

WITH



ADVENT DEVOTIONAL BOOKLET





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The word advent is defined as the arrival of a notable person, thing or event. When we celebrate Advent in our churches, we remember the first arrival of Jesus as “Immanuel (which means, God with us)” (Matthew 1:23) and look forward to His second coming.

While Jesus’ earthly ministry provided a unique context for God to be with His people, the Biblical narrative from Genesis to Revelation affirms that Immanuel is not just true at Christmas; it has always been and will always be God’s desire.

As we move towards Christmas this year, we will reflect on how this theme is developed throughout scripture in the garden, the tabernacle, the temple and the end! It is our hope that this resource will increase your knowledge and love for God, the King of the universe who wants to be WITH you.

Kristal Toews

Discipleship Pastor

WEEK 1

GOD WITH US IN THE GARDEN

As the Biblical story began, Genesis 1 and 2 affirm that God is distinct from His creation but present in it. He spoke and the earth was formed and filled. He delighted in what He had created, calling it good. He approached animals and humankind with blessing and, finally, He rested. As Adam began exploring the garden and his purpose within it, God communicated with him, watched over him, and created a woman to be in relationship with him. God was WITH His people in the Garden.

Kristal Toews

Discipleship Pastor





WEEK 1

GOD WITH US IN THE GARDEN

DEC. 2

God WITH Us Before Time

JOHN 17:25, ROMANS 5:5, EPHESIANS 1:4-5

Joshua Scott - Weekend & Teaching Ministries Pastor

Have you ever wondered what God was up to before He created the world? I mean, He's existed for an eternity before ever forming the universe, so how did He pass the time? Well, without getting into the mind-bending thought that time itself didn't exist yet, the Bible actually does give us an answer about what God was doing before there was a world and the answer is surprisingly good news for you and me today.

In John 17:25, Jesus is praying to His Father and He says, "before the foundation of the world, you loved me." Before anything else existed, before there was time, space, solar systems and water cycles, black holes and black widows, God the Father was loving His Son. And He did this by the Spirit. Romans 5:5 teaches us that "God's love has been poured into [the hearts of believers] through the Holy Spirit" so the way that God the Father communicates His love, even to His own Son, is through the Spirit. Which means that in eternity-past, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit were enjoying love and fellowship WITH one another.

Now, at this point you might be thinking to yourself, “Ok, great. But I don’t really see how that applies to me.” That would be fair. But let me add one more Bible passage to this mix and I think you’ll see just how much of a difference this makes.

In Ephesians 1, Paul is describing the incredible outcome of salvation for lost sinners. He basically says that all those who have been saved, who have come to Jesus in repentance and faith, were chosen by the Father (vv.3-6), redeemed by the Son (vv.7-10), and sealed with the Spirit (vv.11-14). All of which amounts to a shocking guarantee that the Christian will receive the greatest inheritance that God can offer: eternity WITH Him. But near the beginning He says something that should catch our attention. Paul writes, “[God] chose us before the foundation of the world... In love, He predestined us for adoption to Himself as sons through Jesus Christ.” (vv. 4-5).

Let’s pull a few threads together here. We just established that before God created anything, the Father, Son, and Spirit were enjoying love and fellowship WITH each other. But, according to Ephesians 1, He was also preparing a plan to call His people, whom He hadn’t yet even made, into love and fellowship WITH Him too. And more than that! He was planning to adopt them to Himself as sons. Not meaning that it was going to be a boys club, but that all believers, male and female, would enjoy with God what the eternal Son Himself enjoyed. Just as the Son was the eternal object of the Father’s love, that Son was to become the “firstborn of many brothers” (Romans 8:29), who would themselves, WITH Jesus, become the objects of the Father’s eternal love poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.

So the story of a God who persistently desires to be WITH His people that we'll spend our Advent season exploring isn't a story that began in the Garden of Eden. It predates even that. It's a story that began in the love and fellowship that the Father, Son, and Spirit shared WITH each other for eternity past, and it's a story that will end with all of His people enjoying an eternity WITH Him too.

And what do we do with this kind of message? Well, two things: 1) if you haven't yet trusted in Jesus, the Son of God, as your saviour, consider what you're missing out on. By simply turning from whatever else you've been chasing in this world and humbly accepting God's forgiveness this story could be your story. And 2) if you have trusted in Jesus, simply enjoy. Enjoy the love of your eternal Father poured out into your heart through the Holy Spirit and the guarantee that your present and your future is a present and future WITH Him. Enjoy this season of advent in a special way this year, and day after day, ponder the wonderful message of the Bible that God has been relentlessly pursuing, on page after page, fellowship WITH His people.

PRAYER: *Father, we can't help but marvel at your incredible plans. That before all things were made, you had decided to redeem your people from their sin and invite them to share in the love that your Son has eternally enjoyed. We could never earn or deserve that kind of grace, forgiveness, and affection, yet you freely give it. Help us this Christmas season to thoroughly enjoy what we have received from you: undeserved kindness, grace to approach your throne in prayer, space to hear you speak in Scripture, and hope for a full and endlessly satisfying future WITH you. Would you be magnified and adored in our hearts and minds this advent. Amen.*



WEEK 1

GOD WITH US IN THE GARDEN

DEC. 3

God WITH Us in Relationship

GENESIS 1:26-28

Kristal Toews - Discipleship Pastor

My father is a woodworker and has a basement full of tools. So, when we would drop our kids off to hang out with Grandma and Grandpa, they would often spend time sawing, nailing and painting new inventions. When we returned they would proudly present these items, explaining why they made them, and what they were designed to do.

Because they created each item, our kids had the authority to determine their purpose. This authority is the right and responsibility of every creator, and we see this conviction clearly represented in the Bible's opening chapters. Genesis 1:1-2:6 describes all that God made and why; and, in the midst of this story, we read that God created people and defined our purpose. Genesis 1:27-28 reads,

“27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God He created Him; male and female He created them. **28** And God blessed them. And God said, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it...’”

