

Emmanuel - God with Us

Luke 1:26-30

Intro

God is with us through the good the bad and the ugly times of life. Christmas can be a time of sadness for some. Everybody has dark days. You don't want to get out of bed. You're afraid to face the world. You don't feel like it's worth the effort. You've had an argument with your spouse or family member. Or someone precious to you has passed away. You don't feel like celebrating Christmas. As a matter of fact Christmas can be a low time for some people.

No Matter What Problems We Face, God Is With Us

Mary teaches us that no matter what problems you face, the Lord is with you.

The angel said to Mary, "*Do not be afraid*" (Luke 1:30). But we wouldn't blame Mary if she was afraid. There were valid reasons for her to be afraid.

Imagine the fears and problems she might experience as a result of her pregnancy:

- Possible divorce by Joseph. Joseph at first assumes that Mary has been unfaithful to him. What else would he have thought? He decided to divorce her (which, according to their law, was necessary to end the engagement) before he was told in a dream that Mary's baby was, in fact, conceived by the Holy Spirit. But right now, Mary doesn't know how all of that will work out. But she does know God will be with her, whatever Joseph does.
- Possible rejection by her family. Did Mary's family believe her story that the baby growing inside her was the Son of God? Would you believe that if your daughter told you that story? We are never told anything about Mary's parents' reaction to her pregnancy. But it's very possible that they didn't believe her story. But Mary believes God is with her, no matter how her parents may react.
- Certain rejection by her community. Imagine the gossip that must have circulated Nazareth. The people would have accused her of adultery—a sin that was not looked on lightly as it is today. It's likely that Mary was shunned by those who had once been her friends. But Mary believes God is with her, even if her friends and community abandon her.
- Possible stoning according to the law. According to the religious law, this was the penalty for adultery. By New Testament times stoning was rare, but it was still a possibility. Especially when we read in John 8 about the religious leaders who caught a woman in adultery and were ready to stone her.
- The stress and discomfort of travel. Mary probably felt distressed in the very first Christmas. In the first place, she was 9 months pregnant and she had to ride a donkey from Nazareth to Bethlehem. That would be stressful. She has the first baby she's ever had by herself, alone in a stable with Joseph and the animals. That would be stressful. But God was with her!
- The disappointment of finding no adequate place to give birth. I imagine Mary experienced difficulty in the very first Christmas. She has been told that she was to bear the Messiah,

the Son of God. And she gives birth in a stable. I think that would be disappointing. Not in the Holiday Inn, not even in a hospital. She has the baby in a barn, a stable. Life can be disappointing sometimes.

I imagine Mary went through a lot. It was very difficult for her. A most strenuous situation for a young girl to face and experience. How could she be calm and courageous as she faced all of the challenges that her pregnancy might cause?

She would cling to the words the angel spoke in Luke 1:28: "*The Lord is with you.*" The Lord would be with her. He would help her. He would give her the strength and courage to face anything. Emmanuel, the Lord is with you!

Conclusion

No matter what your problems, the Lord is with you. Bring those problems to Him and trust Him to work them out, and He will, just as surely as He worked them all out for Mary. Remember what the angel told Mary, "*The Lord is with you*" (Luke 1:28).

Psalm 34:18 "*The Lord is near to those who are discouraged; he saves those who have lost all hope.*" The first way God encourages us is He says, "I'm with you." "*The Lord is near*"-- He's not left you. Perhaps some of you had tough times this year. Maybe 2016 was a disappointing year. You didn't get the job you thought you were going to get. You didn't get a raise. Your health failed you. Your hopes and dreams and the things you'd hoped would happen didn't materialize. Perhaps a loved one passed away...

Where is God in all that? He's where He's always been. He hasn't left you. Emmanuel – God is with us! He encourages me in difficult times by reminding me that He is with me.

He encourages me by helping me realize He's got a design, a plan, and a purpose for my life. Jeremiah 29 "*The plans I have for you, says the Lord, are plans to prosper you, not to harm you, to give you hope and a future.*" Underline "hope" and "future". God says, "I don't want to hurt you. I want to help you. I created you. I have a future and a hope for you."

This Christmas, you may feel overwhelmed. Maybe you're going through one of those dark days – a time of difficulty. The good news is because of Christmas, "*God is with us.*" We are never alone.

Folks, God is with us. He will never leave us nor forsake us. We are never alone.