

Devotions with Matt

April 16, 2020

IMMANUEL

Right after the genealogy of Jesus is His birth narrative starting with the Immaculate Conception and Joseph's right decision to take Mary as his wife. This story is usually reserved for Christmas sermons, but right in the story of the angel telling Joseph what is going on is the Good News of our Savior's birth that is for all seasons- not just Christmas.

The first Good News comes as the angel tells Joseph to name their son Jesus which is a variant of the name Joshua which means The Lord saves. He is told to name Him that because "He will save His people from their sins." We most often associate being saved from our sins to forgiveness, and while that is true, there is a bigger and grander plan in place when it comes to forgiveness of our sins: Reconciliation to God.

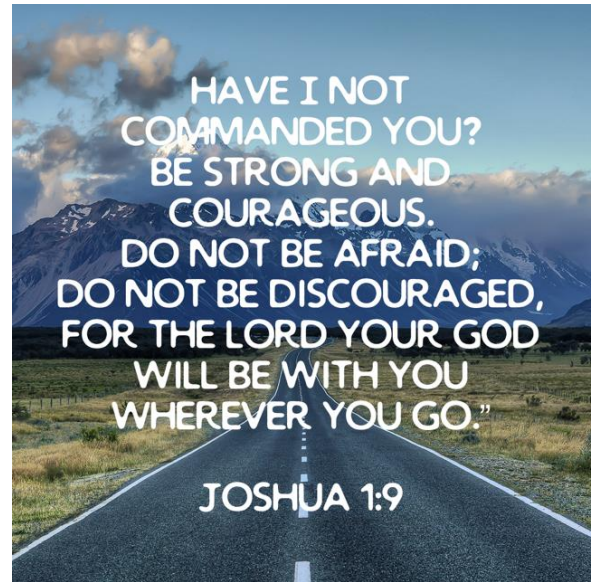
Sometimes God is thought of an angry Master at His creation because of our sin. Often He is looked at as someone desiring to punish every wrong doing in our lives or withholding His love and friendship simply because He does not like the way we live. While it is true that God is angry at sin, it is also true that all of His wrath was poured out on Jesus on the cross and now, for us, there is no condemnation in Christ Jesus. We have been cleansed of our sins by His shed blood and freed from the burden and punishment of sin. So God does not hold His love and friendship back from us in His anger. But if we do not ask for forgiveness and accept Jesus as Lord in our lives, our sins remain in us. It is then that we are separated from God, not because He is an angry Master, but because He is holy. A holy God, perfect and righteous, cannot enter into the presence of sin. Therefore our relationship with Him is broken. The Good News is that Jesus was born to save His people from their sins, to wash them away with His holy blood, in order to repair and reconcile our broken relationship with God. He is Jesus.

The other Good News I find in reading the second part of Matthew chapter 1 is what Jesus will also be called: Immanuel- which means God with us. The two go hand in hand. Jesus cleanses us from our sins and restores our relationship with God. But that relationship does not have to wait for heaven. Immanuel means God is with us today. He is with us in the good times in life and the bad. He is with us on the mountaintop and in the valley. He is with us in our homes, places of work and wherever you are reading this devotion. He is with us everywhere. That means whatever you are going through right now He is there. Whatever you are feeling right now He is with you. He is Comforter, Healer, Deliverer and Redeemer. He is Immanuel.

So whatever you are going through during this time remember that God is with you. It is so easy to look at the problems and obstacles we are facing and forget to look up and see Jesus right there with us. It is easy to feel alone and forget to reach out and grab His outstretched hand. It is easy to be afraid of the unknown and forget that His perfect love drives out all fear. It is easy to think that life is too difficult and forget that His power is made perfect in our weakness.

The message I got in reading through Matthew chapter 1 this morning is that God is with us and it's all going to be ok. Will you look up to Jesus today and remember He is Immanuel- God with us!

"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." Joshua 1:9



In Christ, Matt