

06/5/11

## **Friend of God #6 – God With Us**

### Introduction

It's great to be with you this morning.

I know a lot of you here this morning, but I also realize that some of you are sitting there searching for your bulletin to make sure you're in the right church.

So, for those who don't know me, I'm Trey Garner. I'm the pastor of our Children's Ministries here at Faith.

I've been here for a little over twelve years now, and I spend most of my Sunday morning ministering to 1<sup>st</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> Graders.

And since we're getting acquainted, I thought I'd take this opportunity to introduce you to my family.

This is my wife Deb.

She and I have been married for almost ten year. She helps in our children's ministries and in overseeing our church's Passion Play. And she is awesome.

Together, we've got two kids.

This is our son Noah. He turns three on Wednesday. He loves cars, racing, chasing, and basically anything that goes in a circle.

This is our daughter Lauren. She just turned one. At her recent one-year doctor appointment, they took all of her measurements, and she is on in the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile in height, the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile in weight, and the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile in head-size.

So, she's short, fat, and she's got a big head. I wonder who she gets that from. But we love her like crazy.

And since we're whipping out the photo album...

This is my mom. She lives down in Houston, Texas. And when I was in high school called her Reba...for what I think are obvious reasons.

This is my dad. One of the things I appreciate about my dad is that while we were growing up, he was always there for us.

Baseball games, school plays, you name it, he was there. And there was one incident when I was in the sixth grade when I was really thankful for that.

As some of you know, I've got a background in theatre, and when I was in the sixth grade, I was in my middle school production of *The Wizard of Oz*.

In case you, you can't find me, I'm short kid in the tuxedo. I was the Wizard.

And during our dress rehearsal our dress rehearsal, I was involved in accident on stage.

If you're familiar with *The Wizard of Oz*, then you probably remember the scene at the end of the story where the Wizard and Dorothy are planning to use a hot air balloon to take Dorothy back to Kansas.

But the hot air balloon begins to go up before Dorothy gets inside and the Wizard floats off without her.

Well, we're doing that scene.

And we're a middle school. We don't have a big budget with a fancy auditorium and a rigging system.

What we've basically is me in cafeteria trash can that's got butcher paper around it to make it look like a basket.

We've got two ropes tied to the handles of the trash can that go up into the rafter over a pulley and down again into the hands of two eighth graders and our French teacher Mr. Ghormley, who had helped to build the sets.

And the basic idea is that they would pull on the rope, and then shove the trash can onstage as I yell "Goodbye everybody." "I'm sorry Dorothy."

Very sophisticated set-up.

So, we're doing our dress rehearsal, and it's time for the balloon scene.

I get into the basket. They hoist me into the air. They push me onstage.

And as I'm yelling, the trash can overturns. And I fall out of the trash can onto the stage floor. Smack. Right on my chest.

And all of the air has been forced out of my body. And if you've ever gotten the wind knocked out of you, you know it's a scary experience.

I couldn't breathe, and I was terrified. And from what I could see, nobody on stage knew what to do to help me.

So, there I was lying helpless on the floor, surrounded by fairies, munchkins, two eighth graders and a French teacher, and I thought...well, this is a strange way to go.

And right at that moment, my dad jumped up on stage, put his arm around me and said, "Just breathe. Just breathe."

And I'm telling you, having him there with me in that moment made all the difference in the world to me.

Having him with me made me feel like everything was going to be all right.

And I tell you that story because it's a lot like the message that God's people in the Old Testament received when they were in trouble.

With that in mind, please open your Bible to Isaiah chapter 7...page 491 of the front section of the Bible under the chair in front of you...

Our church's theme this year is **Living Life Together...**

And I would encourage you to be thinking each week about whether you are making progress at becoming more connected to your church family here...

Maybe that means you invited a person or a family to have a meal or a visit with you in some setting...

Maybe that meant going out of your way to attend a wedding, or a shower, or a memorial service or a viewing...

Maybe it meant sending a card to someone who was hurting...

Maybe it meant joining an Adult Bible Fellowship, or a Point Man Group, or a Ladies Bible Study...

Perhaps it meant participating in a service opportunity...

