

Text: Matthew 1:23
Theme: God With Us

December 23, 2018

How many times has someone asked you something and your response was, "I know I should know, but I can't think of it at the moment? I must be having one of those senior moments?" Knowing, yet forgetting isn't something we like to do, but it happens. In a few days, we will celebrate another Christmas. As we do, we will be reminded once again of Immanuel - God with us. Today, we focus on those familiar and precious words because we often forget them when we need them most.

I. As we know, Christ came to be with us. A. Yet we often forget that God is with us.
1. We forget because we think we are self-sufficient. We don't like the reminder, but sometimes we act like the two-year old who cries out with great boldness, "I can do it all by myself." Our society has done a great job of teaching us to be independent, to be self-sufficient. As a result, we feel guilty asking for help and often view it as a sign of weakness. Because we think we can handle it, we forget what we need to remember. In our moments of crisis, we forget God is with us. It's not ignorance. It's forgetfulness. We forget when we desperately need to remember.

2. We forget because we fail to understand the significance of God with us. How many of you like to be alone? We may like our independence and we may like a little peace and quiet on occasion, but, truth be told, we don't like to be alone. We want to know someone is there for us when we need them. But thinking we are alone is faulty thinking. God's promise is, "I will be with you always. When you forget, I will not forget. When you feel alone, I will be there. No matter what you face, I will never leave you alone!" Those words are great words, comforting words. Yet because we fail to understand the value of those words, they too often fall on deaf ears.

B. What encourages us to remember that God is with us far beyond the Christmas season?
1. We are encouraged by the assurance that He is our Wonderful Counselor. Those are the precious words we imprint on our hearts. Today, God is your Counselor. Tomorrow, God will be your Wonderful Counselor. He will be there to listen when you need to unload, to speak those words of comfort to your heart. As your Wonderful Counselor, He will lift you up when you are down, reinvigorate you when you have lost your energy. God with us as our Wonderful Counselor reminds us every day that, come what may, God will still comfort us.

2. We are encouraged by the reminder that He is our Prince of Peace. Imagine everything in your life were suddenly peaceful, that the hectic pace became a peaceful pace, that the perceived expectations were suddenly replaced with peaceful expectations, that your busy schedule suddenly became a peaceful schedule. We can dream of what it could be like or we can believe in the Prince of Peace and allow Him to bring us peace. Because God is with us as our Prince of Peace, peace is possible. It's available. The question of the moment is, "Will I remember the Prince of Peace is with me and believe in His power when I need it most?"

3. We are encouraged by remembering He is our mighty God. Here's a question for you to ponder about our mighty God, "Can God create a rock so big that He can't lift it?" That's a foolish question, isn't? A far more useful question is, "Will God help me? In my lowest moments, will God come through for me?" Because God is with us as our Mighty God, the answer is, "Absolutely!" How do we know? Because

He is your Mighty God and my Mighty God. To discover His incredible power is to ask, to believe, to lean on our God absolutely convinced that God can fix what we cannot fix, that His power is unlimited, that God can do anything God chooses to do.

4. We are encouraged by the reminder that He is our Savior. Luke says, "A Savior has been born to you." As we hear that statement, what word stands out? The word is "Savior," right? But before we pull out that single word and move on, God with us says, "Look more carefully. Your Savior has been born, but, most importantly, He has been born to you, for you." In the midst of all the Christmas activities, activities that can easily overshadow God with us, our God says, "I sent My Son for you. He came to save you, to give you that promise of eternal life, and to give you the assurance that I am with you today, tomorrow, and every day of your life."

C. Because we know God is with us, what's our response? 1. We respond by spreading the news. "The shepherds spread the word which had been told to them." But the part we often miss is the next statement, "And all those who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said." Today, you and you and I, we have news so great we can't keep it to ourselves! Nobody liked those smelly lowlife shepherds, but on that first Christmas, people listened and were amazed. As we share that same story, we should expect a response of amazement. When God touches hearts through our simple words and actions, amazed will be their response.

2. We respond by returning here to worship. What were the shepherds doing a week after their journey to Bethlehem? We have every reason to believe that worship was still their response. Every Sunday, Immanuel, God with us, invites us into His presence to remind us that He will be with us in the week ahead, that He will comfort us in our discouraging moments, and to assure us that He has the power to handle whatever happens in our week. As we gather in this place, we gather to be immersed in and surrounded by God with us in such a way that the week ahead goes better than we ever imagined possible.

3. We respond by returning to life with a renewed perspective and attitude. As those shepherds watched their flocks and gazed up at the sky, they knew life would never be the same again. As we walk out those doors today and every week ahead, our great Immanuel says, "Step into life with a new perspective, a new attitude because I am with you. Then, things will look different and things will be different." That may sound like wishful thinking as we look at the week ahead, but however it may look, God has made a promise and because God is with us, life will be different, better, more joy-filled. It can be no other way because we have Immanuel, God with us.

4. Sometimes we forget what we know. Yet when we know Him and experience Him working in our lives, we will remember what we know. We will remember Immanuel - God in us, God beside us, God with us. Amen.