People were created in God's image to reflect and represent Him on earth. People were created male and female so that, together, they could achieve this purpose. By being fruitful and multiplying, people would create more image bearers who live in relationship WITH their creator God.

Today, people continue to fulfill the purpose of their creator physically and spiritually. Christian people invite other image bearers (their children, friends, neighbours and family members) to life WITH the God who made this relationship possible.

PRAYER: *Lord, thank you that you created us as image bearers to make more image bearers. Whether we are married or single, young or old, teach us to live in a way that reflects and represents you and invites others into relationship WITH you: the one who designed us and gives us our purpose.*



WEEK 1

GOD WITH US IN THE GARDEN

DEC. 4

God WITH Us in Work

GENESIS 1:28, 2:15, 18,20

Frank Sawatsky - Outreach & Worship Pastor | Mission

“15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.”

- Genesis 2:15

I don't know about you, but I love gardening. However, our cold, wet, and often sunless winter days prove difficult to plant and harvest. It's rather challenging to “garden” during Advent. Even the little that you can do while planting bulbs, winter crops, or simply preparing your soil is quickly overshadowed by the impending snow fall. We all have to hold out hope for when winter passes and the first sign of spring, a crocus, pops through the soil. Then the memory of a bleak winter fades, as the enjoyment and beauty of spring bursts forth, especially here in The Valley. This longing or anticipation has been felt since The Fall.

Before sin entered the world, the Garden of Eden would have been something to marvel at! No thistles or thorns. No gloomy days or lack of sunlight. No decay or death. But a place where growth thrived. Yes, a place that required work and care (like Genesis 2:15 suggests), but a place of bounty, wholeness, flourishing, and togetherness with God.

Since sin entered the world, that picture of God with us in work has changed, but still holds true! We now struggle and toil and long for relief. But God is with us, by His Spirit, equipping us for the work we partake in.

So how do you think about your work? Is God *with you* in your work? Take a moment and ask yourself: Does He help guide, direct, and lead me in my work? Does He receive the glory and honour when my hard work pays off? Do I do all things unto Him, giving thanks for the ability to carry out my tasks? And when things get difficult or challenging, do I face it with hope, trusting that there will be a day when all things sad become untrue; when Heaven will collide with Earth and God will be with His people? It's here that we'll see a new garden. One where we'll work and and be in perfect relationship with the Father.

This Advent, pray that God would give you the insight to see the value in your work, as we labour on caring for and cultivating the world; not in vain, but with hope for His return.

PRAYER: *Father, would you give me insight to see the value in my work, as I labour on caring for and cultivating the world; not in vain, but with hope for your return. Lord I pray that in all of my efforts, whatever I put my hand to, that I would be aware of your power and presence. Thank you for the gifts and abilities you have given me and your church. I ask that you would use us in mighty ways, for our good and your glory, Amen.*



WEEK 1

GOD WITH US IN THE GARDEN

DEC. 5

God WITH Us...Disrupted

GENESIS 3:1-8

Eric Heath - Central Abbotsford Pastor

Several years ago, one of my children (who shall remain anonymous) was sent to their room as a consequence for some misbehaviour. After the time out had been served, the child came back downstairs, apologized, and rejoined the family activities as normal. It was only at bedtime that the truth was discovered: the “time out” had been spent trashing the bedroom! A closed door had kept the sin hidden from dad for a short while, but it was only a matter of time before all became evident.

My child had tried to hide disobedience from me in order to maintain our relationship. It has been this way since that fateful day in the garden when the serpent deceived our first parents into transgressing the commands of their God. Genesis 3:8 bluntly describes their efforts at covering up their own sin:

“8 And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.”

God had created humans in His image to be WITH them, in perfect relationship, for eternity. Despite this, Adam and Eve not only allowed the serpent to come between them and God, they sought to hide themselves and their actions from Him, presumably in the hope that God could be WITH them, just as before.

Of course, He could not. God had told them that if they ate of the tree, they would surely die. It was all over—at least it should have been. But...

Well, we now know that God had a plan, and the sin of humanity would not supersede His desire to be WITH His people for all eternity. The rest of this devotional booklet will unpack just how He has pursued presence WITH His people throughout time. We can daily rejoice that we serve a God who loves us this much, despite our efforts at pushing Him away.

PRAYER: *God, we thank you that while we were still sinners, transgressing your commands and hiding from you, you were steadfast in pursuing us and making a way for us to be WITH you through your son, Jesus.*



WEEK 1

GOD WITH US IN THE GARDEN

DEC. 6

God WITH Us in Brokenness

GENESIS 3:8-13, 22-24

Gary Lidstone - Pastor to Seniors

Imagine the delightful scents of blooming flowers and lush grass in a beautiful garden. Picture breakfast hanging low on the branches of fruit trees, while birds sing sweet melodies. Visualize a majestic lion walking gracefully, seeking affection, as animals play fearlessly and butterflies flit about. In this serene paradise, the temperature was so pleasant that clothing was unnecessary. Every evening, God strolled through the garden, enjoying fellowship with Adam and Eve.

Life for these first created beings was filled with divine intent. Created in God's image, they engaged in His plan to enjoy and worship Him forever. However, they disobeyed by eating from the one forbidden tree—the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Instantly, shame washed over them, and they felt the need to hide from God, sewing fig leaves together for cover.

They were accustomed to God walking in the garden each evening, sharing rich conversations. Yet, when God came on the evening of their disobedience, they hid among the trees, attempting to conceal themselves from the One with whom they had shared such deep fellowship.

God called to them, eventually finding them covering in their makeshift clothing. They confessed their disobedience and, in mercy, God killed an animal to provide a covering for their shame.

This was God's first rescue mission. Although Adam and Eve could no longer dwell in the garden, God did not abandon them. Instead, He offered forgiveness through the slain animal whose skin became their covering. Throughout the Scriptures, God sought a people to follow Him, foreshadowing the ultimate rescue—sending His Son to atone for our sins. This is the reason we celebrate Christmas, the ultimate rescue mission. Broken lives can be made new!