Maybe it meant finally making the decision to become a Christian this year, or to be baptized, or to attend our Intro to Faith class, or join our church...

This theme could be acted upon in dozens and dozens of ways.

And maybe no one else hardly noticed...but you know that that was a step for you...you were moving out of your comfort zone because you wanted to not just be a hearer of the Word...but a doer of what we've been learning from the Word of God this year...

For the last few weeks, we've been emphasizing this issue of being a **Friend of God...**

The ultimate foundation on which we can live life together...what unifies us and brings/binds us together is our love for Jesus Christ...

And we started several weeks ago when Pastor Viars discussed **An Outrageous Possibility**...how you can tell if a person is really a friend of God...

Then on Mother's Day, Pastor Dutton focused our attention on **God Reaching Out to Us**...friends certainly do that...they stand at the door and knock...

Pastor Viars again shared with us about **God Dwelling in Us**...when His Spirit takes up residence in us...

The following week, Pastor Viars challenged us to think about **God Ruling Us**...coming to grips with Jesus as our benevolent king.

Then, last Sunday, Pastor Woodall shared what the Scriptures have to say about **God Loving Us** with an unbreakable, unstoppable, always and forever kind of love.

Now, this morning, we want to look Isaiah chapter 7 along with several related passages, to see what it means to have a friendship characterized by the phrase **God With Us**

Before we look at this passage, I want to provide you with some context to help you understand what we're about to read.

This passage is set in Jerusalem during the 8<sup>th</sup> Century B.C.

At this point in the history of God's people, we find that the nation of Israel, which was once a strong nation comprised of 12 tribes united under the leadership of kings David and Solomon, has now become a divided kingdom that has been compromised by greed, strife, and idolatry.

Following the reign of Solomon some 150 years earlier, the nation was divided into two separate kingdoms.

On this map you can see the southern kingdom of Judah, named for the larger of the two tribes within its borders.

The northern kingdom, comprised of the remaining ten tribes, retained the name of Israel. Israel was larger and by all accounts more prosperous than Judah.

Jerusalem lay near the northern border of Judah.

The man in charge of Jerusalem was a king by the name of Ahaz. His elderly father, Jotham was still living and was king in name, but Ahaz held the reins of power and controlled the affairs of state.

As we learn in the descriptions of him in the book of 2 Chronicles 28...

**2 Chronicles 28:2**  
**[Ahaz] walked in the ways of the kings of Israel**

And you say, "Oh, that's a good thing, right?" Actually, not a good thing.

The kings of Israel weren't exactly known for their faithfulness to God. They were corrupted by the idolatrous practices of the people living around them, and Ahaz of Judah engaged in the very same things.

In fact, he was Judah's most ungodly king to date—going so far as to build a pagan altar in the Temple area and to offer his own children as human sacrifices.

At the time described in this passage, Ahaz had been in charge for a bit less than 10 years, but they had been a tempestuous 10 years.

Judah had been plagued by internal and especially external pressures.

The prophets Isaiah, Micah, and Hosea had all been sent by God to call Ahaz and Judah back to God, but there had been little evidence of repentance.

As we look at what was going on in the region, several nations were exerting pressure on Judah—Israel to the north, and Israel's northern neighbor Aram, what is today the nation of Syria.

Israel and Aram were normally foes themselves, but they had struck an alliance because they were trying to fend off advances of Assyria.

As you can see, Assyria was the big kid on the block at the time. The Assyrian King was Tiglath-Pileser—there's a name that didn't quite catch on.

"How did little Tiglath Pileser do in class today?"

"Well, he conquered two of his classmates, so you'll have some extras on the ride home. You've got a minivan, right?"

Tiglath-Pileser was gobbling up the nations around him, and Israel and Aram were next on the menu.

So, the kings of Israel and Aram tried to bring Ahaz and Judah into their anti-Assyrian coalition, but Ahaz didn't want any part of it.

He was like, "I know who the school-yard bully is, and I'd rather not openly oppose him."

So, what did Israel and Aram do?

They were like, "Well, if you don't want to be our friend, then we're going to make you be our friend."

They conspired to invade Judah, and tried to set up their own man on the throne.

By the grace of God, tiny little Judah was able to hold them off, but it suffered great losses in the process.

