

Immanuel

Week 3

The Arrival of the Promise

Text: Luke 2:1-20

Introduction

- Reflect on childhood Christmas experiences and changing perceptions of gift-giving.
- Personal anecdote about Christmas lists and the deeper meaning of received gifts.
- Transition to the unexpected gift of Jesus—God's choice over human expectations.

The Unexpected Gift of Jesus

A. The Nature of God's Gift

○ Emphasize the Lamb of God—a baby rather than a military leader.

B. The Misunderstanding of Expectations

○ Discuss how the Jews expected a political savior.

○ Contrast their expectations with God's plan—a humble birth in a manger.

Significance of the Manger

A. The Setting of the Birth

○ Analyze why Jesus was born in a stable rather than a palace.

○ Discuss the symbolism of shepherds—the humble and lowly honored first.

B. Universal Message

- The announcement to shepherds signifies God's inclusion of all people.

- Peace on earth amidst ongoing struggles and a promise of reconciliation.

The Descending Love of God

A. Historical Context of God's Approach

- Examples of God meeting humanity at their lowest points throughout Scripture.

- Contrast with works-based religions that depict gods as distant.

B. God's Desire for Relationship

- Emphasize God's initiative in forming covenants and promises.

- Discuss how grace precedes obedience—a theme rooted in liberation.

Emmanuel: God With Us

A. The Meaning of Emmanuel

- The gift of Jesus as the fulfillment of our deepest need for relationship.

- Access to God transforming our lives and the world around us.

B. The Revelation of the Gift

- Reflection on the gifts wrapped in the identity of Jesus—fully God, fully man.

- Explanation of how understanding this gift deepens over time.

Conclusion

- Transition to the lyrics of "Mary, Did You Know?"

O Highlighting the implications of Jesus' life and ministry through the song.

- Encourage reflection on the personal significance of Jesus as Emmanuel.

Closing Prayer:

- Embrace the gift of relationship with Christ this Christmas season and beyond.