

God with us 2 – In the Pain

Welcome back to Redemption Church. It's a beautiful Christmas season here in Plano Tx.

Welcome everyone to Redemption Church. We are not a mega Church but we are a mighty Church. We are doing mighty things in Plano, Dallas Fort Worth, and throughout the world. #mightynotmega

Welcome. as always, to everyone watching and listening online.

We are excited about the Christmas season. Last week we started a brand new sermon series called God with Us.

GOD WITH US

The true message of this season is that God is with us.

Matthew 1:23 (NIV2011) “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”).

You are not alone! Immanuel has come. God is with us.

Last week we told you that God is with us in the silence.

God is with us in the silence

Before God spoke through an angel, God had been silent for 400 years. There are times of silence in our life. There is the “in between space” ... the space between the promise given and the promise performed. Even in the space where you are not seeing your prayers answered, not hearing God's voice, or feeling His presence, God is still there. God is with us in the silence.

The birth of Jesus in the manger is proof that God was with us all along.

Today I want to tell you that God is with us in the pain.

God is with us in the pain

There are many songs that focus on the joy and happiness of Christmas..

- It's the most wonderful time of the year
- We wish you a merry Christmas... or in Espanol, Feliz Navidad
- Jingle bells

- Santa Clause is coming to town
- All I want for Christmas is you
- Rockin' around the Christmas tree

Let us never forget that some this Christmas season will be dealing with pain.

- The loss of a loved one becomes more evident than ever when there is an empty chair at the table where they used to sit.
- Christmas is a time for family... but we have to admit that some families are difficult.
- Those who have gone through a recent divorce feel out of place this time of year.
- There are some people who are will work over time on Christmas to pay the bills.
- Imagine the single mother who can't afford to put anything under the tree... or to even have a tree.

I remember the last Christmas with my Grandmother, Hazel Fluitt. She was on hospice care after a long fight with breast cancer and was in and out of consciousness. That experience marked that Christmas and every Christmas since.

The original Christmas story is filled with pain. I want to focus on 3 very painful parts of the Christmas story, a Dead Marriage, a Dead Reputation, & a Dead Baby

a Dead Marriage, a Dead Reputation, & a Dead Baby

I cannot think of any Christmas Carols that mention any of these points. The little children's Christmas plays usually jump right past these plot points. However the writers of the New Testament put these painful moments within the Christmas story.

Matthew 1:18 (NIV2011) This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 1:19 (NIV2011) Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

A dead marriage

Mary was a virgin, yet was pregnant by the Holy Spirit. Her husband to be, Joseph, was not buying this story however. Joseph was going to divorce Mary.

Divorce is one of the most painful things anyone can go through. Mary is a young virgin girl who is engaged to be married to Joseph. This should be a time of dreaming and celebrating and counting the days until they are married... but before the marriage can be consummated Joseph has decided to divorce Mary.

It says "because he was faithful to the law... he had in mind to divorce her quietly. Under the law given through Moses, Joseph had a right to divorce Mary if He thought she was unfaithful to Him. The penalty was severe enough that Mary could have been stoned to death... so although Joseph did not believe Mary, He did care enough for her to divorce her quietly so that she wouldn't be harmed/killed.

Mary & Joseph had a dead marriage. It is easy to question if God was with them based on this pain.

Mary had a dead reputation.

Luke 1:28 (NIV2011) The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

The Angel said to Mary that she is highly favored and that the Lord is with her. And yet... there is evidence that her reputation took a great hit. Joseph did not believe her... who would believe her? Who would believe that she was overshadowed by the Holy Spirit?

Mary & Joseph, because of a census had to travel back to the city of Joseph's family line. That city is called Bethlehem. Joseph had family in Bethlehem... yet none of his family offered Joseph & Mary a place to stay. Why? Because they did not approve of Mary and this pregnancy. Mary's reputation was destroyed and she was disowned by her own family. She ends up staying the night in barn and placing Christ in a manger.

Later on in the gospel's the Pharisees insinuate that Jesus was of illegitimate birth. (John 8:41) These many years later, the reputation of Mary was still called into question.

It hurts when people say mean things about you. The Christmas story contains that kind of pain.

Mary & Joseph had a dead marriage & Mary had a dead reputation. And then there is the dead baby.

The birth of Jesus is not the only baby in the Christmas story. In Luke 1 an angel tells a priest named Zechariah that his wife Elizabeth would give birth to a son. Elizabeth was old in age and had been barren – unable to have a baby. Now God was going to give them a baby we all know today as John the Baptist.

