

Immanuel God With Us

***Matthew 1:23***

***“The Virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel which means, “God with us.”***

God with us, that is a very good thought. For believers it is so easy to believe God is with us when things are good. When you get a raise at work or your baby sleeps through the night for the first time, when your family is healthy or when you get a parking spot that is very close to the front entrance way we say “God is good!”

But it’s much more difficult to sense presence when you’re in the valley. When you get bad news, when you’re hurting or when you’re alone or worried or battling depression, it’s much more difficult to comprehend God with us.

So much of our life is good but this one area brings everything else down. So often we have long seasons in our lives where our marriage is good but one of your kids are making crazy and stupid decisions and it hurts. There’s so many good things but we let one or two things take us down in the valley.

So today I want to look at where Immanuel is AT in those valleys. In the Bible valleys represent several things. In the valley there often was a battle. For some of you you may be in the middle of your own Valley in a fierce battle. Valleys were also seasons of desperation but they are far less viewed as

places of growth and I think that it's here that a lot of Christians missed the best time for growth.

You see the thing is, we get to enjoy him on the mountain tops, but we get to know him intimately in the valleys. Look with me at ***Psalms 84:5-7 "Blessed are those whose strength is in you, who have sent their hearts on pilgrimage. As they pass through the valley of Baca, they make it a place of Springs, the autumn rains also cover it with pools."***

The valley of Baca is a reference to a tree this tree was covered with SAP, it looked like the tree was crying. That's why it's also translated as the valley of tears, the valley of weeping or the valley of loss.

Going through a valley can be a difficult and dangerous journey. That's why the Psalmist says, "blessed is those who strength is in you."

For those that are followers of Christ, we believe that when we get to the end of our strength there is a divine strength from God that is available to those who know him. ***2 Corinthians 12:9 says, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."***

If you were in the middle of a valley this morning remember that you have access to the very real, ever present, supernatural power of God. Remember the text doesn't say blessed are those who make it on their own or blessed are

those who are very determined. Sometimes it's like we have the spirit of independence on us. We may not say it but our actions scream, "I want to stand on my own 2 feet, I don't want to depend on anyone for anything!" This goes diametrically opposed to ***Psalms 84 "blessed are those whose strength is in you."***

I like how the new living translation translates Psalms 84 verse five, take a listen. ***"What Joy for those whose strength comes from the Lord, who have set their minds on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem."***

Here's the cool thing about this verse. Jerusalem was known as the city of refuge or the place of peace. One commentary said, in order to get to the place of refuge you had to travel through the valley of tears. I like that because sometimes in order to get to the place where you appreciate the presence and power of God you've got to travel through pain in order to get to the presence and power of God.

Look at that scripture again, ***"who have set their minds on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem."*** What you think about matters. What you have your mind set on matters. Paul said, "set your minds on things above."

For instance, your current situation might be in the valley but your mind can still be set upon God. Your soul may be aching but your mind is set on God. Your emotions may be all over the place but your mind is fixed on God. I am on a pilgrimage to the

place of peace and the power of Immanuel is going with me because he is God with me! ***“He is the lamp into my feet and a light unto my pathway.”***

As much as we would like to, we can't go quickly through the valley. It's a pilgrimage not a foot race. God rarely reveals himself to people who are rushed. This time of year can be all consuming with Christmas parties, family get-togethers, work functions and so on. All the while God is saying don't rush through, don't be too quick, I want to show you something. Be still.

I want you to remember this the next time you were in the valley or for those who are currently in the valley as I speak, **the valley is not your home.** You are on a pilgrimage to the place of peace. King David said, ***“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil for thou art with me.”***

Remember we enjoy God on the mountain top but get to know him in the valley. He is Immanuel God with us.