



Some Assembly Required

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Typically, I bring you a message that I've done at home, and sometimes other places as well, so it's kind of polished in my heart and polished in my mind. Today, I'm going to do the exact opposite. It's a brand-new message today, never preached it before. We're going to give birth to a message. I feel like we're family, so I can give birth in front of you. We're praying that it's not breach and that it comes out and accomplishes all that the Lord wants it to accomplish.

I want to begin with three words that when these appear on a Christmas present, in the heart of a parent, especially those of us who have ADD, they strike fear in our hearts. Those words are "Some Assembly Required." Some of you love gathering all the pieces and figuring out how to put it all together and taking your time and walking the process. We don't like you. Some of you even read the directions. I would never even consider reading... How many of you just confess today. You would read the directions. A lot of you actually. What a weird church you are today.

For those of us who have ADD, it's not that we can't figure it out. It's not that we can't read. I'll look at the pictures periodically. It's that we are too impatient. We don't want to take the time to do it. We also know from experience that it's not going to go the way that it's supposed to go. We're going to get done and there will be one, two, three pieces left over. We have no idea where they go in the process and we just hand it to the kid and say, "Play with it." They're like, "It's broken." We've experienced that, right?

In life, it's very similar to that sometimes, right? It's not that we're afraid of the work that goes into life as much as we are worried that there's something missing. Or as much as it is that we're worried there are parts of us we know in our hearts are that are just broken, and no one wants to be broken.

Here's the good news, as we walk into the Christmas season, God came to fix the broken. And Christmas, whatever else it is, is all about God coming to fix those parts in us that are broken, those parts in us that don't fit, those parts of us that are out of place.

Next week, Ted is launching you into a Christmas series through the Gospel of Luke, Luke 2, which is the most familiar passage in Christmas. There are a whole bunch of things that unless you have really studied it, really paid attention, you've missed. I'm looking forward to it. In fact, I saw the outline yesterday for your series that's coming, and I look forward to following along with you online. But what I want to do today is just sort of set the context for the series that's going to begin next week in Luke 2. Luke has, in terms of complications, a little bit of complications, a little bit uncomfortable, right?

Mary and Joseph have to travel across the country when she's nine months pregnant, and she has to lay the baby in a manger because there is no other room. And there are some confusing parts. Why are the shepherds there? In terms of drama, there is a little bit of drama, but you back up a few gospels into Matthew, and in terms of drama, it's a whole other story. It's crazy dramatic. Luke is told from Mary's perspective. Matthew is told from Joseph's perspective.

If you've got your Bible, turn to Matthew 1. In Matthew 1, he begins with all the genealogy. So and so begat so and so begat so and so. The father of is the father of is the son of is the son of. Typically, we skip all that because we can't pronounce 90% of it, right? It's like reading the instructions when you put something together, you know, "assembly required." But there is a lot of truth in that genealogy. And the conclusion of that genealogy is two things – Jesus is related to Abraham and Jesus is related to David. Because every Jewish person knew that the Messiah had to be related to Abraham and the Messiah had to be related to David.

But then you get to Verse 18, and we find out that he's not only related to Abraham, and he's not only related to David, but he's actually related to God, and he is, in fact, the son of God. And you get to this story in Matthew where this young couple is engaged. Mary is engaged to be married to Joseph and she becomes pregnant and has to go tell her fiancé that she's pregnant. Now the drama begins. And that's just the beginning of the drama.

Before I dive in and kind of go verse by verse through this text with you, I want to just let you into this beautiful mind of mine. When I say that, I'm like it is like a mind map and there are strings and things drawn. You've seen movies where a serial killer is working on it. That's what happens in my brain. I'm not a serial killer and never will be a serial killer, but I do think through things in mind maps, and I draw lines all the time. I have found it helpful for those who are ADD, for those who are in a younger generation that have grown up visually, to share periodically, kind of pull the curtain back into my own Bible reading.

Here's the truth. When I was a child, my comprehension was so below average that my dad... I don't know if he bribed the teachers or what, but first grade through fifth grade, I stayed after school every day. I had private tutoring. One of my teachers would stay with me, I would listen to a story on cassette tape or a record player (that will date me) and then had to answer questions about the story I had just listened to. They were trying to improve my comprehension. Because of that struggle that I've had my whole life and being ADD and being low comprehension, it brings with it some challenges into the Word of God and reading the Word of God, which have quite honestly proven to be great strengths for me to teach the Word of God because I have to be so diligent to work through it. So, I'm just going to show you a little bit.

