

I'm going to tell you all something that you probably do not know about me...I love Christmas. I love everything about it. I love the feeling in the air. I love the family togetherness. I love the joy and the carols and the presents and the lights. Most importantly, I love the meaning. Let's consider this Christmas passage together as a starting place for our study tonight.

#### Matthew 1:20-23

<sup>20</sup> 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. <sup>21</sup> She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." <sup>22</sup> All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

<sup>23</sup> "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel"

(which means, God with us).

Jesus is Emmanuel, God with us. This title is something so much deeper than Jesus coming, though. I want you to consider the last words of Jesus before He ascended into heaven. If you knew you were about to leave someone you loved dearly for the last time, do you think you would choose your words carefully? I think so too. Do you know the last words of Jesus? When referencing Matthew 28 we often think of the Great Commission. Those weren't His very last words though. They are actually, "I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:20)

**Emmanuel is so much more than Jesus coming. It is Jesus staying.** God not only was with us...God is with us. He has always been with us and always will be with us...and He is with us even now. From His coming to His going, God has been reminding us that He is with us.

What does this mean for us...that God is with us always? It means...He is with us in our hardship, pain, crying, doubt, fear, and struggles...He is with us in our temptations, sin, thoughts, and every action...He is with us when we're alone, in a crowd, with a friend, or an enemy...He is with us in our joy, achievements, laughter, and blessings. He is with us always.

This means SO much for us. For anything that we have gone through, are going through, or will go through, the incredible reality of knowing that God is with us gives us the strength to continue on.

But, although all of these things are true, I don't think it is necessarily what Jesus is talking about when He promised His presence. The specific context in which Jesus is talking about is in witnessing – the Great Commission - in proclaiming who Jesus is and what He's done.

Here's one thing that Jesus said earlier in His ministry that helps show this point.

#### Mark 13:9-11

<sup>9</sup> "But be on your guard. For they will deliver you over to councils, and you will be beaten in synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them. <sup>10</sup> And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations. <sup>11</sup> And when they bring you to trial and deliver you over, do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit."

The greatest reason people don't witness is because of fear. I think it's right in line with public speaking, probably for many of the same reasons. What Jesus is talking about in these verses should naturally give us more reason to fear than public speaking or simply sharing our faith. It talks about being in front of rulers and being beaten.

I did a little exercise last Thursday in our weekly Bible study with the youth. I asked them when do they feel most helpless, and when do they feel most able/courageous. I asked them to picture a huge log that's too heavy for you to lift but you have to get it into a truck. You feel helpless. But what if you have someone that's really strong with you, helping you? You feel able and courageous. That's how many of us are in our lives. You think you are alone, so you feel helpless. But, remember who is with you!

**If we have Jesus with us, we have no reason to fear.** Some people say there are 365 instances of "fear not" in the Bible, one for every day of the year. I don't know how true that is, but I do know the Bible very often tells us not to fear, because we are so prone to it. Also, many of the instances of God telling us not to fear are directly tied to the promise of His presence with us. Take these two for example.

**Joshua 1:9**

*"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."*

**Matthew 10:26-33**

*<sup>26</sup> "So have no fear of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. <sup>27</sup> What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. <sup>28</sup> And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. <sup>29</sup> Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. <sup>30</sup> But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. <sup>31</sup> Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. <sup>32</sup> So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, <sup>33</sup> but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven."*

Jesus is talking about being a witness in this Matthew passage, and what are we a witness about? Emmanuel. The same thing that strengthens us to proclaim from the rooftops is the same thing that we proclaim from the rooftops...God is with us! Jesus has come! Jesus is here! Jesus can be yours! Forever!

This is the Good News – this is the Gospel. What we're talking about here is evangelism. We get our word evangelism from the Greek word εὐαγγέλιον (*eungellion*). You know what that word means? "Good news."

