

O Come, O Come Emmanuel

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 December 2019

Preacher: Dr. Don Owsley

[0 : 00] with us. In fact, that's the main theme of the entire Bible. Jesus, the one who is God with us. Anybody wants to know what the central theme of the Bible? You just remember Christmas time.

Emmanuel, God with us. He created us. He covenanted with us and he came to us. And those are the three things we're going to see as a message of hope. He created us. He covenanted with us and he came to us. If you have read in Genesis chapter 1 and 2 and 3, you would know that God created us. In fact, in Genesis 1 verses 26 and 27 says that God decided to make man, that is mankind, male and female, in his own image. And he did that for a purposeful relationship and a purposeful fellowship. In Genesis chapter 2 verse 7, it says that God breathed into man his life. And that was for a God-oriented direction.

That was so that there would be this intimate relationship and this fellowship and this camaraderie and this connection that is unlike any other. God didn't have to do that.

He was not alone. That was the Father, Son, and Spirit. He was very well content. And yet, for whatever reason, he decided to create man and woman, male and female.

But he created the universe as the environment to display his glory in a place in which to put man and woman. And he did that for his own pleasure.

[1 : 42] And what we see in many, many different passages in Isaiah 43, for example, he tells us that all who are called by his name are created for his glory. God created you to be with him, to know him.

God created you so that he would be with you. And that's the theme. He created us. The second thing that we see is God covenanted with us.

We see that throughout the scripture. Covenant, if you want to know the real basic meaning, is I will be your God and you will be my people. And that's what it is to covenant.

And you have the old covenant, the old expression of that covenant, and you have the new expression of that covenant. In the beginning, there was this covenant of life where God said, I will be your God and you will be my people.

I am with you. In other words, Emmanuel. And there was another promise that was part of that. It is, I will never leave you nor forsake you.

[2 : 45] covenant God gave his covenant scriptures. It's the delight that God had in giving and offering to his own people an eternal, living communion.

Imagine in eternity past, he had designed and decided that he was going to have this special relationship with the special people. Put them on a special planet. The special creatures.

But as you know, Adam and Eve broke that covenant. In fact, Hosea chapter 6 verse 7, it says very explicitly, Adam broke covenant with God.

The message of this breaking of the covenant we see in Genesis chapter 3 is essentially that Adam and Eve decided, you God, you will not be our God. We will be our own gods.

We're okay without you. They violated that trust. They violated the relationship. They, you know, in one aspect, they were committing treason. But they didn't want the kind of relationship that God designed them to be.

[3 : 52] We don't want you to be with us. So we, we leave you. And we will forsake you. And God says, all right. He sends them off. He sends them out.

He sends them into the wilderness. If this is how you want to live, go. That's what we call sin. The breaking of the covenant. Rejecting the forever living communion with a holy God.

It's a horrible, horrible story. Very sad story. Thank God it doesn't add that. End there. But God being just and holy had little choice but to give them what they wanted.

So he curses them. He says, you, you want to live without me? Then you will live a life without me in essence. And yet at the, at the same thing, at the same time, God in his grace made a promise to them that he would provide life for them.

And so this promise is known as the covenant of grace. It's a covenant of grace. He didn't have to do that. He could have ended it all and started all over again.

[4 : 58] Or just ended it and never start again. But he chose. He chose to give a covenant of grace. And what that is, is to Eve, God promised through your seed, I will have a people of my choosing.

I promise. That's my paraphrase. I'm still going to have a people. In fact, the story of the Old Testament is essentially the story of two kinds of people.

Those who are, God calls to himself and others who don't want to have anything to do with God. Jesus brings that up in, I believe, John chapter 7 and 8.

So the scriptures of the Old Covenant are beautiful. It's the unfolding of this message. It's the promise that God will come. I will be with you.

I have made that promise. I am your God. You will be my people. It's the promise of Emmanuel. Oh come, oh come, Emmanuel. Was what essentially they had within their hearts.

[6 : 01] And they prayed to God constantly for that. Every page of scripture glistens with a bright and heavenly star. Every word gleams with the light of his heavenly promise that he will have a people for himself.

And so when we read, for example, in Luke 24, verse 44, it says that all scriptures speak about Emmanuel. Well, if we get an overview of this Old Covenant, we see how it tells us how this God who came to be with us.

Genesis 26, in love, the Lord appeared to Isaac one night and said, I am the God of your father Abraham. Don't fear, for I am with you. I will bless you and I will multiply your descendants for my servant Abraham's sake.

Flip over a few pages to Genesis chapter 28, verse 15. And with joy, God said, Jacob, behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go and I will bring you back to this land for I will not leave you.

Then in Joshua, chapter 1, verse 5, it says, no man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, I will be with you.