- 120,000 of its best men were killed in a single day.
- 200,000 women and children were taken into captivity for a time.
- Not only that, but while Judah's attention was on Israel and Aram to the north, the Edomites took advantage of the opportunity and attacked from the east and took some of its people captive.
- And the Philistines attacked from the west, capturing several of Judah's western villages.

And there sat Judah, clowns to the left of them, jokers to the right, and there they were... stuck in the middle of all these forces who were bearing down on them.

And it must have seemed like they didn't have a friend in the world.

And Ahaz had a decision to make...

After the losses he had just suffered, He knew that Judah wouldn't be able to hold out against a prolonged siege if Israel and Aram decided to attack again.

So, he had to decide...who he would turn to for help. In the midst of this great storm, when the very existence of His nation was at stake, who would he trust to be Judah's friend?

That's where we pick up. Let's look at Isaiah 7, beginning in verse 1.

1. Now it came about in the days of Ahaz, the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin the king of Aram and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up to Jerusalem to wage war against it, but could not conquer it.

*That's what we just talked about. Israel and Aram tried to take Judah, but Judah was barely able to turn them back.*

2. When it was reported to the house of David,

*That's another way of referring to King Ahaz, the leader of the house of David*

saying, "The Arameans have camped in Ephraim"

*Ephraim was one of the ten tribes within Israel—in fact, it was the southernmost tribe, and so by saying that "The Arameans have camped in Ephraim," that was a warning that Israel and Aram were preparing for another invasion.*

When it was reported to the house of David, saying, "The Arameans have camped in Ephraim" Ahaz's heart and the hearts of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake with the wind.

*So, it's like we said. They're freaking out.*

3. Then the LORD said to Isaiah, "Go out now to meet Ahaz, you and your son Shear-jashub, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool, on the highway to the fuller's field

*Now, let's pause for second.*

*Why was Ahaz out at some pool? Was he on vacation? Was he considering going into Pastor Viars' old line of work as an in-ground pool builder?*

*Sadly, no. Some scholars believe that Ahaz was doing a survey of Jerusalem's water supply to see how well they would hold out against a siege.*

*Again, he's freaking out. So, the Lord sends Isaiah to say to him...verse 4...*

4. 'Take care and be calm, have no fear and do not be fainthearted because of these two stubs of smoldering firebrands, on account of the fierce anger of Rezin and Aram and the son of Remaliah.

*The Lord's using a bit of sarcasm here, mocking the significance Aram and Israel.*

5. 'Because Aram, with Ephraim and the son of Remaliah, has planned evil against you, saying,
6. "Let us go up against Judah and terrorize it, and make for ourselves a breach in its walls and set up the son of Tabeel as king in the midst of it,"
7. Thus says the Lord GOD

*In other words, don't worry about these other guys are saying, don't worry about your own thoughts and concerns. You listen to me.*

*"It...(their plan)...shall not stand nor shall it come to pass.*

8. "For the head of Aram is Damascus and the head of Damascus is Rezin—now within another 65 years Ephraim will be shattered, so that it is no longer a people,
9. and the head of Ephraim is Samaria and the head of Samaria is the son of Remaliah.

God is basically saying, "These guys that you're all worked up over...they're a bunch of nobodies."

God's message to Ahaz and to his people was that he had not abandoned them. His covenant promise of protection was still in effect.

They had nothing to fear from Aram and Israel.

In his commentary on Isaiah, John Oswalt says,

**From Ahaz's point of view [Aram] and Ephraim constitute a major threat, but from God's point of view they are negligible and need not occupy the king's time (*The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1-39, p. 196.*)**

Then, in verse 9, God reframes the situation in an attempt to help Ahaz see what's really at stake here.

He says...*"If you will not believe, you surely shall not last."*

There's a little play on words taking place here in the original Hebrew, and I like how the NIV captures it. It says...

### **Isaiah 7:9**

**If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all.**

Remember the decision Ahaz had to make? He had to decide who He would turn to for help, who he was going to trust to be his friend and the friend of his people.

God's really answering that question for Him.

In His anxiety, perhaps Ahaz should have looked to the Scriptures for counsel. Maybe a verse from the Psalm 46 would have helped him.

