**FOCUS** in 2020

December 6, 2020

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**GOD WITH US –** *An Advent Series*

***In the Valleys – Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:23***



**Isaiah 7:14**

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name **Immanuel**.

**Immanuel** – God with us!

It would be so unfortunate in this Christmas season to became so busy with activities like shopping, attending parties and gatherings, or being so focused on end of the year projects, news, etc, that we did not slow down, reflect, and put our focus on the historic, apocalyptic, world changing event, that God sent His one and only son into the world to redeem us to Himself through Him.

Christmas reminds us of this incredible truth: No matter where we are, or what we go through, **God is with us**! Immanuel! We begin a new sermon series today of experiencing Immanuel. And we know that fully embracing God being with us happens best when life becomes or is difficult. In other words, we are more apt to deeply experience His being with us when we are in the **valleys**, **wildernesses**, and **storms** of this life.

**Today’s message is entitled God With Us: In The Valleys.** When it comes to geography, valleys are a depressed area of land between two higher parts which might be hills or mountains. Valleys are also metaphorical in nature for rough spots we go through in life.

1. Valleys are a **part** of life.

Beloved, **do not be surprised** at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though **something strange** were happening to you.

**1 Peter 4:12**

1. Valleys are **unpredictable**.

Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring. **Proverbs 27:1**

1. Every valley is **different**.

As we look at scripture, we can see many kinds of valleys, and the hard time that each might represent for our lives today:

Valley of **Failure** - Genesis 14:1-11

Now **the Valley of Siddim** was **full of bitumen (tar) pits**, and as the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah **fled**, **some fell into them**, and the rest fled to the hill country. So the enemy took all the possessions of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their provisions, and went their way. **Genesis 14:10-11**

Valley of **Fear** – Numbers 13:23-33

And they came to the **Valley of Eshcol** and **cut down** from there a branch with a **single cluster of grapes**, and they **carried it on a pole** between **two of them**; they also brought some pomegranates and figs. **Numbers 13:23**

And they told him, “We came to the land to which you sent us. It flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. **However**, the people who dwell in the land are **strong**, and the cities are fortified and **very large**. **Numbers 13:28**

Valley of **Conflict** – 1 Samuel 17:2-4, 11

And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered, and encamped in the **Valley of Elah**, and drew up in line of battle against the Philistines. And the **Philistines stood on the mountain on the one side**, and **Israel stood on the mountain on the other side**, with **a valley between them**. And there came out from the camp of the Philistines a champion named Goliath of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span.

**1 Samuel 17:2-4**

“**Have you seen this man** who has come up? Surely he has **come up to defy Israel**.“ **1 Samuel 17:25a**

* Facing a giant conflict/challenge

Valley of **Grief** – Psalm 84:5-7

Blessed are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion. As they go through the **Valley of Baca** they make it a place of springs; the early rain also covers it with pools. They go from strength to strength; each one appears before God in Zion.

**Psalm 84:5-7**

* Sadness, weeping, pain
* Loss of something or someone

To experience **mountaintops**, you must journey through **valleys**.

**What do you need to do if you are in the valley?**

First of all:

No one needs to travel through valleys **alone**.

The good news of Christmas is that God is with us. So if you find yourself in a valley, remember:

1. You are not **alone**.

* He is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.
* Jesus said: I will never leave you nor forsake you.

The Lord is **near** to the **brokenhearted** and **saves** the **crushed in spirit**.

**Psalm 34:18**

When you pass through the waters, **I will be with you**; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.

**Isaiah 43:2**

* He is the **lily** of the valley. Not everything in a valley is ugly. In fact, the closeness you can experience with God is the most beautiful flower blooming in the crag of a rocky place.
* Church community – We are His body. When you are going through a valley, you have a spiritual family who cares for you, and here to share in your burdens.

1. There is **purpose** in your valley.

* God does not waste a hurt.

Blessed are those whose **strength** is in you… They go from **strength** to **strength**… **Psalm 84:5-7**

* God gives us strength.
* We grow in perseverance, faith, and reliance.

Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces **endurance**, and endurance produces **character**, and character produces **hope**, and hope does not put us to shame…

**Romans 5:3-5**

Knowing that there is purpose in valleys, we can hold this question before God:

**God, what is it that you want to show me in this valley?**

1. **Dig** a little deeper.

* Dig deeper into God’s presence.
* Stay in the Word.
* Use prayer as your steering wheel.

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Happy are those who are strong in the Lord, who want above all else to follow your steps. When they walk through the **Valley of Weeping**, it will become a **place of springs** where **pools of blessing and refreshment collect** after rains!

**Psalm 84:5-6 TLB**

For this light **momentary** affliction is preparing for us an **eternal** weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

**2 Corinthians 4:17-18**