[7 : 26] I will not leave you nor forsake you. In Isaiah 41, 10, he says, fear not, I am with you.

Be not dismayed, I am your God. Jeremiah 1, 8, and verse 19, it was for hope. Do not be afraid, for I am with you to deliver you.

In Ezekiel 16, verse 62, out of his own joy, God reinforces his promise of life. I will establish my covenant with you and then you shall know that I am the Lord.

Do you see, this message, I will be with you and you will be mine. I will never leave you nor forsake you, is repeated again and again and again and again throughout all the Old Testament.

As you know, many people say, well, the God of the Old Testament is the God of wrath and anger. He's always on, always mad about everything. Well, that's not true. Yeah, he was angry and yet in his anger because he's a just and holy God and a loving God and a gracious God and a merciful God, he still made the promise, I will be with you.

[8 : 41] I will never leave you nor forsake you. God was with us. If we were to go to heaven and talk to the different people who have already gone before us, especially those from the Old Testament, they would say, yeah, God was with us the whole time.

Adam, God was with us. Abel, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Ruth, Ruth, kinsman, redeemer, Boaz, David, the shepherd and king, all of them could have said, God was with us.

God was with me in my life. God was with me in these circumstances. God was with me when I was distraught, when I was going through trials, when I was having a difficult time, when everything seemed to be crashing down like in Job's life.

God was with me. Many of the events in the Old Testament showed how God was with them. God was with them because Adam and Eve had clothed them. He was with Noah.

He was with Israel when he delivered them from Egypt. He's with them in the Old Testament sacrifices. He was with them in the tabernacle with the Shekinah glory, came down in order to be with his people.

[10 : 13] He was with them in the Ark of the Covenant with Aaron's rod and the law even and the brazen serpent and the smitten rock. They would say, yes, God was with us.

And then there's this thing we call and theologically called theophanies where God manifests himself in a variety of ways and those were the most obvious times. For example, in Genesis 16, Hagar would have said, God in his grace sought me out while I was running away and disheartened and yet he gave me assurance and comfort.

God was with me. In Genesis 18, God was with Abraham when he came when God visited him through two angels.

In Genesis 22, Emmanuel stays the hand of Abraham who is about to sacrifice his own son Isaac. In Genesis, I mean in Exodus 33 and 40, he was with his people in the glory cloud.

He shaded them by day and gave light by night. He was with them. What a sight. What a spectacle. Imagine camping in a place like that and you look out and you see this magnificent, huge, ginormous cloud, maybe the size of a, you know, a cat five tornado and yet it doesn't destroy them.

[11 : 38] It's there. Daniel 3 and Daniel 6. Twice God comes to be with Daniel and saves them. God was with them and God saves them.

But it wasn't just for them. I mean the Old Testament is a story of how God created and mankind rejected God and they fell into sin.

They rebelled against him and God kept going after them again and again and again. He said, I will be with you. I want you to be with me. I desire that. It was a promise and they kept looking for that promise.

And so what Christmas is, it's essentially the story of that promise that's come to fruition. It's fulfilled. The prophecies are fulfilled. The hope is fulfilled.

All of that is fulfilled. So the last point here is God came to us. God came to us. In 1 Peter chapter 1, I want to read these verses 10 and 12.

[12 : 45] It says, Of this salvation, he's talking about that was promised, the prophets have inquired and searched carefully who prophesied of the grace that would come to you.

Searching what or in what manner of time? The Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicated when he testified before he had the sufferings of Christ, the Messiah, and the glories that would follow.

To them it was revealed that not to themselves, but to us, they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things which even the angels desired to look into.

Imagine the angels in heaven, you know, they've got to go to class now because they're trying to figure out what in the world God is doing with people. God revealed the coming Emmanuel.

You know, Isaiah 7, 14, you know this well. It says, Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. And the sign was a pointer. You know, it displayed something that God was going to do specifically for a particular reason.

[14 : 02] And here was the sign. Behold the virgin, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son. Galatians 4, 4 is one of the best Christmas verses, I think.

When the fullness of time had come, just at the right time, God sent forth his son, born of a woman, born under the law to redeem those who were under the law that we might receive the adoption as sons.

It's the point of the incarnation. It's the point of God who became man, not a man who became a God. God who became man. That's the story of Christianity.

That's the story of scripture. Unlike all other stories, all other religions, all other philosophies, God became man to be with us. The incarnation is the most crucial fact of history.

It's the greatest theme of the Bible and the central character of scripture. O come, O come, Emmanuel. In Jesus, we find Yeshua, Emmanuel.

[15 : 11] Jesus, the Savior. Yeshua, Joshua, means Savior, Jesus. The God who is with us. It's the promise of Luke 1 where she replies in the song of praise as a fulfillment that we see a fulfillment in Luke 1 verses 46 through 54.