### **Psalm 46:7**

**The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold.**

But what does Ahaz choose? Look there in verse 10.

10 Then the LORD spoke again to Ahaz, saying

11 *"Ask a sign for yourself from the LORD your God; make it deep as Sheol or high as heaven."*

*God is basically saying... "Let me prove to you that I can be trusted. Let me show that your faith in me will be justified. Name the sign you want.*

*You want an earthquake? No problem.*

*You want it to rain Buicks? You got it.*

*The Lord is telling Ahaz—He's not just asking him, He's commanding Ahaz to ask for a sign.*



*How often do you get an offer like that? I mean, can you imagine?*

*I would have been like, "I want the ability to stop time and go up to people who are frozen in place and move their bodies into funny positions.*

*I want to be able to fly like Superman. I want X-Ray vision. I want to be able to shoot lasers out of my eyes.*

*I mean, this was shoot for the stars time. The Lord had told him to do this.*

*And what is Ahaz's response? Verse 12...*

12 But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, nor will I test the LORD!"

Makes me want to go back in time and smack him upside the head.

But that response sounds pretty righteous, doesn't it? Ahaz sounds as if he knew God to be so trustworthy that asking for a sign would be unthinkable.

But does that fit his character? Does that sound like the man who "walked in the ways of the kings of Israel?"

Uh, uh.

So, if that doesn't sound like Ahaz, what was really going on here?

Ahaz didn't *want* any evidence that he should trust God. But why not?

Oswalt says,

**Apparently it is because his mind is already made up. He is going to trust his and his nation's fate to Assyria, and he does not want...evidence that such a drastic decision is unwarranted. Any sign provided by Isaiah could only be an embarrassment to him, so he attempts to avoid the dilemma by an appeal to piety (*The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1-39, p. 203*).**

Ahaz has decided to strike a deal with the devil so to speak. He has decided to ask the school-yard bully Tiglath-Pileser to be his friend, to ask the Assyrians for protection against Israel and Aram.

He never considered trusting God.

And now, he's got Isaiah telling him that God would give him a miraculous sign of deliverance. And well, frankly, that would just mess things up.

It would disrupt the plans he had already made. Maybe he's already asked the Assyrians for help.

But to acknowledge that to Isaiah, and to have word of it get out to the people, would be embarrassing.

So he hid his hypocrisy behind a pious façade by pretending to be concerned about the Lord's command not to put God to the test.

You think God was fooled by Ahaz's new-found religion?

Survey says, "X"

Look at Isaiah's response...verse 13...

- 13 Then he said, "Listen now, O house of David! Is it too slight a thing for you to try the patience of men, that you will try the patience of my God as well?"

In other words, "Ahaz, zip it." Verse 14...

- 14 "Therefore, the Lord Himself will give you a sign..."

*The Lord responds to Ahaz saying, "Hey, you don't want a sign? You're getting one anyway."*

*But who does he give the sign to? He doesn't give it to Ahaz alone. The "you" if verse 14 is plural instead of the singular we would expect if the sign was solely for Ahaz.*

*Isaiah announces that the God will give a sign to all of Judah.*

*And look what the sign is...verse 14 continues...*

- 14 Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.

*Now, is that the sign? Too often, I think we stop there because we know that verse is cited in the New Testament in reference to the birth of Christ.*

*I think we assume that it's the virgin birth of Jesus that Isaiah announces. But look at what the text says. There's more...verse 15...*

- 15 "He will eat curds and honey at the time He knows enough to refuse evil and choose good.

*Say, that doesn't sound like it's talking about Jesus, does it? Hmmm. Verse 16...*

- 16 "For before the boy will know enough to refuse evil and choose good, the land whose two kings you dread (*Israel and Aram*) will be forsaken.

The sign Isaiah promises includes not just the birth of the child but also his name (*Immanuel*), the diet he will eat, and a comment about his development that is tied to the timeframe for the destruction of Aram and Israel.

If we were to keep reading, we would see that the sign actually includes more than that. But for the purposes of our discussion today, I think that gives us enough to chew on.

In the immediate context, the sign predicted by Isaiah is not a reference to the birth of Jesus Christ.

