

During this season of Advent, we have been exploring all the gospels of their version of the nativity story. Isaiah prophesied that Jesus would be named Emmanuel, which means God with us, so we have been exploring these sacred texts to show us where God is with us so many years ago and today.

Matthew said that God is with us in the love and commitment Joseph had for Mary. Despite their less-than-perfect circumstances, God's steadfast love was seen through Joseph's commitment to Mary and fulfilling his call to raise Jesus as his son.

Mark said God is with us in new beginnings and in the good news of Jesus Christ, especially when we really need good news. God's constant presence is with us when we're in the wilderness like John the Baptist, and when we're waiting the arrival of a God whom we never expected.

Luke said God is with us in the simplicity and practicality of life. God slips into our lives barely unnoticeable until he comes at the exact moment when we need him the most. We may not have made room for Christ before, but our empty mangers give Christ a place to take up residence in our lives. We knew it had to be God with us because of the peace, hope, joy, and love he brings.

And, today, John's nativity story, the birth story of Jesus, is the creation story. John tells us that Jesus was with us in the beginning at creation. The birth of Christ wasn't just an event that happened before the common era. Christ has always been with us even before he was made flesh.

John tells us that Jesus, the Word, was at the beginning of creation as God.

God spoke things into being, and it was through Christ that all was created. He was not an afterthought, a Plan B, sent to fix what humans messed up. Christ has always been the source and sustenance of all life. We are all created by and through Christ. That was always the plan, for Christ to always be with us.

John also says that God is with us as the Word. I have a bit of trivia for you. We call the Bible the Word of God, but nowhere in the Bible, does it refer to itself as the Word of God. Church tradition defined the Bible as the Word of God, but right here, John says Jesus is the Word. If we wonder what God thinks about a particular topic, look to what Jesus said about it since he is the Word of God.

We can also trust that going to Jesus to get a word from God is the correct path, because Jesus is God. We're going straight to the source. Sometimes we think Jesus is somehow less than God the Father, because he is second in the Trinity. Another piece of trivia -- nowhere in the Bible does the term, Trinity, exist.

In an attempt to define and understand God, the Bible describes all three persons: God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit, but the Bible does not use the term Trinity. The word wasn't created until the second century. We give thanks again to church tradition who actually created the term for us, so we can better understand how God is with us in these three forms.

And, finally, John says God is with us as the light. Jesus, God in human form, came to bring light to the darkened world to show us the way. Christian author, Edith Schaeffer, said: "Don't be fearful about the

journey ahead; don't worry about where you are going or how you are going to get there. If you believe in the first person of the Trinity, God the Father, also believe in the second person of the Trinity, the one who came as the Light of the World, not only to die for people, but to light the way... This one, Jesus Christ, is himself the Light and will guide your footsteps along the way.”

Jesus is with us in the wilderness and in the darkness, but he doesn't ask us to stay there. “He doesn't want us stumbling around in the shadows of life. He will be the light for us through our journey of life. He will provide the illumination that gives us a sense of safety [and direction]. He will brighten our path, so we can take the next step.”¹

The next step is opening a place for Christ in our lives. Being born with Christ this Christmas marks a new beginning and the next step on this path that God has created you to walk. God beckons you to follow.

All the gospels agree that God is with us in the person of Jesus Christ. All the gospels talked about the opposition to Christ, the violent and oppressive setting that Christ was born into, and the darkness that engulfed the people and the world. All the gospels confer that Jesus is the light of the world, the Son of God, the Messiah, who joined us in our darkness in order to give us life, truth and grace.

At the beginning of Advent, I asked you to look for Emmanuel during this season of Advent. In the midst of the hustle and bustle, our preparations, and our celebrations, where did you see God with

you? If you would like to share that in this space, I invite you to write it on the poster during our closing song or after Worship.

God is with us everywhere. In the beginning, in creation, in the word and in the light. In the Bible, in the trinity and in church tradition. In the wilderness and in the manger. In community and in solitude. “If you think of our world as being without God or that God is really distant or faraway, [remember that] throughout all our experiences and encounters, God is present with us and will be even until the end of the age.”² Emmanuel, God with us, light our way. The true light, that enlightens everyone, come into our world and show us the way. Amen.

¹ Bruce and Stan. *God is in the Small Stuff at Christmas*, 185.

² Trevor Hudson, *Pauses for Advent*, 43.