PRAYER: *Father God, thank you for rescuing Adam and Eve from their sin. Thank you that you love broken people, and through the gift of your Son Jesus, made a way for us to experience wholeness and sweet fellowship with you now and for eternity.*



WEEK 1

GOD WITH US IN THE GARDEN

DEC. 7

God WITH Us in Reconciliation

2 CORINTHIANS 5:18-21

Jon Pasiuk - Pastor of Care

As a teenager, I had the opportunity to go on a missions trip to Makiivka, Ukraine. Our team spent the majority of our time working with orphans. Some were living in an MCC home where they were loved and cared for. Others lived in state-run institutions called “internats” that were little more than jails for children; an environment more like the world of *Oliver Twist* than the world I grew up in.

The experience created a crisis for me. When I looked at those kids I felt like I was seeing another me. If I valued my life and my future; how could I not value theirs as well? How could I do nothing about their suffering? There must be something I could do, but what?

The trouble is that more often than not there aren't any quick fixes for these troubles. The world is broken and the scale is beyond what any of us can handle.

This has been our human experience ever since sin came into the world. All creation is longing for reconciliation with God. The good news is, this situation is not hopeless. All of our pain, sorrow and scarcity is ultimately healed when we are reconciled to our Creator.

We become new creations, and God entrusts us with this ministry of reconciliation.

“**17** Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. **18** All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; **19** that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. **20** Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”

- 2 Corinthians 5:17-20

God takes the initiative to reconcile us to Himself, and then call us to be a part of his work. Each of us have been entrusted with resources, energy, skills, and time which we must choose how to use. Not all of the things we pursue will prove worth our time and effort in the end. Even good things we do for others may only alleviate their troubles for a moment. But God’s kingdom is eternal, and the things we do in faithful service as ambassadors of Christ will prove worthwhile for all eternity.

PRAYER: *Lord, I thank you that, through the cross, I have been reconciled to you. Make me an instrument of your peace. May all of my relationships, my efforts, my thoughts, and my priorities be aligned with the call to be your ambassador.*



WEEK 2

GOD WITH US IN THE TABERNACLE

In Genesis 3 sin entered the world and, since sinful people cannot enter the presence of a Holy God, there was a new obstacle to God being with us. Rather than giving up, however, God called Abraham to follow Him and promised to bless the world through his family (Genesis 12).

God revealed Himself in various ways to Abraham and his sons, and eventually delivered their descendants from slavery in Egypt and gave their new leader (Moses) instructions to build a portable place of worship (the tabernacle), so that He could dwell in their midst (Exodus 25:8). Exodus 40:34-38 affirms that God was WITH His people in the Tabernacle.

Kristal Toews

Discipleship Pastor





WEEK 2

GOD WITH US IN THE TABERNACLE

DEC. 9

God WITH Us in the Tabernacle

GENESIS 12:1-3, GENESIS 22

Bonny Wormald - Children's Pastor | Abbotsford

As a parent, I see the power of presence or WITH-ness in the simplest, most tender moments. When my children are unwell, they seek the comfort of being with me or their Dad. They desire a WITH-ness that is constant. Being near them—physically, mentally and emotionally—makes them feel safe and connected, offering them peace and comfort. These moments are a reminder that sometimes, just being with the people we love and feel loved by in return is enough to feel a sense of peace.

In a way, this is a small picture of what God wanted with Abraham—and with us. From the beginning, God desired and pursued a close relationship with His people. In Genesis 12:1-3, God calls Abraham out of his homeland, promising to be with him and make him a great nation. God didn't just call Abraham to set him on a distant journey alone, He promised His presence and blessing. Throughout scripture, God's WITH-ness is demonstrated in His relentless pursuit of a people for Himself.

Later, in Genesis 22, we see this promise of WITH-ness on a deeper level.

When God asked Abraham to offer his son Isaac on Mount Moriah, Abraham obeyed, likely with a heavy heart yet trusting that God would somehow provide. Just as Abraham was about to sacrifice Isaac, God stopped him and provided a ram in his place. In that moment, God was showing Abraham that He is not only with us but is our Provider—even in our most desperate moments. God’s presence was real on that mountain; and, He showed it by providing a sacrificial substitute, foreshadowing the ultimate sacrifice God Himself would one day make.

Today, God’s promise of WITH-ness is fulfilled in Jesus—God with us. Jesus offered Himself as the substitute for our sins, just like the ram for Isaac. And, just like Isaac didn’t resist being the sacrifice, Jesus didn’t resist being a sacrifice for His people, securing a forever WITH-ness that would be an unshakeable hope for His people.

PRAYER: *Lord Jesus, thank you for giving yourself as a sacrifice for us and securing a forever WITH-ness. Help us remember that you are with us now, just as you were with Abraham. You, who camped with your people and provided the perfect sacrifice, have promised never to leave us. Be our comfort, our peace, our Provider. Help us trust in your faithful presence. You are God with us, now and forever. Amen.*



WEEK 2

GOD WITH US IN THE TABERNACLE

DEC. 10

God WITH Us in our Dreams and Setbacks

GENESIS 28:10-22

Martin Greindl - East Abbotsford & Community & Care Pastoral Intern

J.R.R Tolkien once said, “A single dream is more powerful than a thousand realities.” As a writer of fiction, Tolkien knew of the influence a dream could have on a story. But, could you imagine the power of a dream that shows true reality in a way no one else can see? Genesis 28 tells of that dream. Jacob, Abraham's grandson, is running for his life after he deceived his father. You probably remember that Esau, his brother, wanted him dead (27:41).

So, Jacob fled to his uncle, Laban. During his escape while sleeping on a stone, something strange happens. Jacob dreams of a ladder reaching heaven with God above it. Surely the sight of angels ascending and descending this ladder could fill a book, but the author wants us to see something else: a promise.

At Bethel, Jacob heard the promise: God would fulfill His covenant with Abraham. But more, Yahweh said, “I will be with you, keep you, and bring you back.” When Jacob was being unfaithful, and running away in fear, the God of the universe came near, saying, ‘You’re not alone. I am not done with you.’

