

Remnant Life Church
12.30.22
A Christmas Playlist – O Come, O Come, Immanuel

We have come to the end of our Christmas Playlist

- For those of you who have not been with us the past several weeks we looking at 4 familiar Christmas carols and a deeper meaning they each carry beyond the lyrics and melodies that we have come to know so well
 - The First Noel
 - The angels brought their announcement of Jesus' birth to the lowest on the cultural ladder – shepherds
 - Because Jesus did not come for only the rich, the powerful, or the learned but for everyone!
 - Away in a Manger
 - Why a manger for the Son of God?
 - The manger is, among other things, a representation of us and our hearts
 - Dirty, sin-filled yet Jesus dwells within each of us when we surrender our lives to Him
 - Joy to the World
 - Joy that the world cannot take away
 - Joy that helps us to remember the great blessings of God in our lives even in the face of the difficult things we must deal with
 - This evening we complete the playlist with O Come, O Come, Immanuel

Emmanuel is a name given to Jesus meaning “God with us”

- **Matt 1:23** – *The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel – which means, “God with us.”*
- This evening we look briefly at the fact that we serve a God who did not see us in our sin and move away from us, leaving us to die in sin
- Instead, He came close to us in the person of Jesus Christ
 - This is called the incarnation
 - Almighty God willingly taken on human form
 - As the apostle John wrote in **John 1:14** - *The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us...*
- CS Lewis wrote, *The central miracle proclaimed by Christians is to say that God became a man.*

This is the Good News the angels spoke of that first night that is a source of great joy for each of us

- It is the greatest of all miracles
- For without it, we have no hope, we have no source of joy, and we are dependent only on what man is capable of doing without God
- And we are all witnesses right now of the depravity of man's heart apart from God

For the next few minutes, as we begin to bring our Christmas service to a close, I want to share with you what this Christmas miracle means to us that God decided, not to move away, but move closer to us through the birth of a child in a manger.

1. Because God is close, we receive His love

- a. When we read the Bible, at any place from Genesis through to Revelation, we are reading of God's love
- b. From His love for His people the Israelites to His words of correction and warning given through the prophets
- c. From the coming of Jesus to the words of John and the end of days God's love is evident
- d. It is that same love that He has for you this evening in spite of man's continual desire for independence
 - i. **Gen 3:23-24** - *So the LORD God banished Adam from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.*
 - ii. This is perhaps one of the saddest scriptures in all of the Bible
 1. Adam and Eve were in a perfect, harmonious, and physically close relationship with God
 2. But they decided to disobey God, give in to the temptation brought by satan, and were separated from God because of the curse of sin
 3. But we see God remain loving to His creation
 - a. Loving but also just
 - b. Sin carries consequence every time and we read of that as well
 - c. But God never stopped loving us
- e. One of those prophets who spoke for God was Isaiah
 - i. Isaiah foretells of the coming of Jesus 700 years before it happened
 - ii. These were the same words that Matthew wrote of
 - iii. **Isa 7:14** – *Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign; The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call Him Immanuel.*
 - iv. God's love was present but distant because of sin
 - v. Jesus, as the incarnation, the physical manifestation of God's love would forever change the relationship between God and man by coming close to us here on earth
- f. And God's presence would remain even after Jesus returned to heaven
 - i. **John 16:7-8** - *But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate (meaning the Holy Spirit) will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment:*
 - ii. It is through the Holy Spirit that we maintain that closeness to God and know His love while also being reminded of our need for Him

2. Because God is close, we have light

- a. Each of the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) tell of the coming of Jesus
- b. But John does it differently than the other three
 - i. **John 1:5-9** - *The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.*
 - ii. John contrasts the light of Jesus Christ that came into a dark world
 1. Why is the world dark?
 2. Because of the presence of sin
 3. Sin is characterized by darkness
 - a. Face it, it is easy to think of a time when you did something you should not have
 - b. Was it done where everyone could see?
 - c. Or was it done in secret, in darkness, to hide what was being done?
 - iii. Jesus is called the light of the world
 1. He was the one who referenced Himself in this way
 2. **John 8:12** - *When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life."*
 3. To walk in the light means you must be close to it
 4. We can do that because God is close to us

3. Finally, because God is close to us, we can get close to Him

- a. Because God is close and gives us His love, because He is close and is the true source of light, we too can become close to Him and to others
- b. What do I mean by that?
 - i. Our life is about relationships
 1. First our relationship with God
 2. Second, our relationship with others
 - a. Jesus was asked what the greatest command was, and He answered as recorded in **Matt 22:37-40**
 - b. *Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."*
 - ii. Knowing the love of God means sharing that love with others
 1. It means demonstrating that love
 2. It means being kind when others are not
 3. It means offering to help those who are struggling even when it means you get nothing in return

4. It means being willing to tell others what Jesus Christ has done for you and how you are changed because of Him

Immanuel – God with us

- The nature, character, and measure of God is unfathomable to us
 - Our minds are not capable of understanding God
 - The best we can do is try and explain Him in a way that makes sense to us but fully knowing that it is not even whisper of who He truly is
- Yet God went to great lengths to make Himself available to us
- To be with us
 - That is the true miracle of Christmas
 - He is close to you right now, this very minute, here in this service
 - But He is not restricted to a particular season of the year, a particular day of the week or a specific type of building
 - He is with you every day, in every situation, in every moment of your lives
- That is the reason for the season
 - God came down, in the form of a human being to dwell, to walk, and to live among us
 - If you remember nothing else from our time together this evening remember this...
 - God loves you and is with you always!
- May this truth fill you with the joy, the hope, and comfort so desperately needed in these times and may you carry the beauty of this season with you every day throughout the year because He is Immanuel, God with us!