And you say, “Whoa, Pastor Trey. I know that verse is about Jesus, and the reason I know that verse is about Jesus is because we talk about that at Christmas.”

To which I would say, “Hang on, we’re getting there.”

But remember who Isaiah was talking to—Ahaz. The sign has to make sense to him.

It wouldn’t make sense for Isaiah to tell Ahaz, “Hey, you know that problem you’re having with the Israelites and the Arameans...well, I’ve got good news for you...in 700 years the Messiah is coming.”

That would be like you coming to me saying, “Hey, Pastor Trey, I don’t know how I’m going to pay my mortgage, and I think they’re going to foreclose.”

And in response, I say, “Hey, you don’t need to worry about that. Because I happen to know that you your great grandchildren are going to win the Publisher’s Clearinghouse.”

You’d be like, “That’s great, but where am I going to live *next week?*”

So, if this sign isn’t an immediate reference to Jesus, then who is the boy, who is this Immanuel predicted by this sign? And who is this virgin?

Scholars have wrestled with that question for years. And while we don’t have time to consider all of the possibilities that have been suggested, I think the answer can be found where we such things are usually found: *in the text*.

Isaiah chapter 8 follows Isaiah chapter 7.

That’s not a very profound statement, but it’s important because chapter 8 is still talking about the same topic that we’ve been reading about in chapter 7.

Look ahead at chapter 8, verse 3. This is Isaiah talking...

- 3 So I approached the prophetess, and she conceived and gave birth to a son. Then the LORD said to me, "Name him Maher-shalal-hash-baz;

*Say that three times fast.*

- 4 For before the boy knows how to cry out 'My father ' or 'My mother,' the wealth of Damascus

*That's the capital of Aram.*

- 5 and the spoil of Samaria...

*That's the capital of Israel*

...the wealth of Aram and the spoil of Israel will be carried away before the king of Assyria."

And you say, "Pastor Trey, you're coo-coo for CoCo Puffs, I didn't see anything in there about Immanuel."

Stay with me. It's in there. We've just got to dig for it.

In chapter 8, Isaiah marries a woman identified only as "the prophetess."

We're not sure why she has that name. It was probably given to her because she became the wife of the prophet.

I know it's not a very flattering name. But don't hold it against *her*—she married into it.

To this union, a son is born named Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz.

That's another one of those names that didn't really catch on.

And many scholars believe that this is the boy identified as Immanuel in Isaiah 7:14

And you say, "Why would they believe that? His *name's* not Immanuel."

We need to remember that we see instances throughout Scripture where a single individual may be given a couple of different names that are descriptive of different aspects of his life.

That's what's going on here.

Just as the name "Immanuel" has significance, the name "Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz" also has significance.

But because you want to eat lunch at a reasonable hour, we're going to skip past that for now.

The reason scholars believe this boy is Immanuel is because chapter 8 ties his life to the destruction of Israel and Aram just as chapter 7 tied Immanuel's life to it.

Compare what is said about Immanuel in the prophecy of Isaiah 7:16 to what is said about the Isaiah's son in chapter 8 verse 4.

### **Isaiah 7:16**

**For before the boy will know enough to refuse evil and choose good, the land whose two kings you dread [Aram and Israel] will be forsaken.**

### **Isaiah 8:4-5**

**For before the boy knows how to cry out 'My father ' or 'My mother,' the wealth of Damascus [Aram] and the spoil of Samaria [Israel] will be carried away before the king of Assyria.**

And you say, "Okay, Pastor Trey, I'll buy that connection. But you still haven't convinced me that Isaiah 7:14 isn't speaking directly about Jesus. What about Immanuel being born to a virgin?"

That's a great question.

Because of the use of the word "virgin" in Isaiah 7:14, many have believed that the passage has to be referring to the miraculous birth of Jesus to Mary.

After all, the New Testament clearly explains that Mary was a virgin when Jesus was conceived in her by the Holy Spirit.

This is where understanding the original Hebrew is helpful.

Hebrew scholars will tell you, the word translated as "virgin" in this passage doesn't have to refer to a woman who has never had a physical relationship with a man.

The word can also be translated as "young woman" or "maiden."

