cleansing.**

In John 14:1-6, assuring His disciples when they had troubled hearts, ***Jesus promised that they had a future mansion with Him in heaven.*** The Lesson for us is, because Jesus is God with us:

You can bring your future to Jesus.

In John 15:2, coming close to prune away unprofitable parts when lives were fruitless, **Jesus made their lives more fruitful**. The Lesson for us is, because Jesus is God with us: **You can bring your entire life to Jesus.**

In John 16:7-9, promising to convict when hearts were sinful, **Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to keep His children on track spiritually**. The Lesson for us is, because Jesus is God with us: **You can bring your secrets to Jesus.**

In John 17:17, praying for sanctification by the truth of His Word, **Jesus promised to open His children's understanding of the Scriptures**. The Lesson for us is, because Jesus is God with us: **You can bring your need for life-changing times of Bible study to Jesus.**

In John 18:8, watching over His disciples in their darkest hour, **Jesus looked out for them** in spite of their weakness in the garden. The Lesson for us is, because Jesus is God with us: **You can bring your moments of weakness to Jesus.**

In John 19:25-27, caring for His mother even as He died, **Jesus set an example of the importance of caring for your family**. The Lesson for us is, because Jesus is God with us: **You can bring your family and each individual need and entrust them to Jesus.**

In John 20:25-29, finding Thomas in his doubt and bringing him to faith, **Jesus lovingly reassured him**. The Lesson for us is, because Jesus is God with us: **You can bring your doubts—no matter how dark, painful, and embarrassing—to Jesus.**

In John 21:15-18, standing on the shore when Peter needed restoration, **Jesus lovingly restored and inspired Peter to greater service for Christ**. The Lesson for us is, because Jesus is God with us: **You can bring your failures, whether public or private, to Jesus.**

Applying Emmanuel to Our Lives

If you go back through this list and prayerfully say each of the bold action statements out loud in a manner like that below, it can help to further cement these truths in your mind:

- “I want to bring my questions to You, Jesus;
- “I want to bring my emergencies to You, Jesus;
- “I want to bring my struggles to You, Jesus”; and so forth.

Do you see the power of personalizing Christ's presence in your life today? Believe that He is just as near to you, and *ask* for His help!

The greatest truth of Christianity is that at the moment of our salvation, when our sins were forgiven instantly by the gracious work of Christ on the cross—**we got all of God!** The One Who saves us is “God with us”! We have all of God in the Person of Christ who dwells in us!

Worshipping Christ as God with us

Have you experienced the power of an endless life, and are you partaking every day of the powerful presence within of the very Lord God Almighty?

That is what God with us provides, the regeneration that each human so desperately needs, that God offered in Christ, His gift at Christmas.

“And **you He made alive**, who were dead in trespasses and sins . . .” (Ephesians 2:1).

“The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may **have life**, and that they may have it **more abundantly**” (John 10:10).

“For it is evident that our Lord . . . has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to **the power of an endless life**” (Hebrews 7:14a, 16)

O Come Let us Adore Him (#82)

O Come let us Adore Him

We'll Praise His Name Forever

We'll Give Him all the Glory

For He Alone is Worthy