Short story

The children were lined up in the cafeteria of a Catholic Elementary School for lunch. At the head of the table was a large pile of apples. The nun made a note posted on the apple tray “take only one God is watching”. Moving further along the lunch line at the other end of the table was a large pile of chocolate chip cookies. A child had written a note “take all you want God is watching the apples”.

Emmanuel – God with us

This morning – worship song, children’s video, Emmanuel story and dance – our message “God with us”. Let’s talk about what that means

Pray

So easy to fall into the cultures and traditions of the holidays…..Christmas is Christ’s birth, Easter signifies His death and resurrection followed by His ascension to Heaven. He’s in another realm far away that someday we will inhabit and one day He will return to take us all home. “God with us” means so much more than that.

His Spirit resides in those who believe and accept and proclaim Him as their Lord and Savior.

He’s closer than any of us can imagine. He’s accessible 24/7, 365 days a year.

His Presence can be experienced in a tangible way.

His voice can be heard.

His beauty can be seen.

Let’s start in John 1-1-17 TPT

Jesus came as the light of the world. He then passed the baton to us announcing that we are the light of the world. Jesus came as the miracle worker. He said that we would do “greater works” than He did (John 14:12). He then pulled the greatest surprise of all, saying, “right now the Holy Spirit is with you, but He’s going to be in you.” (John 14:17) Jesus who illustrates to us what is possible for those who are right with God, now says that His people are to be the tabernacle of God on planet earth. Paul affirms this revelation with statements such as, “Do you not know that you are the temple of God and the Spirit of God lives in you?” (1 Cor 3:16)…..and you are a dwelling place of God.” (Eph 2:22)

If the Father filled the OT houses with His glory, though they were built by human hands, how much more will He fill the place that He builds with His own hands! He is building us into His eternal dwelling place.

Salvation was not the ultimate goal of Christ’s coming. It was the immediate target…the marker in the lane. Without accomplishing redemption, there was no hope for the ultimate goal – which was to fill each born again person with the Holy Spirit. God’s desire is for the believer to overflow with Himself, that we might be filled with the fullness of God.

**19**May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God. (Eph 3:19)NLT

John 14:15-21 TPT

John 17 TPT – prayer to the Father for the disciples and each one of us

Communion

This morning as part of our Christmas celebration, let’s remember, celebrate and honor what Christ has done for each one of us. As you come to the altar and take communion this morning, celebrate His birth, death, resurrection and the Kingdom life he gives us now and into eternity.

Luke 22:14-20 NLT

**14**When the time came, Jesus and the apostles sat down together at the table. **15**Jesus said, “I have been very eager to eat this Passover meal with you before my suffering begins.**16**For I tell you now that I won’t eat this meal again until its meaning is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God.”

**17**Then he took a cup of wine and gave thanks to God for it. Then he said,“Take this and share it among yourselves. **18**For I will not drink wine again until the Kingdom of God has come.”

**19**He took some bread and gave thanks to God for it. Then he broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this to remember me.”

**20**After supper he took another cup of wine and said, “This cup is the new covenant between God and his people—an agreement confirmed with my blood, which is poured out as a sacrifice for you.

Say after communion:

We don't come to church just to be spiritual for an hour or so, and then go home to be physical. We LIVE in the Spirit, and we walk in the Spirit. Our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit – we are one with Him. This is what it means: He was born for us and took on our flesh so that we can be born again and take on the Divine nature, and live a new kind of life. This is what Christmas means: No more beating on closed doors, but an open heaven, angels ascending and descending freely, our prayers reaching the throne of God unhindered, and the Holy Spirit constantly pouring upon us like sunshine from a cloudless sky. God is with us – “Immanuel.” REINHARD BONNKE

Silent Night/Away in the Manager

Closing Prayer