Just think of it: Experiencing heaven while fleeing hell, hearing your heavenly Father after leaving your earthly one, knowing Yahweh will be your God! What Jacob realized was that God was present and faithful to bring him back “in peace.” (Genesis 28:21) Peace. Might that be something you long for—a sign from God that He is with you? Assurance that even though you’ve messed up, He is not done with you? Look to Jesus, the Prince of Peace, who entered this messy world—“God with you” in flesh, hanging on a cross.

Even there, “The Lord was in this place and (we) did not know it” (Genesis 28:16), nailing our faithlessness to a pole, raising a precious “gate of heaven.” If you feel weak, restless or alone, turn to Jesus’ promise: “I am with you until the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:20).

PRAYER: *Father, thank you for not giving up on us. Thank you for being with us. Lord Jesus, thank you for wanting to be our God. Forgive us for our unbelief. Holy Spirit of peace, help us see! Amen.*



WEEK 2

GOD WITH US IN THE TABERNACLE

DEC. 11

God WITH US as He Leads

EXODUS 13:21-22

Dolly Oliech - Missions Pastor

When do you notice the clouds in the sky? For the most part, clouds are so much part of our everyday lives that we don't give them much thought. That changes when you are hoping for sunshine or rain! There are times when a cloud looks unusual and it is noticed. I remember one morning in Uganda being awestruck by the beauty of an ominous cumulus cloud with glorious sunbeams radiating from behind. When seeing this, today's text came to mind:

“21 And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. **22** The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people.”

- Exodus 13:21-22

This must have been a sight to behold for the Israelites. This cloud was a manifestation of God; a physical evidence to the people that God was with them and leading them. The Israelites had just left Egypt. God would direct them to cross at the Red Sea miraculously on dry ground. This pillar of cloud would continue to lead them throughout their wilderness journey into the Promised Land.

In order to be led, the people needed to follow. The cloud leading Israel would be pointless if the people did not actually follow in obedience. It would be a difficult journey for them in the wilderness and they needed to trust His direction. And yet God's presence was ever in front of them, reminding them that He was with them, guiding them along the way.

This image is relevant for us today as well. While we do not physically see the presence of God as the Israelites did, as believers we have the Holy Spirit who dwells within us. God has given us His Word to lead and guide us.

PRAYER: *Lord, we are thankful that you are always with us. We are also grateful for your Word to guide and lead us. We confess that we do not always follow your lead, as we rely on our own wisdom. Help us to look to you: would your Holy Spirit guide, convict, encourage and lead us as we follow you in obedience.*



WEEK 2

GOD WITH US IN THE TABERNACLE

DEC. 12

God WITH Us to Dwell

EXODUS 25:1-8, 29:43-46

Andrew Geddert – Worship Pastor

A living room says a lot about its host. Every item of decor placed, fabric chosen, and colour carefully selected speaks to the taste and preference of its curator. Has the room been warmly lit to create a cozy and inviting atmosphere? Has it been cleaned and organized in such a way as to beckon one inside? A living room presents a glimpse of the nature and character of its host.

In Exodus 25, Yahweh instructed the people of Israel to build Him a sanctuary at Mt. Sinai. It was made to be the living room of a divine king, fully furnished with precious metals, stones, skins, and other items denoting royalty. The ark of the covenant was like God's throne, signifying that the King of kings will live there.

While the Lord had appeared to His people before in fire and cloud, He had not taken up residence in this way since walking in the Garden with Adam and Eve. Of the Tabernacle, Exodus 29:43-45 says, "There I will meet with the people... I will dwell among the people of Israel and will be their God." What the Tabernacle intimates about God is that He desires for people to experience and know His holy presence—even though their sins should repel Him away.

This was the Lord's gracious accommodation. Instead of remaining distant, He chose to set up His living room right in Israel's midst so they would know He was the Lord their God. God has accommodated His presence even further to you and me, sending His Son into the world. He came into our midst, despite our sin, so we can experience and know Him. Just as the Tabernacle did, Jesus reveals God's desire to dwell among us—even in us. By sending the Holy Spirit, God makes His dwelling within each willing heart that would receive Him. If you have placed your faith in Christ, your heart is now His living room. That is cause for incredible peace and comfort this Advent season. It is also cause to ask ourselves, "Does my heart reflect the nature and character of the One who I claim is its host?"

PRAYER: *Lord, thank you for the gift of your presence in Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Help me find comfort in knowing that you dwell within me, and make room in my heart for the furnishings of your will and character.*



WEEK 2

GOD WITH US IN THE TABERNACLE

DEC. 13

God WITH Us in Glory for His Glory

EXODUS 40:1-8, 22-24

Gary Lidstone - Pastor to Seniors

The story of the Exodus, the departure of the Israelites from Egypt, serves as a powerful illustration of God's work in the lives of those who place their faith in Jesus. It begins with the Israelites enduring harsh slavery under the Egyptians, forced into back-breaking labour for Pharaoh's ambitious building projects.

In their suffering, the Israelites cried out to God for deliverance, and He heard them. Egypt acted as an incubator for the nation of Israel, allowing them to grow numerous and strong, but now they yearned for freedom from Pharaoh's oppression. God raised up Moses, who would confront Pharaoh with the command, "Let my people go.". The story unfolds with the ten plagues that God sent upon Pharaoh, ultimately leading to the Israelites' expulsion from Egypt. These were God's chosen people, destined to be a light to the world and a testament to His salvation.

God established the Israelites as a theocracy through the Law given to Moses, guiding them as they journeyed to the Promised Land in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

The former Egyptian slaves were now governed by God through the leadership of Moses and his brother Aaron. God also provided strict instructions to build a portable temple, or Tabernacle, where He would dwell among His people. Once the Tabernacle and its furnishings, including the Ark of the Covenant, were completed, “The cloud covered the Tabernacle, and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle”. Thus, the Israelites transitioned from slavery in Egypt to living in the presence and glory of God, set free to follow Him toward the promised land.

Similarly, the Bible describes us as slaves to sin; but, in Christ, we are liberated to walk with Him, sharing His message with others. May we live as free people, empowered by what Jesus accomplished on Calvary.