At my church, we bought a TV like this where I draw all the time. I draw on the scripture and show people how I mark of the scripture. It's not for everybody, but it is for some people, and it has proven to be helpful.

I want to just show you this verse. This is how I would do it. The birth of Jesus the Messiah. I would write in my Bible right there and draw a beautiful shape around it for Christmas. This is about Christmas, right. This is the birth of Jesus the Messiah. This is how Jesus the Messiah was born. I preloaded some color in here, but what I did was start highlighting in my Bible and I ended up making two lists. I encourage you to do this. Pay attention to the repetition in the Bible. When the Bible writer, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, begins to repeat himself, it is not because they can't move on; it's because they are trying to make a very clear point. And in this little scripture, I made a list of four things, and four things that mirror one another. I'll show you the list here in just a second. But I highlighted one list in red and one list in green and numbered them.

This is how Jesus the Messiah was born. ***His mother, Mary was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took place while she was still a virgin.*** So, this is number one. And I'm going to show you what list I put that under. In fact, here are the lists. "Not Joseph" and "Yes, Holy Spirit." This writer is trying to make these two points very clear. Joseph is not the father. The Holy Spirit is the father. This is number one on Joseph not the father, right? She's still a virgin. They haven't been together. Number one under Holy Spirit is very clear. ***She became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit.*** – Matthew 1: 18.

Matthew 1: 19 ***Joseph, to whom she was engaged, was a righteous man.*** So, it's not Joseph. He's righteous, which means *right standing with God*. So, premarital sex was not a part of Joseph's habit and Joseph's lifestyle. So, that's number 2 on the list of "Not Joseph." ***And did not want to disgrace her publicly so he decided to break off the engagement quietly.*** Mathew 1: 19

And as he considered this, an angel... Now we have heavenly beings coming into the story, right? ***An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. Joseph, son of David, the angel said, "Do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife."*** Why? Because she hasn't cheated on you. Joseph, you are not the one. You were not with her, so you are not the father. Number 2 on the green is ***For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit.*** Matthew 1: 20 ***And she will have a son and you will name him Yeshua or Jesus.*** Yeshua means "Yahweh saves." That's what the name means. So, this means he's from God. He is God. This God, Yahweh's plan to save his people. So, the Holy Spirit was the one involved. ***For he will save his people from their sins.*** – Matthew 1: 21 Not from Rome, but from their sins. Why? Because this is God and what he is doing.

All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord's message through his prophet. – Matthew 1: 22. Now we have prophets. The old testament prophets speaking into this birth, about this baby. And it's not just the birth. In fact, we're not even really talking about the birth in Matthew; we're talking about the conception. So, it's not all about the virgin birth in Matthew; it's all about the divine conception. ***"Look, the virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and they will call him Immanuel, which means 'God is with us'"*** - Matthew 1: 23 This is the prophecy by the way. Remember they just mentioned this came from a prophet? He lists the prophet. It's Isaiah 7, for inquiring minds. Dual fulfillment of Isaiah 7. And the final conclusion of this fulfillment is in the person of Jesus Christ. When Joseph woke up, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded and he took Mary as his wife –Matthew 1: 23-24 Now, let me show you the last one here. ***But he did not have sexual relations with her until after the son was born. And Joseph named him Jesus.*** – Mathew 1: 25

Now, let me show you the conclusion of this chart. I wish I could have shown you as we went, but here it is. This is very clear in scripture when you look at it, you outline it, and you make it make sense to your visually. It's not Joseph. Why? Because before the marriage took place, while she was still virgin, the baby was conceived.

Joseph – No

1. But before the marriage took place,
While she was a virgin, the baby was
Conceived
2. Was a righteous man
3. Angel said, "do not be afraid to
Take Mary as your wife."
4. But he did not have sexual
Relations with her until after
Her son was born. And Joseph
Named him Jesus.

Holy Spirit – Yes

1. She became pregnant through
2. For the child within her was Conceived by the Holy Spirit
3. Jesus – Yahweh Saves
4. All of this occurred to fulfill the
Lord's message through his prophet

Now, let's back up and read this thing, but I wanted to show you an overview of what I would do with that text when I sit down to read it and say, "God, what are you saying to me?" "What are you saying to your church?" "What is it that you want us to hear?"

