

## **Theme: “Names of Wondrous Love” - IMMANUEL**

Our Lenten series for this year focuses on some of the names of Jesus and how these names show His “wondrous love” for us in connection with God’s plan of salvation. We began this series on Ash Wednesday with the name JESUS, which means “Savior.” Today we come to the name IMMANUEL. We begin with a reading from the Gospel of Matthew in which Matthew quotes the prophet Isaiah, who prophesied some 700 years before Jesus’ birth that this would be one of the names for Jesus, and tells us what that name means:

### **Text: Matthew 1:22-23 & John 18:3-12 (NKJV)**

**Matthew 1:22-23** **So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: <sup>23</sup> "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us."**

**John 18:3-12** **Then Judas, having received a detachment of troops, and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, came there with lanterns, torches, and weapons. <sup>4</sup> Jesus therefore, knowing all things that would come upon Him, went forward and said to them, "Whom are you seeking?" <sup>5</sup> They answered Him, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said to them, "I am He." And Judas, who betrayed Him, also stood with them. <sup>6</sup> Now when He said to them, "I am He," they drew back and fell to the ground. <sup>7</sup> Then He asked them again, "Whom are you seeking?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." <sup>8</sup> Jesus answered, "I have told you that I am He. Therefore, if you seek Me, let these go their way," <sup>9</sup> that the saying might be fulfilled which He spoke, "Of those whom You gave Me I have lost none." <sup>10</sup> Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. <sup>11</sup> So Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into the sheath. Shall I not drink the cup which My Father has given Me?" <sup>12</sup> Then the detachment of troops and the captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound Him.**

Immanuel. “God with us.” What a perfect name for Jesus! When the fullness of time came, Christ who was God from all eternity became true man. He didn’t give up His deity but added His humanity to His person. He became the God-man, one person, but with both a divine and a human nature. True God and true man. Behind this miracle was the divine plan of salvation. As God, Christ gave the laws; as man, He was subject to them. And as the God-man, His perfect keeping of the law now counts for you and me. As God He could not die; as man He could die. And as the God-man He did die, and with His holy, precious blood He made the full, sufficient payment for all sins on the cross.

In our text we see “proofs” that Jesus is Immanuel, “God with us.” During His life here on earth Jesus put aside, or suppressed, the use of His divine powers as God. Occasionally He showed glimpses of His power and glory as true God, and this night, outside the Garden of Gethsemane was one of those occasions.

Malchus, the high priest’s servant, certainly got a glimpse that Jesus is Immanuel, “God with us.” Our text tells us that while Jesus was being arrested, **“Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus” (John 18:10).** Luke’s Gospel tells us that after rebuking Peter Jesus **“touched his [Malchus’] ear and healed him” (Luke 22:51).** What do you think was going through Malchus’ head when this happened? Malchus must have wondered, “Who is this Jesus anyway? Where did He get such power?”

The soldiers who came to arrest Jesus certainly also got a glimpse that Jesus is Immanuel, “God with us.” These soldiers came armed with **“with lanterns, torches, and weapons” (John 18:3)**. No doubt they were prepared for and expecting at least some resistance from Jesus and His followers that night. Instead of finding a rebel armed to the teeth, they find Jesus stepping forward and quietly asking, **“Whom are you seeking?” (John 18:4)**. What do you think was going through their minds and hearts **“when He said to them, ‘I am He,’ they drew back and fell to the ground” (John 18:6)?** “Who is this Jesus anyway? Where did He get such power?”

I often think about how they answered when Jesus **“asked them again, ‘Whom are you seeking?’ (John 18:7)**. Did they answer a bit more timidly the second time after getting up and dusting themselves off in front of this unarmed, unassuming preacher who had somehow just knocked them all to the ground by His words? Were there some nervous glances between the soldiers and a “gulp” before they answered the second time, **“Jesus of Nazareth”**? This was no ordinary man they were arresting, and they certainly weren’t overpowering Him or taking Him by force. **“He was,”** as Isaiah had prophesied, **“led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth” (Isaiah 53:7)**. This was Immanuel, the God-man in wondrous love going silently, willingly to the slaughter.

Did you catch the third “proof” from our text that Jesus is Immanuel, “God with us”? It was one brief phrase that could be easy to miss or overlook, **Jesus therefore, knowing all things that would come upon Him, went forward and said to them, “Whom are you seeking?” (John 18:4)**. Jesus as true God knew what was going to happen. He knew all the terrible suffering and torment—the hell, literally!—that He would go through if He stepped forward and allowed Himself to be arrested that night. And make no mistake about it, He was the one in charge here. He was the one willingly allowing this to happen. As Matthew records in his Gospel Jesus reminded Peter after Peter tried to defend Jesus with his sword, **“Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?” (Matthew 26:53)**. Jesus explained very clearly earlier in John’s Gospel **“The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again” (John 10:17-18)**. Jesus’ willing love for us and for all sinners compelled him to carry out the Father’s plan of salvation.

Immanuel, “God with us.” We’ve seen proof of how this name fits Jesus. Now let’s see what it means for us. Is there any promise for us in that name of wondrous love? Definitely!

- † **He is Immanuel—“God with us”—through the means of grace.** He is still with us and comes to us in the power of His Word, the Bible, and His Sacraments, Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, which are connected to that powerful, life-giving Word.
- † **He’s Immanuel—“God with us”—in our troubles.** He knows what they are like. He suffered them Himself. Is it grief caused by the loss of a loved one? He knows. He wept at the grave of His dear friend Lazarus. Is it temptation that never seems to leave us alone? He knows. He faced Satan’s relentless attacks from the beginning to the end of his earthly ministry. Is it loneliness brought on by unfaithful friends? He knows. He experienced the betrayal of Judas and the denial of Peter and the desertion of all His disciples this night He was arrested. Not only does he know but he can do something about our troubles as the God-man who can do anything. And as our loving God and Savior we know what He can and will do for us in our troubles is always truly for our good!

† **He's Immanuel—"God with us"—in service to him.** When it's two steps forward and three steps backward on the path of our Christian life, He knows. When it's our old sinful nature getting once again the upper hand in daily battle with our new man, He knows. He's there to encourage us in His Word, "Don't give up. Remember, I have already paid for your sins, and I remember your failings no more. Remember that I'm here to strengthen you through the Word and Sacrament so that you can walk more closely with me. Remember I am Immanuel—"God with you."

† **He's Immanuel—"God with us"—even in the valley of the shadow of death.** We do not know when our last day will be, but we do know who will be there at our side when it comes. When it's our turn to walk through the "the valley of the shadows of death" (**Psalm 23:4**), what comfort to be able to say, "**I will fear no evil, for you are with me**" (**Psalm 23:4**). What comfort to know that He is well acquainted with the valley of death because He has walked it before us! What comfort to know that though the shadows may threaten us, they cannot harm us because He has paid for sin and conquered death. What comfort to know our walk will end in heaven at His side where we can say to Him whose love has brought us there, "Now I am always with you."

May God help us all to never to lose sight of Jesus' "wondrous love" as our Immanuel, "God with us." Amen.