PRAYER: *Father, we thank you for your glory and might. We are grateful for how you have set us free from the bondage of sin and the eternal judgment that accompanies it. Empower us by your glorious power to shine brightly for you in our world. May others see the radiance of Immanuel, God with us, as we live in the glorious freedom of your presence.*



WEEK 2

GOD WITH US IN THE TABERNACLE

DEC. 14

God WITH Us unto Eternal Life

JOHN 1:1-5, 9-14

Josh Ratzlaff - Young Adults Pastoral Intern

Last year, my brother brought a beautiful coffee table into our living room. It is a testament to my father, not only because he taught my brother all the skills of using tools and wood finish, but also because he spent years working alongside him.

My dad built our home for us to live in and built into us skills for life development as his children; but, God gives greater life transformation to all willing to receive Him. In speaking about Jesus coming to dwell with humanity in order to give eternal life, John says:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. **2** He was in the beginning with God. **3** All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. **4** In him was life, and the life was the light of men. **5** The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it... **9** The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. **10** He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. **11** He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. **12** But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,

13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. **14** And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

- *John 1:1-5, 9-14*

In Christianity, God is not merely there waiting for us to reach up to Him. He came to dwell among us. Creator God over all the cosmos indwelt human flesh. Why?

So that we might receive Him (11-12), and so that he can adopt us as children, born of God. But why? So that we might be with Him, enjoying Him as the Son enjoys the Father and Father enjoys the Son before the world was created (1-3). In this united joy and love, they created the world for the purpose of us seeing His glory and joining them in their joy.

PRAYER: *Thank you Jesus for not leaving us in darkness, but coming as true light and life to give us new life by receiving you. May we give you glory for your endless truth and grace, amen.*



WEEK 3

GOD WITH US IN THE TEMPLE

As Abraham's descendants (the nation of Israel) settled into the land God provided for them, they initially continued to worship at the tabernacle, but eventually King David voiced the dream of building the LORD a permanent place of worship (2 Samuel 7:1-3), and his son Solomon actually builds this temple (1 Kings 5-8), then, when it was dedicated, "the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD." God was WITH His people in the temple.

Kristal Toews

Discipleship Pastor





WEEK 3

GOD WITH US IN THE TEMPLE

DEC. 16

God WITH Us: Inviting God's Presence

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2 CHRONICLES 7:1-3

Zach Wallace – Central Abbotsford & Community & Care Pastoral Intern

The success of a party rests on one thing: inviting the guest of honour to show up. I have never attended a good party where the birthday boy or girl wasn't there. No matter how great the preparation, the celebration will be a bust if the guest of honour doesn't get the invitation. The passage today comes at the end of a great effort by Solomon and the people of Israel to build a temple for God. We read in 2 Chronicles 7:1-3,

“As soon as Solomon finished his prayer, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the temple. **2** And the priests could not enter the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord filled the Lord's house. **3** When all the people of Israel saw the fire come down and the glory of the Lord on the temple, they bowed down with their faces to the ground on the pavement and worshiped and gave thanks to the Lord, saying, “For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.”

At the end of all the people's effort to build a house for God, Solomon didn't neglect to invite the guest of honour. The prayer Solomon is finishing in our text was a humble prayer of invitation for God to show up to His party!

When God does, worship and thanksgiving breaks out. God's greatest gift today for His church remains His presence in our midst!

Unfortunately, it is easy to forget to invite God. We can live our whole lives building things for the Lord, but when we forget to pray and invite Him into what we are doing, we have prepared a party for a guest we didn't give an invitation to. The encouragement for us is that when God's people humbly came to God, with sincere devotion, it took only Solomon's prayer for God to do what He is delighted to do: come and be with His people.

PRAYER: *God, grant us humble and sincere hearts to seek and ask you to come and fill your Church. That we would worship you with thanksgiving for your goodness and steadfast love in your presence!*



WEEK 3

GOD WITH US IN THE TEMPLE

DEC. 17

God WITH Us...Through the Curtain

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2 CHRONICLES 3:10-14, GENESIS 3:24

Kristal Toews - Discipleship Pastor

In the days before rolling blinds and tinted windows, people guarded the inside of their home from outsiders by hanging curtains. Curtains stopped people from trespassing into private and sacred spaces.

When the temple was constructed, Solomon had a beautiful curtain created to protect its most private and sacred space: the Holy of Holies, where God's spirit dwelled. 2 Chronicles 3:10-14 describes this space and its curtain as follows:

“10 In the Most Holy Place he made two cherubim of wood and overlaid them with gold. **11** The wings of the cherubim together extended twenty cubits: one wing of the one, of five cubits, touched the wall of the house, and its other wing, of five cubits, touched the wing of the other cherub; **12** and of this cherub, one wing, of five cubits, touched the wall of the house, and the other wing, also of five cubits, was joined to the wing of the first cherub. **13** The wings of these cherubim extended twenty cubits. The cherubim stood on their feet, facing the nave. **14** And he made the veil of blue and purple and crimson fabrics and fine linen, and he worked cherubim on it.”

In Genesis 3:24 God placed “the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life” and here, in the temple, cherubim guarded the Most Holy Place and were sewn onto the curtain which stopped people from trespassing into this private and sacred space. Why? Because cherubim were angelic beings associated with protecting the holiness of God.

When Solomon built this temple, God desired to be with His people but they needed to be protected from stumbling into His holy presence, so He warned them by hanging a curtain.

The need for this physical partition remained for about 1000 years until the day that God’s son died. As Jesus gave up His spirit, the temple curtain was torn in two (Matthew 27:51; Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45). Now, because of Jesus’ perfect life, death and resurrection, “We have confidence to enter the holy places... by the new and living way that He opened for us through the curtain, that is, through His flesh (Hebrews 11:19-20)!