Now, I should also say that it's likely that the young woman described this prophecy was made was a virgin in the technical sense at the time the prophecy was made.

Of course, following the marriage ceremony described at the beginning of Isaiah 8, this woman would no longer have been a virgin.

And you say, Pastor Trey, is that the best you've got?

Yep, that's the best I've got. But take heart, Pastor Viars will be back next week, and I'm sure he'll straighten all this out.

Okay, now that we've sorted out the difficulties in this passage, let talk about the central issues here...

Let's start with the **Significance of the name.**

**Immanuel means “God with us.”** And at last, we come to the title of our message.

Remember, Judah was facing what appeared to be certain destruction. They appeared to be trapped. It was a day of despair and hopelessness.

Ahaz got to choose who his friends would be. He got to choose who he would look to for help. He got to choose who he would trust. He got to choose who would be with him.

And that’s the central issue in the passage.

Who would be with him?

Would it be the Assyrians or would it be God?

We know from what we’ve read that Ahaz chose the Assyrians. But was that the right choice?

You might say, “Yeah, look what happened. Israel and Aram were both destroyed by the Assyrians. It looks like it worked out all right for old Ahaz.”

To which Scripture would say, “Not really.”

If you read on in chapter 8, you find out when Assyria conquered Aram and Israel, they forgot to stop conquering.

They kept going into the land of Judah, into the land of Immanuel.

But amazingly, the people of Judah weren’t consumed by the Assyrians.

The peoples of Israel and Aram were taken into exile, but that didn’t happen to the Judeans.

Assyria had that in mind, but its plans were thwarted.

Why?

Because Immanuel! Because God was with them.

Isaiah had proclaimed a message of deliverance. A son would be born named Immanuel.

Both his birth and his name would serve to remind people that God was indeed with them and would deliver them from their peril.

In spite of the foolish choice Ahaz had made on behalf of his people, God made good his promise. He was with them. He delivered them.

Now, fast forward 700 years.

There's more to this story that hasn't been told.

The Gospel of Matthew introduces us to Jesus Christ, the Son of David. And one of Matthew's chief concerns is to demonstrate to his readers that Jesus is the fulfillment of the OT Messianic promises.

After recording the genealogy of the Messiah in the first seventeen verses of the Gospel, Matthew turns to an account of the circumstances of the Messiah's birth.

In v. 18, Mary is discovered to be pregnant before the wedding.

Now that put her fiancée Joseph in a real spot.

Joseph had to assume that Mary had been unfaithful to him. After all, he knew of only one way people got pregnant.

And aside from dealing with his own feelings of betrayal, Joseph had to decide how he would respond.

He had a few options, but none of them were very good.

Frankly, in some ways, his situation was similar to the one faced by Ahaz. Joseph had to feel somewhat trapped by the situation.

He could proceed with the marriage and raise the child as his own.

However, if he did that, he would be marrying a woman that he didn't believe he could trust.

Not only that, but people likely would have assumed that he was the one who had fathered the child.

And in the legalistic society in which they lived, he and Mary would have had the stigma of immorality attached to them for the rest of their lives.

Another option was to publicly shame Mary. The law even allowed him to demand her death.

But from what we see in the Scriptures, Joseph wasn't the kind of man to do that.

He had been shamed, but he was less concerned for his own shame than he was for Mary's.

So, as the Scriptures tell us,

**Matthew 1:19**

**Not wanting to disgrace her, [Joseph] planned to send her away secretly.**

And as Joseph contemplates what he's going to do, an angel appears with a message from God.

**Matthew 1:20-23**

**“Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.” Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: “Behold, the virgin shall be with Child and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which translated means, “God with us.”**

What's interesting here is that Matthew quotes from Isaiah and applies that 8<sup>th</sup> century prophecy of Immanuel to the birth of Jesus Christ.

But it is more than application. He says that Jesus' birth is the *fulfillment*, of what the Lord said through Isaiah.

Here it is revealed that we have the greater Immanuel. We have moved from Isaiah's *son* to Isaiah's Savior.

In Isaiah 7 and 8, Immanuel is the sign to God's people that they had not been forsaken by God—that He was with them, that he would protect them.

But in Matthew we have more than a *sign* of God's presence. We have God Himself personally, bodily present with His people.

