

My Favorite Thing About CHRISTMAS

Matthew 1:22-23

December 25, 2021

I had to think about this sermon for a minute because Christmas is not my favorite holiday.

I started getting Christmas catalogues in September – showcasing all the stuff my loved ones would be unable to live without – UGH!

In early October the Christmas trees and decorations were already up at the Home Depot – UGH!

In my neighborhood, as soon as the Halloween lawn décor came down the Christmas lawn décor went up, double UGH!

Christmas is not a time of year that I love, but it seemed appropriate to continue with the theme of our English language series, *“My Favorite Thing About”*, so after pondering the topic a while, I decided that **My Favorite Thing About CHRISTMAS** is ---- *“God WITH Us”*.

2 Corinthians 1:20 tells us – *“For no matter how many promises God has made, they are ‘YES’ in Christ....”*

That’s really what it’s all about. From the moment Adam and Eve sinned and were promised, *“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”* {Genesis 3:15} to the moment of His birth, when Mary *“... wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger....”* {Luke 2:7}, the story of scripture is the story of Jesus.

John 1:18 tells us – *“No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father’s side, has made him known.”*

God revealed himself through Jesus and that began in the Old Testament:

- Who spoke to Abraham, *“as to a friend”* and sat down to a meal with him? Jesus.
- Who spoke to Moses at the burning bush? Jesus.
- Who wandered around the desert with Israel for 40 years? Jesus.
- Who appeared to Joshua before the battle of Jericho? Jesus.
- Who joined Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego in the furnace? Jesus.

Throughout the entire Old Testament, we see the activity of Jesus – *“God WITH Us”*

The word, *“WITH”* is a preposition and of all the ways it can be used in a sentence, the following is the one that caught my eye: *“used as a function word to indicate the object of attention, behavior, or feeling”*

We are the object of God’s attention – the focus of all heaven’s activity, but by the time the curtain opened on the New Testament, the truth about God had become so distorted that there was a real danger of it being lost altogether. It was then that God chose to send Jesus to earth and clothe Him with humanity in order to make Himself known once again.

- **Matthew 1:22** - All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 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."**
- **John 1:1-14** - In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of men. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it..... ¹⁴ The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Now *“God WITH Us”* would walk the dusty roads of Palestine to heal and restore and reveal the heart of God.

He came so that **WE** might come to know Him, but it’s more than that even, notice Hebrews 4:15 - *“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin. ”*

Because Jesus chose to come and be **WITH** us – He knows what it’s like to **BE** us – He can identify **WITH US**. He can sympathize **WITH** our hurts, our weaknesses, our fears.

He knows what it's like to be tempted:

- **Matthew 4:2-3** - After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³ The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

He knows what it's like to be heartbroken:

- **John 11:35** - Jesus wept.

He knows what it means to be tired:

- **Luke 8:23-24** - As they sailed, he fell asleep. A squall came down on the lake, so that the boat was being swamped, and they were in great danger. ²⁴ The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Master, Master, we're going to drown!" He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm.

He knows betrayal:

- **Mark 14:44-46** - Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard." ⁴⁵ Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Rabbi!" and kissed him. ⁴⁶ The men seized Jesus and arrested him.

He knows abandonment:

- **Matthew 26:55-56** - Jesus said to the multitudes, "Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest Me as against a robber? Every day I used to sit in the temple teaching and you did not seize Me. But all this has taken place that the Scriptures of the prophets may be fulfilled." Then all the disciples left Him and fled.

He knows what it's like to be afraid:

- **Mark 14:34-36** - "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death," he said to them. "Stay here and keep watch." ³⁵ Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that, if possible, the hour might pass from him. ³⁶ "Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

He knows what it means to face death:

- **Mark 15:22-37** - They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha.... ²⁴ And they crucified him..... ³⁴ At the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" -- which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" ³⁷ With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last.

The miracle, the meaning, the message of Christmas is not just that Jesus walked around Palestine for 33 years and healed some people. It's that through His personal experience He is **WITH** us and because He chose to be **WITH** us, we have been given the opportunity to be **WITH** Him – to experience Him.

Because of Jesus, we can experience salvation - we can experience forgiveness - we can experience son-ship.

That's why *"God WITH Us"* is *My Favorite Thing About Christmas*.