

God With Us

Matthew 1:18-25

The Fourth Sunday in Advent, December 18, 2016

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

In the beginning God created Adam from the dust of the ground. He breathed into Adam the breath of life and Adam became a living being. God planted a garden in the east, in Eden. He put the man in the garden to work it and to keep it.

God put two trees in the middle of the garden, the tree of life, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He told the man that he may eat of any of the trees of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he must not eat because on the day that he eat of it he would surely die.

God created the animals and God created Eve. They all lived together in the garden in paradise.

Eventually Adam and Eve encountered the temptation of the serpent. Under the temptation of the serpent, they ate of the fruit of the tree about which God had told them not to eat. Once they had done so, they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day. Adam and Eve heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day and they hid themselves from the face of the Lord God. They hid among the trees of the garden.

Now I ask you, Immanuel Lutheran Church, do you think that God had made a habit of walking in the garden in the cool of the day?

It certainly sounds like He did. God came walking in the cool of the day, not because He was trying to catch Adam and Eve in what they had done. God came walking in the garden in the cool of the day because He had always gone walking in the cool of the day. Why should that day be any different? It was not God who cut Adam off from walking with Him in the cool of the day. It was Adam that went and hid himself from the face of the Lord God. He hid because he had eaten of the fruit of the tree about which God had told him that he shall not eat lest he die.

After that there was no more walking with God in the cool of the day.

God cast Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden. They lived east of Eden. Adam worked the ground in order to bring forth bread from the earth for him and his household to eat. After many years and many children Adam died. He returned to the dust of the ground from which he came. He died. And when he died there was no walking with God in the cool of the day.

God was with Enoch. It even says that Enoch walked with God. So there was someone even back then who walked with God in the cool of the day. And that is why Enoch did not die. God took Enoch. He was one of two people in the Scriptures who did not die. He did not die because he walked with God. When God walks with a person in the cool of the day, one does not die.

God was with Abraham.

God protected Abraham all the days of his sojourning. God fulfilled the promises He made to Abraham. He gave Abraham and Sarah a son in their old age.

God was with Abraham in the sense that he did these things for Abraham and blessed him. But this is not the same as walking with God in the cool of the day.

God was with Isaac.

God was with Jacob. God blessed Jacob. God protected Jacob from his brother Esau. God gave Jacob great wealth from his uncle Laban. Even though Laban tried to cheat Jacob, God protected Jacob

and his family. Even though Jacob died in Egypt, God had been with him and blessed him his entire journey, but it was not the same as walking with Him in the cool of the day.

God was with Joseph. God protected Joseph from his brothers, from the Egyptians, from Potiphar's wife. God exalted Joseph over all of Egypt and over his own brothers who had tried to harm him. God was with Joseph and blessed him with children and was privileged to see his father again before his father died.

Even though God was with Joseph in this manner, it was not the same as walking with God in the cool of the day.

God was with Moses. God promised to be with Moses. God was with Moses and so God responded to Moses' prayers. When Moses held up his staff according to God's command, plagues came on Egypt. When Moses prayed to God for relief from the plagues, God responded to Moses' prayers and gave relief to Egypt. God performed the mighty works that brought His people out of Egypt. Moses is the closest anyone in the Old Testament comes to walking with God. God says that He spoke with Moses face to face as a man speaks to his friend.

But in spite of the fact that God spoke with Moses face to face that is not the same thing as what Adam had when he walked with God in the cool of the day.

God was with David.

God took David from being a shepherd to being king over all of Israel. God gave David victory over all of his enemies. God gave David rest on every side when he was king over Israel. Even after David sinned, God was with David and forgave his sins. Even when Absalom ousted David off of the throne, God restored the throne to David. David was a man after God's own heart.

But that is not the same as what Adam had. God walked with Adam in the cool of the day.

God was with the prophets of the Old Testament.

God gave them the words to speak. God rescued them from danger. God refuted those who spoke against them. They proclaimed, "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel." They had the authority to speak for God Himself, but that is not the same thing as walking with God in the cool of the day. That is not what Adam had before he took of the fruit of the tree and ate.

Walking with God in the cool of the day does mean that God is physically present with you. That is how I walk with my son in the cool of the day in the summer time. Sometimes he is in his wagon or his Smartrike, and sometimes he is walking. The sun is setting and the heat of the day is over. On a good night in early spring or late autumn there are no bugs that bite us and annoy us. Or if there is a cool breeze the bugs cannot land on us anyway. It is the picture of peace. It is a quiet joy that I wish would last forever, but eventually the sun sets or the bugs get bad or it is raining or winter sets in or something like that. Because of the transitory nature of this life such moments are precious and fleeting, but at least they give us a glimpse of what Adam had with God.

Adam was not walking with his children. Adam was walking with God. The Creator and origin of everything from whom and for whom all things exist, was walking with Adam in the cool of the day. This is what we lost and in spite of the fact that God was with hundreds of people in the Old Testament none of them, except perhaps Enoch had this quite of relationship with God.

When God walks with you in the cool of the day, there is the eternal peace. When God walks with you in the cool of the day your conscience is at ease before Him. When God walks with you in the

cool of the day, He is not only with you to protect you, but He is there such that there is nothing that can go wrong. Everything goes right when God walks with you in the cool of the day.

This is what we lost when we took of the fruit of the tree and ate it despite God's command not to do so.

And this is what Jesus restores.

Do you understand what Matthew is saying when he calls Jesus, "Immanuel"? In the Old Testament when Isaiah spoke the word of Immanuel he was simply telling king Ahaz that God was with him like God was with everyone else in the Old Testament. God would rescue Ahaz from the two kings who were threatening him.

But when Matthew says it, He does not merely mean that God is going to rescue His people once again, although he does mean that. He does not merely mean that God is going to protect His people from harm and danger, although He does mean that. Matthew means that God Himself is going to once again walk with His people in the cool of the day. What Adam had in paradise before he fell into sin is going to be restored. Jesus is going to restore it.

Do you understand what our confession of faith means when we say that Jesus is God? The child in the manger is the maker and preserver of all things. If it were not for Him you would not have existed at all. He makes and preserves all the birds, beasts, the galaxies, and the stars. He was the Word that brought them into existence.

That means that when Jesus grows up, God has grown up. When Jesus is a child in Mary and Joseph's home, God is a child in Mary and Joseph's home. Mary and Joseph's home has become the holy of holies of the temple. God is dwelling with them. They see God face to face. And so did everyone else who beheld Him.

And so Jesus calls disciples. He calls His disciples to follow Him. And when His disciples go about with Him, they are walking with God once again in the cool of the day. Paradise has been restored.

And just as this walking with God in the cool of the day was lost through sin, so also Jesus must save His people from their sins if this walking with God is going to continue. The disciples do not simply get to walk with God arbitrarily. Jesus, their God, suffers and dies on their behalf and atones for them all thus saving them from their sins and once they are saved from their sins, there is no stopping them from walking with God.

Jesus rises from the dead and walks with them again. He walks with them on the road to Emmaus. He walks with them by the Sea of Galilee.

He walks with you in the Word and the Sacraments and so God walks with you in the Word and the Sacraments. God walks with you in the cool of the day. The most important part of paradise has been restored to you. It is only a matter of time before the rest is yours also.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.