PRAYER: *We praise you Jesus for your perfect life and substitutionary death on our behalf, which paid for our sins and grants us access behind the curtain, into the very presence of God!*



WEEK 3

GOD WITH US IN THE TEMPLE

DEC. 18

God WITH Us as the Sacrificial Lamb

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2 CHRONICLES 7:4-5

Jesse Schellenberg - Mission Campus Pastor

“4 Then the king and all the people offered sacrifices before the Lord. 5 King Solomon offered a sacrifice of twenty-two thousand head of cattle and a hundred and twenty thousand sheep and goats. So the king and all the people dedicated the temple of God.”

- 2 Chronicles 7:4-5

A few years ago we took our kids to Kilby and wandered through the historic museum. It was a blast from the past as our kids took in what it was like to be alive in 1900's. As we were leaving the museum and heading back to our modern home with all of its comforts, one of our kids summed up the experience this way: “Well, I’m sure glad I’m not an olden day person.”

Solomon’s temple was an amazing building, created for the purpose of worshipping the one true God who had just filled it with his glory. It makes sense that Israel would like to honour the completion of it with an elaborate dedication ceremony that would signify it as consecrated, set apart, holy and sacred. Well, honour it they did. Over an eight day period, Solomon and the people of Israel would go on to sacrifice 142,000 animals!

So great were the amount of sacrifices that they had to use the entire courtyard in order to accommodate all of it.

Fast forward to today and God is still worthy of total devotion, honour and praise. This is why 2000 years ago the blood of one animal, a perfect spotless lamb, was shed to consecrate, dedicate and set apart a new temple for God. The new temple, us, the church, God's people, has been consecrated and dedicated in full, because this lamb was none other than Jesus, His beloved son.

We are no longer dependent on elaborate dedication ceremonies or the sacrifice of animals to set us apart. We now have confidence to enter the most holy place, to be the temple, to dwell with God—not by blood of bulls but by the blood of the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, was slain once and for all.

“Well, I'm sure glad I'm not an olden day person.”

PRAYER: *Father in Heaven, Hallowed be your name, worthy of all praise, honour and adoration. Your Son has set us apart, consecrated us and dedicated us to your service so find us faithful to live in such a way to bring fame to your name as we enjoy life with you as your people.*



WEEK 3

GOD WITH US IN THE TEMPLE

DEC. 19

God WITH Us: Restored as His Own Dwelling Place

.....

2 CHRONICLES 7:19-20

Arielle Hlady - Leadership Development Admin Assistant

When I was little, my sister and I used to bicker constantly. It was so bad that one of our mutual friends once said, “I love spending time with you two, but only when you’re not together.” Hurtful, but true. Our parents often reprimanded us, but it didn’t take long before we were bickering again. Even as we argued, I often thought, “What if Mom and Dad find out? We’ll be in big trouble.”

2 Chronicles 7:19-20 is a passage where God warns His people once more: if they do not obey His command, He will banish them from His presence and they will suffer the consequences of their sins. Our God does not tolerate sin. Yet, if we live under the law, the fear of condemnation is constant. It is 613 commandments that we must uphold to perfection; and, as for me, I know I could not go one day without breaking at least one of those commandments.

According to the story of redemption, the idea of the temple is retraced from Genesis to Revelation. The temple, in the Bible, is a place where God’s presence can be experienced, a place of communion with God.

In Genesis, Eden was such a place; in the Law, the tent of meeting, and the Tabernacle permitted the Israelites to carry the presence of God within their midst. So when the Israelites heard the word of 2 Chronicles 7:19-20, the fear of God's wrath must have been felt throughout the audience. If they did not obey, they would be cast out from His presence.

Christmas furthers our understanding of God. Despite the Israelites' continuous sin pattern, God will come to dwell in their midst and change His people into His temple, a temple that will not be destroyed. So when we look towards Christmas, it is an invitation to ponder His presence amongst us as His people. We no longer have to fear the wrath of God, but can gratefully look at Christ as our hope and salvation.

PRAYER: *Lord, in this Christmas season, we want to thank you for your abundant grace and mercy. Our sins are more numerous than the fish in the sea; yet, you decided to make these broken jars of clay your temple. We do not deserve such mercy and love and, for that, we thank you. Amen.*



WEEK 3

GOD WITH US IN THE TEMPLE

DEC. 20

God WITH Us: His Living Temple

2 CHRONICLES 6:1-2, ACTS 7:47-50

Andoret Bernard - East Abbotsford & Community & Care Pastoral Intern

The magnificence of cathedrals signifies God's glory, holiness, and presence as a centre for worship. Despite David's desire to build God a permanent house, God raised David's offspring, Solomon, who built His glorious temple as an everlasting dwelling place (Acts 7:47, 2 Chronicles 6:2). Yet, Solomon recognized that if the heavens couldn't contain God, the temple wouldn't either (1 Kings 8:27).

In response to the accusation of speaking against the temple, Stephen asserts that "the Most High does not dwell in houses made by (human) hands." He then quotes Isaiah 66:1-2: "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me, says the Lord, or what is the place of my rest? Did not my hand make all these things?" (Acts 7:48-50).

While cathedrals and places of worship serve significant roles in expressing faith and gathering believers, the true essence of worship and God's dwelling is not in the grandeur of human-made structures but in the collective body of believers—the living temple in which His Spirit resides.

Jesus, as David's Offspring, is building God's living temple for His everlasting indwelling, replacing the 'static' physical temple with the people of God as living stones.

“16 Do you not know that you (plural) are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?”

- 1 Corinthians 3:16

“22 In Him, you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.”

- Ephesians 2:22

Do you walk in spiritual isolation? Remember, you are part of an interdependent faith community where the Spirit dwells individually and collectively. Each contributes to the health and strength of the church's spiritual structure. Recognizing yourself as part of God's temple encourages spiritual discipline and dedication toward spiritual maturity and holiness. As a dynamic temple, each believer plays a role in strengthening the body, offering encouragement for endurance, and adding new believers through the power and indwelling of the Spirit.

PRAYER: *Thank you, Father, for sending your Son, Immanuel—God with us—to offer us salvation and unite us as a community of believers in whom the Spirit resides. By your working, transform us into a living temple that embraces the spiritually isolated and be a beacon of hope to those outside the church. In Jesus' Name, Amen.*



WEEK 3

GOD WITH US IN THE TEMPLE

DEC. 21

God WITH Us in His Temple, the Church

.....