But we are told in the historical writings of Josephus that Elizabeth feared the baby to be dead in her womb. They could not go to the hospital and have a sonogram to look at the baby. They understood that if they did not feel the baby move it was likely that the baby had died while still in the womb. The historian Josephus writes that Elizabeth had not felt the baby move and the baby was believed to be dead.

Elizabeth & Zechariah had prayed for a baby all their life, and now it seems they will not have this joy. This is painful. It is painful to think about your child's funeral. ..Such a great loss.

a Dead Marriage, a Dead Reputation, & a Dead Baby

A dead marriage. A dead reputation. And now a dead baby.

Matthew 1:23 (NIV2011) “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”).

Is God really with us in our pain?

Well God was in this Christmas story.

When Joseph was going to divorce Mary, God sent an Angel to speak with Him.

Matthew 1:20 (NIV2011) But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

God brought that dead marriage back to life.

And Marry and her dead reputation. What about that?

God performed everything He said He would. She did give birth to a son and He was the messiah. Joseph did believe her, but not everyone would ever believe that she as a virgin gave birth to the Son of God. But do we believe her today?

And while she had to see her son hang on a cross, she also saw him rise again from the grave. And while Mary had to let go of her son so that he would ascend to heaven, she also received His Holy Spirit in Acts 2.

And that dead baby. What happened?

In Luke 1 Mary goes to see her cousin Elizabeth, because the angel told her she was also pregnant.

Luke 1:41 (NIV2011) When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

Luke 1:42 (NIV2011) In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear!"

That baby she had feared to be dead, leaped within her by the power of God.

All this is proof that God is with you in the pain.

If you are in pain today, I have good news. You are not alone in your pain. God is with you even in pain. God can actually take that painful situation and resurrect it.

However I have to be honest with you. I gave you 3 painful stories that God turned around. God saved the marriage. God gave Mary more than what a lost reputation would cost. The baby leapt to life...

If we are not careful we will incorrectly believe that the answered prayer, the miracle, the resurrection, is proof that He is with us. The real revelation is that God is with us even when there is no proof.

God is with us even when there is no proof.

Every time problems and pain come your way it does NOT mean that God has left you. He is Immanuel! God is with us!

- God was with the baby John the Baptist when he leapt in his Mother's womb.
- God was equally with John the Baptist when he was executed in prison.
- God was with Mary when her marriage with Joseph was saved.

- God was equally with Mary when, later Joseph died to bury her husband.

God is not with you because everything turns out well. God is with you because He is Immanuel – God with us. It is because He is with us that things turn out well.

God is with us in the pain

Jesus Himself is the proof that God is with us in pain. Wherever there is pain you will find Jesus.

Many times in scripture Jesus stops whatever he is doing because someone in pain called out to him. The phrase “He was moved with compassion” appears many times in the Gospels. Jesus did not turn away from the pain of others. Jesus was moved with compassion by pain.

If you are in pain today, I NEED you to know that Jesus sees your pain and it moves His heart with compassion. God is with us in the pain.

The greatest example of Jesus being with us in the pain is the cross.

The prophet Isaiah, the same prophet who foretold the Virgin Birth and the baby being Immanuel, God with us... Isaiah the prophet gave us an essential prophecy about Jesus.

Isaiah 53:3 (NIV2011) He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.

Isaiah 53:4 (NIV2011) Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted.

Isaiah 53:5 (NIV2011) But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.

700 years before Jesus was born, the prophet told us that Jesus would be familiar with pain. He was familiar with pain because “surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering.”

When Jesus Christ carried that cross to the hill called calvary... when he was mocked and ridiculed... when he wore a crown of thorns and was beaten with the cat of nine tails whip... when his hands and feet were nailed to the cross... when he hung between earth & heaven... when He was stabbed in the side... when God withdrew His Spirit from Him and he was abandoned and drew His last breath... He was bearing your pain.

The pain you are experiencing today... Jesus already bore on the cross. Perhaps we need to let Jesus bear our pain for us instead of bearing it our self.

God is with us in the pain

musician

I remember the December where my grandmother was in Hospice and coming to the end of her journey. I remember driving home and breaking down and crying. I had never felt pain like that before. There was such sadness as I realized I was losing my grandmother. I had prayed, but Jesus was not going to answer my request.

Sad. Hurt. Disappointed. It was painful. I remember being 18 and trying to hide the fact from others that I was crying.

But I also remember feeling God. I remember his peace & love being felt. God was with me in the pain.

It is possible to feel peace & pain at the same time. Even though the situation with my grandmother did not turn out like I would have liked, God was there. He was with me.

I don't know what your pain is today. I am not offering you a wave of a magic wand and suddenly you have no more pain and problem. But what I offer you today is that Jesus is moved with compassion. He is familiar with your pain because he bore it on the cross. You can be in his presence right now.