**Jesus is good news.**

With all the news of the pandemic going on right now, we need good news! The world is longing for good news! Why is Jesus good news, and why should we tell others about Him? Let's look at a story in Scripture that will show us the immediate blessing that comes from trusting Jesus – the story of the woman who touched the fringe of Jesus' garment.

## Mark 5:21-34

<sup>21</sup> And when Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered about him, and he was beside the sea. <sup>22</sup> Then came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name, and seeing him, he fell at his feet <sup>23</sup> and implored him earnestly, saying, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well and live." <sup>24</sup> And he went with him.

And a great crowd followed him and thronged about him. <sup>25</sup> And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, <sup>26</sup> and who had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse. <sup>27</sup> She had heard the reports about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment. <sup>28</sup> For she said, "If I touch even his garments, I will be made well." <sup>29</sup> And immediately the flow of blood dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. <sup>30</sup> And Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone out from him, immediately turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my garments?" <sup>31</sup> And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing around you, and yet you say, 'Who touched me?'" <sup>32</sup> And he looked around to see who had done it. <sup>33</sup> But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling and fell down before him and told him the whole truth. <sup>34</sup> And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

For 12 years, she suffered with some type of blood disease. Because of this, she would not have been welcomed in any public place. She could not have gathered among the worshippers in the synagogue, and she would not have been permitted to touch the rabbi.

For over a decade, she had gone to the doctors. Surely she hoped day after day that *this* doctor would have the cure, but no healing came. Surely she longed for the day when the bleeding would stop, yet that day did not come. Surely she dreamed of a time when she would be welcomed among the crowds; however, no such time would come. See the repetition in verse 26, "...and who had *suffered much* under many physicians, and has spent *all* that she had, and was no better but rather *became worse*."

By now, this woman had had all that she could take. Then, she made her way to Jesus. Tossing aside all cultural prohibitions, she somehow snaked her way through the crowd to touch Jesus. Then in faith, she reached out and touched his garment. Instantaneously, Jesus did what no physician had been able to do in 12 years. The Messiah healed her, restoring her broken body to health and her wounded soul to redemption. Never would she be the same after the Son of God called her out, proclaimed her his "daughter," and gave her eternal life.

What a story!! We could end it right there...most people do. In fact, every time I have heard this story taught, it has stopped right there, but I think we miss a crucial point of the story if we stop with that. There's an unnamed hero in this story – look at vs 27 and see if you can see them. Somewhere, somehow, by someone this woman had heard something about Jesus. We don't know who spoke to her nor do we know what they said. Maybe they said something like, "I hear He gives sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf, maybe He can heal you!" Whoever it was that spoke to this woman, she heard enough that she would risk all to get to this One named Jesus.

This unknown person likely took a risk to point a hurting woman to Jesus, who had already stirred up trouble among the religious leaders. The dramatic change in the woman, though, was undoubtedly worth the risk. A diseased woman was now well. One unwelcomed among the crowds was now welcomed by the Son of God. An outcast was now proclaimed a daughter. A woman with a dying future now had renewed hope.

THAT is what Jesus brings, and THAT is why we bring people to Jesus. THAT is good news!

There are diseased people all around you that need to know the cure...dying from sin and not being able to heal themselves, no matter how hard they try or how much money they spend. If someone denies that they need help—denies that God exists or that they are a sinner in need of a Savior—means we should be all the more willing and eager to share with them who Jesus is and what He's done.

If someone has cancer but denies that they do and will not listen to the advice of the doctors, what do you do? If you want them to live, you persuade them! You do whatever you can and risk whatever social awkwardness it takes to persuade them that, "If you don't get treatment, you *will* die." There are people all around you that are struggling through life, without the only one that can truly give them life. They need to know that Jesus didn't only come, but that He's here, and that they can go to Him!

Do not fear. He is with you. Who are you going to tell about Jesus? This is the prime time for you to send a message, make a phone call, share your testimony online. God has people's attention right now. He wants each person to know Him. And He intends to do that through your witness of the good news that we all need to hear.