JOHN 15:18-19

Joshua Scott - Weekend & Teaching Ministries Pastor

“16 Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?”

- 1 Corinthians 3:16

There was a show on TV not too long ago called “Undercover Boss” that always ended with a grand reveal. The CEO of the company, all dressed up as a new employee, stands up at a staff meeting to reveal his/her true identity. Of course, most of the people in the room immediately gulp in regret. They knew that they didn’t show this so-called “fellow employee” a great side of their work ethic and immediately wished to have those moments back. It was a horrible thing for this boss to suddenly be around to see the way they acted each day.

Sometimes, I’m sure we have a similar feeling about God’s presence with us. We’re reminded by a pastor in a sermon or a comment by a friend (or perhaps by an advent devotional) that God has been with us for every moment of our day and we immediately think of the moments we wish we could have back. Somehow the presence of God becomes something we dread. And yet, the nearness of God to His people has been the high-point of His promises to them from the very beginning.

We were created to enjoy fellowship with Him and when we come to the end of it all, if we've trusted in Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins, we'll be with Him forever (Revelation 21:3). So the teaching of the New Testament, that God's Spirit dwells in His people, just as He dwelt in His holy temple in the Old Testament, isn't scary news at all, it's an incredible and shocking gift.

We're never alone in our grief, in our struggle, in our questions, in our frustrations, and even in our sin. God is with us, truly with us. Not because we've proven ourselves to be all cleaned up and therefore deserving of His presence, but because by the death of His Son, Jesus, and through our faith in Him, every sin we have ever committed (and will commit) has been paid for. By the mercy of God, all of His people have been made into His holy dwelling place so that we might be WITH Him today, in this very moment. So today as you ponder God's presence with you, don't shudder to think of how disappointed He might be with you. Rejoice at the thought that despite how much you truly don't deserve His favour and blessing, He has come to call you, along with all of His people, His holy home.

PRAYER: *Father, thank you for sending your Spirit to dwell in me. I know that my life isn't clean and pretty. I make mistakes all of the time, and Father, I repent of those things. Help me to walk in the newness of life. But at every step, would you remind me that it's not my behaviour or ability to forsake sin that has earned your favour, but that the work of Jesus has washed me white as snow and made me a holy temple, fit for the presence of your Spirit today. Amen.*



WEEK 4

GOD WITH US IN THE END

In his first sermon after Jesus' life, death, resurrection and ascension, the Apostle Peter urged people, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

The Holy Spirit is currently WITH us convicting us of sin, strengthening us, and helping us to persevere in Jesus until "the end", when God makes everything new (Revelation 21:5). In that day, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God." (Revelation 21:3-4)

Kristal Toews

Discipleship Pastor





WEEK 4

GOD WITH US IN THE END

DEC. 23

God WITH Us in Restored Creation

REVELATION 21:1

Jesse Wilson – Community Groups Pastor

The Lord of the Rings is linked to Christmas time for me. This is partly from being in a theatre in December 2003 to see “The Return of the King” where, at long last, a slow and toilsome march to the resolution of the story had arrived. The terrible threat that had been dreadfully draped over “Middle-Earth” for centuries was finally and fully dealt with. And for the hero Frodo, he feels the completeness of being rid of it and exclaims these liberating words from his exhausted lips: “It’s gone... It’s done....”

There was no longer a source of any burden or any trouble or any fear.

This must be similar to what John felt as he received a picture of the future in Revelation 21:1: “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.”

We are meant to understand the “sea” symbolically as the source or presence of evil. And in the future the sea is no more.

No more!

We must grasp the weight of this!

We must grasp the promise that we will one day be fully and finally rid of the cause of all our sicknesses, stresses, and separation from God.

I cherish the reminder of “God with us” in our mess of sin and evil at Christmas. But the best part about Christmas isn’t confined to an annual celebration; it is a major advancement of God’s “new heaven and new earth” plan. A plan that will culminate with God, at long last, finally and fully and forever with us. This is what the resolution of our story in a restored creation is about! And, it also means (don’t miss it): sin and evil no longer with us.

Take your feelings—be they delight or despair—this Christmas and point them beyond the 25th. Ask our Father in heaven for eyes to see and a heart to embrace enthusiastic expectation about that great future moment where we will breathe the deepest final sigh of settled relief and exhale the words, “It’s gone! It’s done!”

PRAYER: *Father, I’m so thankful for the reminder that what John saw I too will one day see. You know where I am today. You know where the world is today. And this Christmas I ask for the help to know more deeply that what currently is will one day pass away as you restore every single part of creation. Give me eyes to see how temporary sin and evil are, and stir up fresh excitement in my heart for the future of being with you in the new heaven and new earth.*



WEEK 4

GOD WITH US IN THE END

DEC. 24

God WITH Us: His Bride

REVELATION 21:2-4

Frank Sawatsky - Outreach & Worship Pastor | Mission

“2 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 4 ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

- Revelation 21:2-4

When was the last time you thought about God’s love for you? Like really just sat in the truth that God. Loves. You.

He has designed you with intention. He has equipped you with purpose. He has pursued you even while your back was turned away from Him. And, He thinks so highly of you that some would say He’s kind of obsessed. I write this jokingly, but there is something profound about the committed, persistent, relentless love of God: it’s all encompassing.

When meditating on the love of God, a particular image should come to mind: the image of husband and wife.

The Bible teaches that at the end of days, there will be a beautiful, inextricable union of heaven and earth, much like a wedding ceremony (Ephesians 5; 2 Corinthians 11; Revelation 19). A celebration will occur as the weary world rejoices at Christ's return. God will be with His people. What a wedding that will be!

I remember my wedding day, being up at the altar waiting with anticipation while the bridesmaids, flower girls, and ring bearer walked down the aisle. It seemed like time itself stopped as my fiancé took her last steps toward me before becoming my wife. Wow. She always looks beautiful (of course); but, on that day, the hours of preparation suddenly made sense: it was all worth it. The woman I loved was about to be mine!

