

<http://www.worshiphousemedia.com/mini-movies/11635/Four-Words>

Tell the person next to you, “God is with you.”

Emmanuel, God with us; those are powerful words! Those words are Good News at a time in which the world needs a lot of good news.

I don't know what time it is in your life right now; but the Good News is that God is with you! So what time is it in your life right now?

Is it a good time? Rejoice, because God is with you!

Is it an uncertain time? Rejoice, because God is with you!

Is it a bad time? I know it might be hard to hear this right now if it is a bad time, but 'Rejoice, because God is with you!' And because God is with you; you are not alone!

Over and over throughout this Christmas season I've been drawn to this reminder that God is with us. Matthew, at the beginning of his gospel, introduces us to Jesus as Emmanuel, God with us. Probably no other word is more powerful or meaningful in the Christmas story and in our lives today than Emmanuel. And the reason I say that is because no matter what time it is in your life today we have the assurance that God is with us...at just the right time.

At just the right time...

That's how my favorite verse about Christmas begins. It may not sound like a passage you normally hear at Christmas but it certainly tells the Good News of Christmas! The passage is actually from Galatians 4:4-5 and begins: “When the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive the full rights of sons and daughters.”

Notice that Jesus didn't enter too soon, or too late, Jesus entered at the right time.

Jesus entered the world to experience our lives. Not just to know about our life but to actually enter into the fullness of our life- the good and the bad, the highs and lows, the joy and the suffering.

Think about how Jesus life began. His parents were young, they were poor, and on the night of his birth the only place they had to lay their newborn baby was in a feeding trough. He was the Creator of the world, but his birth was greeted by the lowliest of people, shepherds who came in from the hillsides around Bethlehem.

We know it must have been a humble beginning for Jesus. When his parents presented him in the Temple eight days after his birth they brought a sacrifice of two doves- the sacrifice of the poorest of the poor. To top it all off Jesus parents were probably

considered something like outcasts since everyone knew that Mary's pregnancy was 'unusual' to say the least.

Jesus entered our life to experience not only the good times, the ordinary and regular parts of our life; but most importantly Jesus entered our life to experience the passion- the suffering- of our life.

Elsewhere in scripture one writer notes that Jesus sympathizes with our weaknesses. (Heb 4:15) Jesus lived among the people of his day so that he could understand their life stories- not just the facts but the raw emotions of their lives. In this mystery/miracle of God putting on human flesh Jesus experienced life in a way that engaged not only his mind, but most importantly his whole being.

The miracle of Jesus birth assures us that Jesus fully identified with us in our passion. It was costly for Jesus to enter into our world. Philippians 2 says that he made himself nothing, taking on the very nature of a servant, and became obedient to death. Jesus identified with us in our life, with all its joys and sufferings, so that he could redeem and restore us to our rightful place as sons and daughter of God.

I don't know what time it is in your life right now, but the Good News is that God is with us!

As we learned all throughout Advent, the way that God entered our world through the miracle/mystery of the incarnation informs how we are called to enter our own world. So as Jesus entered at just the right time we are called to enter the world of others at just the right time and experience the fullness of their life. We are called to identify with them in a way that we understand their life stories and most importantly so that we feel the story of their lives- through the joys and the suffering. As Paul says in Romans 12: we as disciples of Jesus are to, Rejoice with those who rejoice and mourn with those who mourn.

Jesus came at the right time to a suffering world to redeem the world and set it free from the bondage of pain and suffering. But Jesus could not do that without first entering into our passions- our suffering and pain. And Jesus cannot continue to enter into our world to redeem, restore and renew unless we are willing to follow his example.

Are you and I willing to enter into the passion of others' lives in the same way Jesus did? Are we willing to enter the suffering of those who hurt; like the widow, the orphan, the outcast. These are the people who Jesus came to identify with- to feel their passion- so that he might bring them hope. Are you willing to suffer with those who suffer?

Someone you know needs you to enter into their life to do more than just rejoice with them; they need you to be willing to enter their passion- to experience life where they are and be the light of Jesus in their darkness.

At just the right time, God sent his Son... now let me ask you; are you willing to be sent at just the right time into the life of another who needs to know that God is with us? Not just the words, but the flesh and blood presence of God that you become when you take the light of Jesus into their world.

Every time we enter into the passion of another person's life and fully identify with them we also do the same thing Jesus did for us- we restore to them their dignity as daughters and sons of God. When we welcome Jesus into our heart and experience afresh the birth of Jesus in our lives we are reminded that we are sons and daughters of the King. When we enter into the passion- the pain and suffering- of another persons' life we bring them the promise of Christmas- that God is with us- and no one ever needs to feel alone again!

Prayer

God, it is good to know that you are with us all the time! Thank you for being willing to experience our life- its highs and lows; and most importantly to know that you are with us at just the right time.

As we enter our world tonight may we seek the opportunity to be with others each day of their life. Enable us to experience their stories so that we may respond in ways that are redemptive.

As we carry the light of Jesus into this darkened world may we be the light of the world! Enable us to dispel the darkness and bring the assurance that God is with us.

Amen!