The same *truth* is clearly in view, but the fulfillment is far greater than the first Immanuel.

As in the case of Isaiah time, God saw that His people were in trouble, and He responded by coming to be with us—by coming to rescue us.

But Jesus came not to rescue us from some kind of foreign invasion. No, our need was far greater than that. It was a need that no human Immanuel could ever meet.

Our need was for forgiveness—for life.

Jesus came to rescue us from our sin. And that's exactly what the angel told Joseph.

In the same passage where Jesus is revealed to be the ultimate fulfillment of the Immanuel prophecy, Joseph is told...

**Matthew 1:20-23**

**“you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”**

The name “Jesus” is a form of the name Joshua or Yeshua, which means “God is salvation.”



And that's really what we're talking about.

When we say that God is with us, we're talking deliverance, we're talking about salvation.

Now, I don't know about you, but I need that kind of friend...a friend who is "God with us."

So far, we've been speaking in concepts. Let's bring this down to the level of our everyday lives.

How should the fact that we have a God who is "with us" affect the way we live.

The first step is to...

### **1. Make sure He is with you.**

Jesus came to be with us, in part, because He saw that we, like Judah, have a dire problem for which we have no good answer. Our problem is our sin.

Scripture teaches that...

#### **Romans 3:23**

**All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God**

Later in Isaiah we read that...

#### **Isaiah 59:2**

**Your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.**

Our sins prevent us from having any kind of relationship with a holy God, and those same sins ultimately lead to our destruction.

#### **Romans 6:23**

**For the wages of sin is death...**

Because of our sin, all of us deserve to spend an eternity separated from God.

But remember, we have a God who wants to be "with us." In fact, he went to great lengths to be with us.

Jesus came to save His people from their sins. He did that through His death, burial, and resurrection.

#### **2 Corinthians 5:21**

**He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.**

God offers salvation to any who will acknowledge their sin and embrace Christ as their Savior.

Like Ahaz, we get to choose who we're going to trust. We get to choose our rescuer.

There's all kinds of options out there. You can choose to trust in the god of some other faith. You can choose to trust in your own good works. You can choose to trust in the church you go to.

But there's really only one good option—and that is Immanuel, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And should you choose to do that, God has a marvelous promise for you.

### **Romans 10:9**

**If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.**

Now, I understand that you may have questions about that. And if you'd like to talk to one of us, call the church office this week, or send us an e-mail.

We'll be happy to sit down with you and show you from the Scripture how you can know with absolute certainty that you're on your way to heaven.

But for those who have already trusted Christ, how should the fact that "God is with us" impact your life.

It should help us to...

## **2. Overcome temptation and sinful habits**

We all have sinful tendencies. We all struggle with different temptations. Yours may be different from mine, but we all have them.

God understands that, but he doesn't intend for us to indulge those tendencies. He wants to give us victory over these enemies.

Maybe you struggle with communicating a godly way.

- Is there a lack of kindness in the way you speak to your wife or to your children, to your parents, to your co-workers.
- Maybe you use your words to manipulate other people.
- Maybe you struggle with honesty.
- Maybe you gossip.
- Maybe you're one of those people who would rather do just about anything than actually sit down with another person to solve a problem...

Maybe your problem isn't with communication. Maybe it's with the way you use your time.

- How much time are you spending in front of the TV...playing video games (guys)...
- How much time are you spending on the internet?
- What are you looking at?
- Does the way you spend your time show that you understand that God is with you?

And the excuse might be – I've been this way too long. It's just too hard to change.

Listen, are you telling me that the God who rescues nations, that the God who overcame the powers of death and hell, can't help you?

Yeah, it may be hard, and yeah, you might need to get some help from a godly Christian friend, but remember "God is with us."

Knowing this should also motivate you to...

### **3. Develop your relationship with God**

#### **John 1:12**

**But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God**

If God is with you, you are His child. And He wants to spend time with you.

Maybe the step you need to take as a result of hearing that God is with us, is to purpose to spend more time with Him.

Maybe you need to sit down with your schedule, and block out specific times that you're going to spend reading His Word, that you're going to spend talking to Him in prayer.

He's with you. He wants you to be with Him.