Consider the type of love that will be on display on that final day. The church (that's you and me), will be prepared like a bride. We'll be put together—all of our blemishes will be wiped away because of Christ's work. We'll be seen as beautiful, radiant, righteous, pure, and presentable. All the difficulties and trials of this life will be worth it, since everything that caused us grief or suffering will be swept away. The consequences of sin and the curse of death will themselves be snuffed out, as a new order will be ushered in. God's love will save us!

PRAYER: *Lord, today on Christmas Eve, I meditate on your love. In love, you offered your Son. In love, you will return. And in love, you will finally be with us in the end. Equip me in your love today and always, Amen.*



WEEK 4

GOD WITH US IN THE END

DEC. 25

God WITH Us as Our Father

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REVELATION 21:5-7

Joy Penner - Central Abbotsford & Discipleship Pastoral Intern

“5 And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” 6 And he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. 7 The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son.”

- Revelation 21:5-7

Merry Christmas!

Today we remember and celebrate the Son of God humbling Himself and coming into the world as a baby.

I am not a son, but I am a daughter with a pretty great father. I have gained a lot of things from having my particular dad; he has built me a bookshelf, made me meals, helped me with my car (for better or for worse), and countless other things. But one of the best things I get from my dad is getting to be around him, in his presence, where I am safe and loved and cared for.

In our text today, the Lord gives a sweet promise that the “one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son.” Who is the one who conquers? He explained in Revelation 12:11 that they are those who are covered by the blood of Christ’s sacrifice and testify in faith. So every Christian, male or female, is the one who conquers. And what is this heritage? He has made a new world. The broken world that we live in now with all of its pain and suffering has passed away, and the Lord has wiped every tear from our eyes. Not only that, to us who are thirsty He has given living water, eternal life, to revive weary bones and remove the fear of death. Finally, He says that you will be His child, and He will be your Father. We gain all of the benefits of having Him as our particular Father! But best of all, we get to just be around Him, in his presence, where we are safe and loved and cared for.

On this Christmas Day, let us take a moment to pray, to rest in the presence of our Father, who we are able to approach freely because of His Son.

PRAYER: *Lord, thank you for choosing to be our Father. Thank you that we get to rest in your presence knowing that you have made a way that we can spend forever with you. Nothing that we have ever done could ever earn this heritage you have promised, but you have given it to us freely. Today may we approach you with the confidence and joy of a child that knows their Father loves them.*



WEEK 4

GOD WITH US IN THE END

DEC. 26

God WITH Us Finally, Completely

REVELATION 21:22-27

Jon Pasiuk - Care Pastor

Sometime around the age of two, each of our kids got to experience unwrapping a Christmas present for the first time. It can be a very confusing experience for toddlers who are constantly told not to destroy things, only to suddenly be handed a very colourfully decorated box and told to rip it open. It is both counterintuitive and exhilarating all at the same time.

The book of Revelation says something that would have been shocking and counterintuitive, and yet unimaginably exhilarating to its original readers: when Jesus's kingdom reaches its culmination, there will be no temple.

“22 And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. **23** And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. **24** By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, **25** and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. **26** They will bring into it the glory and the honour of the nations.

27 But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.”

- Revelation 21:22–27

For a Jewish person like the apostle John this is a profound statement. For almost a thousand years the temple had been the one place on earth where God and man could meet. Only one man from a particular tribe and a particular family could enter into the Holy of Holies, and even then, only one day each year. But that was the point of connection between the God of the universe and humanity. Now John says that the temple will be gone.

Counterintuitively, this is not a problem at all. In fact, it is the most amazing thing ever, because its purpose, like the wrapping paper on a present, was always temporary. When the kingdom of Jesus reaches its fullness, the connection point between the God who rules the universe and human beings, you and me, is everywhere we are. No separation. No shame. No guilt. No distance. The right to stand in the presence of God, which belonged only to one priest one day a year, belongs to every single citizen of the new creation.

PRAYER: *Lord, thank you for the assurance that though heaven and earth pass away, you have invited me into eternity in your presence where I will finally be home. Thank you for the promise that the best is yet to come.*



WEEK 4

GOD WITH US IN THE END

DEC. 27

God WITH Us Face to Face

REVELATION 22:4

Jesse Schellenberg - Mission Campus Pastor

“4 They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.”

- Revelation 22:4

I dated my wife long distance for one summer as she lived out of the province. Half way through the summer, she decided to surprise me with a trip out and hatched a plan with my Dad to pick her up from the airport. I remember thinking my Dad had gone out to pick up pizza and wondering to myself what was taking so long. Eventually I heard the garage door open and in walked my Dad, followed by my future wife, to my surprise. The first words out of my mouth after laying eyes on my long lost lady were, “Where's the pizza?” I like to think it was at that moment she knew I was the one.

People often talk about what they are most excited about when heaven becomes their home. The absence of pain, no more temptation, health, reuniting with our loved ones, perfect peace, meeting the heroes of our faith, and the list goes on. There are so many good things we should long for, but there is one thing that will surpass them all.

It's the thing every groom anticipates as he waits at the altar, the thing every mom longs for in the pain of childbirth, and the thing every kid hopes for in their dread of being lost at the grocery store. They want nothing more than to fix their eyes on the one they love and to see them face to face. This is the deepest longing in those moments.

Christian, on that day, when heaven becomes our home, the one who lived for you, bled for you, rose for you, forgave you, saved you, sanctified you, and loves you will be standing there and you will see him face to face. In that moment, I just don't think 'where's the pizza?' will cut it. Because, in the face of Christ, the things of this life will be strangely dim in the blinding light of his glory and grace.

O come, O come, Emmanuel.

PRAYER: *Father in Heaven, remind us often of the glorious end to which you are bringing each one of us. Might the light and momentary afflictions of this age be seen as nothing in comparison to what you have prepared for us. Come, Lord Jesus, Come. Amen*





MERRY CHRISTMAS!



MATTHEW 1:23 ESV

“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel”
(which means, God with us).



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