

**LENT - 2013**  
**Names of Wondrous Love**  
**John 18:3-12**

**IMMANUEL**

Dear Friends in Christ,

Way back in eternity, God planned our salvation before he had even created the world. Imagine this scene in heaven: The Father speaks to his beloved Son and says, “the only way to free mankind from sin’s curse is for you to take on human flesh and put yourself in mankind’s place. To become a speck of cells in a woman’s womb and to be born a helpless child. To become man so that you can be the perfect substitute for mankind, not only under the law but also on the cross that all lawbreaking sinners deserve.” We don’t really know how the dialogue went. But we do know the Son’s response. It was willing obedience to his Father’s plan and wondrous love for unlovable sinners, love far beyond our comprehension.

So 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. 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 was mortal. And as the God-man he did die, and with his holy, precious blood he made sufficient payment for all sins.

Seven hundred years before Bethlehem, God used his prophet Isaiah to put a name on this miracle. “*The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.*” (Isaiah 7:14). Some months before Jesus’ birth, the angel repeated those same words to Joseph. Immanuel they called this wonderful baby. That name means very simply “God with us,” a name truly filled with wondrous love. Immanuel - today we see the proof that Jesus is “God with us,” and we see the promises for you in that Name of Wondrous Love.

**John 18:3-12**

<sup>3</sup> *Judas came to the grove, guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons.* <sup>4</sup> *Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, “Who is it you want?”*

<sup>5</sup> *“Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. “I am he,” Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them.)* <sup>6</sup> *When Jesus said, “I am he,” they drew back and fell to the ground.* <sup>7</sup> *Again he asked them, “Who is it you want?” And they said, “Jesus of Nazareth.”* <sup>8</sup> *“I told you that I am he,” Jesus answered. “If you are looking for me, then let these men go.”* <sup>9</sup> *This happened so that the words he had spoken would be fulfilled: “I have not lost one of those you gave me.”*

<sup>10</sup> *Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest’s servant, cutting off his right ear. (The servant’s name was Malchus.)* <sup>11</sup> *Jesus commanded Peter, “Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?”* <sup>12</sup> *Then the detachment of soldiers with its commander and the Jewish officials arrested Jesus.*

## I. The proof

Not many of the people alive in early first century Palestine recognized that Jesus was “God with us.” For most of his time on this earth, Jesus set aside the use of his divine powers. He still had his powers but only occasionally used them so that he could walk the road to Calvary. But that night outside the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus gave just a glimpse of his divinity. I wonder what Malchus, that high priest’s servant, would tell us about Jesus? Touching his ear sliced off by the rash swoop of Peter’s sword and then sealed back on by Jesus’ loving hand, Malchus must have wondered, “Who is this Jesus anyway? And where did he get such power?”

The soldiers who came forward with the rope to tie Jesus’ hands must have wondered too. How different the arrest of this so-called criminal had been. They had come with their lanterns to comb the shadows of the garden for a dangerous suspect only to have him walk forward to meet them. They had come ready to fight off his followers only to hear him tell them to put their weapons away. Even stranger was how they had been knocked suddenly and helplessly flat on their backs after the suspect had simply said, “I am he.”

Picking themselves up, wondering what Jesus would do next, they must have stepped forward rather hesitantly to bind his hands with a rope. They ended up arresting him, but had they really? They could hardly say they had overpowered him. It was more as if he were letting them arrest him, more as if he were going willingly with them. If they had been students of the Old Testament, they might have recalled the words of Isaiah chapter 53, “*He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth*” (v. 7). No, this was no ordinary man whom they were arresting. This was Immanuel, the God-man in wondrous love going silently, willingly to the slaughter.

What about the One who was arrested? What would he say? He could hardly say, “I didn’t know this was going to happen.” In verse 4 of our text, we are told, “*Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, ‘Who is it you want?’*” The God-man knew what was coming. He knew about the cruel punches that would bruise his face. The sharp thorns that would rip his scalp. The sadistic whip that would chew up his back. The cruel nails that would puncture his flesh. The anguish of hell that would sear his soul. All this he knew, and yet willingly he let them tie his hands. He wasn’t able to say, “I couldn’t do anything to stop this.” This was the almighty Lord, who with one snap of his fingers could have had thousands of angels there to surround him. Remember, with one sentence he had already knocked his would-be captors to the ground.

We really don’t have to ask what Jesus would have said that night in the garden. He had already said it earlier. In John chapter 10 he declared, “*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.*” Jesus would tell us about willingness, of a willing love for sinners that tied his hands tighter than any rope, of a willing love for sinners that compelled him to carry out the Father’s plan of salvation.

Do you want proof that Jesus is truly Immanuel—“God with us”? Even more so, do you want proof that he truly loves you? How can you doubt this glorious fact as you see the God-man Jesus arrested in the garden and going willingly?

## II. The promise

Immanuel is his name, “God with us.” You have seen proof of how this name fits. Now let’s see what it means for you. Is there any promise for you in that name of wondrous love? Let’s start with the promise of salvation contained in that name. Immanuel, God with us, God is not far off in the heavens, glancing at you from time to time across the vast distances. He’s here with us in our world. He’s here with us in our sins, not to cause them or to share in them but to save us from them. You no longer have to fear his presence at your side, as if he’s checking up on you and keeping tabs on how often you fall. Instead, he speaks to you in his Word with that comforting message: “*Your sins are forgiven.*” Immanuel, God with us, he’s here in his Holy Supper, giving you the very body and blood that he used to pay for your sins. The God-man Immanuel has promised never to leave you or forsake you, but to surround you with his forgiveness.

He’s “God with us” also in all your troubles. He knows what all your troubles are. He suffered many of them himself. Is it grief caused by the loss of a loved one? He knows what that is, having wept at the grave of his friend Lazarus. Is it temptation that never seems to let up? He knows what that is, as one who 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 what that is, having experienced the betrayal of a Judas and the denial of a Peter. Not only does he know about your troubles, but he can do something about them, because as the God-man he can do anything. With him all things are possible.

He’s “God with us” also in our feeble attempts at serving him. When it’s two steps forward and three steps backward on the path of sanctified living, he knows. When the old sinful nature starts to gain the upper hand in daily battle, he knows. He’s there to whisper in your ear, “Don’t give up. Remember, I have already paid for your sins. Remember that I’m here to strengthen you through Word and sacrament so that you can walk more closely with me. Remember I am Immanuel—‘God with you.’”

And he will be “God with you” when your last moment comes. You don’t know when that time will come. But you do know who will be there at your side when it does come. When the walk through the valley of the shadow of death faces you, what comfort to be able to say, “I will fear no evil, for you are with me.” What comfort to know that he’s well acquainted with the valley of death because he has walked it before us. What comfort to know that though the shadows may threaten you, they can’t harm you because he has paid for your sin and conquered death. What comfort to know your walk will end in heaven at his side where you can say to him whose love has brought you there, “Now I am always with you.”

We can’t leave the Garden of Gethsemane without one more look at our Immanuel. Listen to what he’s telling us in his wondrous love. “Don’t you see,” he tells us, “I let them tie me that I might untie you.” “Don’t you see,” he says, “with my blood I’ve cut through the cords of sin that bound you hand and foot for Satan’s service and for hell’s confinement.” “Don’t you see,” he says, “you’re free—free from sin, free from Satan, free from death, free to live for me on earth, and free to live with me in heaven.”

Let us pray.

Lord, your great love sent Jesus, True God & True Man, to earth to suffer and die for us. We give you praise and glory that he won our salvation as “God with us” then, and that he remains “God with us” today. Help us never to lose sight of our Immanuel and of his wondrous love. Amen.