The Messiah has come. God has come. He has visited me. He has visited us. But it's not just them. It's a story that continues 2,000 years later.

It's a promise to us. It's our story. We who by nature were far away, we who rejected God in and of ourselves without Him as the covenant Lord, we who denied that He should be our God and that we should be His, we without Him did not want Him to be with us, with me.

And yet He came. He came to be with you. Ephesians 2 basically tells us verses 11 and 5.

It says, Therefore remember that you who were once Gentiles and is not Jewish in the flesh were called uncircumcision by what is called circumcision made in the flesh by hands that at that time you were without Christ.

[16 : 38] You were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. You were strangers from the covenants of promise having no hope and without God in the world but now in Christ Jesus.

You who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ for He Himself is our peace who has made both one and has broken down the middle wall of separation.

He not only broke down the middle wall of separation between us and God but He did so for all people for all backgrounds Jew and Gentile alike to be in Christ the God who is with us.

1 Peter 3 tells us He died for sins once for all the righteous for the unrighteous to bring you to God. Man, that's a long time planning.

That's a long time of promises of prophecies. A long time of ushering hope again and again and again and then He fulfills it in Jesus the God who became that.

[17 : 46] And that's the gospel message that's the good news. His life that He came and when He came He fulfilled the will of the Father because we couldn't do it. He did all the law perfectly because we can't do that.

Even as hard as we might try we could never fulfill all the law. And then He died on our behalf. He died for the sin of Adam and Eve. He died in that inherited DNA that we have in us that sin.

He died for that but also because of our sins. but had He died and not been raised again from the dead that'd be the end of the story. He's a nice guy with some nice words and had good things to say.

And that'd be it. But He doesn't stop there, right? He put Him down three days later and comes back to life. He's raised and then He ascends into heaven again.

That really is the message of the Lord's Supper when we gather together in a moment to partake. God is with us. The bread. He is the bread of life.

[18 : 54] We partake. God is not only the God of history and the God who is outside but He is the God that is in us because of the Spirit. Because of the work in us.

Because we are His. And so when we partake of the life, the bread focuses on Jesus and points to Christ, the life, we take Him in.

So He's out and He's in as well. And we derive life from Him just as we get sustenance from the bread. But not only that, we see in the grape juice and the fruit of the vine that Jesus Himself came to be the crushed grape.

He changed the bitterness of the old wine. In fact, God said, if you follow me and you love me with all your heart and you do all that I command, I will bless you with good grapes and good vineyards and you will celebrate and it will be sweet and delicious and the best.

But if you don't, I will curse it. And what Jesus did essentially is He took that cup. It was the cup of cursing. And He took it for us.

[20 : 06] So now what we have is a cup of blessing. He was the God who was with us and He did it for us.

The promise in Moses and to Moses Deuteronomy 10 is that I, the Lord your God, will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and that you may live.

And that's the beauty that Jesus did. Through His Holy Spirit He takes that and He gives to us a new heart. He takes away that old heart and gives us that new.

Just as He promised in Jeremiah, I will give them a new heart to know that I am the Lord and they will be my people and I will be their God. For they shall return to me with their whole heart.

That's why we sing joy to the world. The Lord has come. Emmanuel. You know, the Lord's Supper is essentially showing that Jesus has indeed given us a new heart.

[21 : 12] A new life. Jesus, the Emmanuel, said I have come that you would have life and life eternal. If you trust and know Him and believe in Him then this meal is for you.

This life is for you. Christ is for you. So that you would be with Him and have fellowship with Him and He would fulfill that longing that He would desire to be with you.

Emmanuel. If you were one of His own and His people and come to really know how much greater and close God is with you than all those who have lived in the Old Testament.

We have a deeper relationship. More intimate relationship because not only of what Jesus has already done and secured for us but because of the Holy Spirit who has worked in us and who is in us.

Christ in us the hope of glory. Christmas, dear ones, is the story of Emmanuel. The promise has come true. God is with us.

[22 : 20] Father, thank you for that. Thank you for the thousands of years of promises. thank you for all the times when people cried out, where are you?

Where is our hope? Why don't you come and rescue? And it seemed to be stalled and yet you were working itself out through all time until you sent the second one of the Trinity, the Son of God who became man.

Thank you for that, Father. Thank you for whatever reason and why you would desire that we would be your people and you would want to fellowship with us. That you would want to be not only our Lord and Savior but also our friend.

We thank you for that. And help us to understand even more every day in this time of Christmas that you are our God and we are your people because of Jesus the God who is with us.

Amen. Be come, O Christ, to you.

[23 : 48] Be come, O Christ, to you.