Now, let's back up and walk through it. Verse 18 ¹⁸ ***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.*** Now that last phrase, "Through the power of the Holy Spirit," There is power in that phrase "Through the power of the Holy Spirit." Clearly, as we said, that's the key to this whole text, the important part. It makes all the difference in the world because it proves not only did Mary not cheat on Joseph, but it also proves something bigger than that, that Jesus is actually the son of God and, in fact, is God, and that Jesus did not come via conventional conception.

He wasn't just conceived like every other baby in the whole world and the history of the world. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit. He wasn't a kid just like any other kid and then God, in a lineup of kids, picked one and said, "I choose that one." That's not how it played out. In fact, the Bible tells us that God chose this beforehand, long before Mary even came on the scene, this was God's plan from the beginning to send the Holy Spirit to conceive this baby in Mary, the Messiah in her to birth a person who would be fully God and fully man, that he would then become the Great High Priest. And that he would

live a sinless life, that he would die a substitutionary death, and he would serve as the first fruit of the resurrection. And it all hinges on this one thing, that he was conceived by the Holy Spirit of God.

19 Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law (righteous), **and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.** Now there is a lot going on in this verse. You may not see it if you don't pay attention. I know a little bit about the Middle Eastern culture, but it's not because I understand Middle Eastern culture but because I've actually studied this text and looked at it over and over again. I don't understand all there is to understand about ancient marriages and first century Middle Eastern marriages, but I understand a little bit more than I did because I've spent some time looking at it in this context and our context today.

If you're unmarried daughter comes home and says, "Hey, Mom and Dad, I'm pregnant," it's going to be a shock, right? If your unmarried son comes home and says, "Hey, Mom and Dad, that girl that I'm dating, she's pregnant," it's going to be a shocker. And it will probably be some tough days in your household and in your family. But it's not going to be the end of the world. Some of you walked through that and not only did you find out it's not the end of the world, but some of you also found out it actually was a blessing, once you met the baby, that there was something good that came out of this trouble in your life.

But in that context, this was a big stinking deal. It was the end. First of all, you couldn't hide it and you couldn't elope and hope that the pregnancy was a long one and that you could get married and kind of play with the math and hope that nobody else played with the math and figured it out. But theirs went a long, long time, right? So, you're not covering it up.

Secondly, to be pregnant out of wedlock in that day equaled major shame. And it would not only bring shame on the girl, but it would also bring shame on the family of the girl. In fact, it meant probably financial ruin for them. For Joseph, it also meant shame for him as well. He would be expected to divorce her. You say, "What do you mean divorce her; they're just engaged?" An engagement was different then than it is today. An engagement was much like a marriage. And the only way you broke off an engagement was through an official divorce. And if you became officially divorced, it meant that you could never, ever marry the rest of your life. So, the context is unbelievable. So, all of that is going on. Broken promises, broken engagement, broken dreams, broken hearts. And for Joseph, everything is broken right now. His life is flipped upside down and he has no idea what to do.

Now, look at this again. Joseph was a righteous man, and he didn't want to disgrace her publicly. He was a good man, an honorable man. He didn't want to put her to shame publicly. By the way, it was the rule of the day that if your fiancée cheats on you, it's your obligation to make it public. It's your role to publicly shame them, and Joseph said, "I'm not going to do that. I'm not going to put shame on her." So, he decided to break off the engagement quietly is what the text says. Joseph said, "My heart is broken, but this brokenness is going to stop here. I'm going to break it off quietly. No public shame, no financial ruin. He was not going to revenge. Why? Because he was righteous.

Now, you have to think about what that means. Because he had the right to do what he was pondering doing or what he was expected to do according to the law and according to society. He could have put it all on her shoulders, but instead, he said, "I will take this on my own back." I've wondered every time I read this and studied this at this time of year, what was it about him that was so different that caused him to go that path? He was righteous even though he was going through so much, even though he was broken hearted, even though he was the one who had broken dreams. No picket fence, no home sweet home, no growing old together on the Cracker Barrel chair on the porch. That's not going to play out for him. It was all over. And he said, "I'm not going to take it out on Mary." Now what made him so special? And what was it that made him so righteous?

The only explanation I can come up with is he was planted in the Word of God. The Word of God was not just in his mind, but it was in his heart. And it was not just in his mind and in his heart, it was on the tip of his tongue. He had an "it is written" for moments like that. By the way, that's the way we defend ourselves against the enemy. It's the way we come against the attacks of the enemy. It's with an "it is written..." You need to put the scripture in your heart and in your mind and in your mouth so that it's on the tip of your tongue in a moment. I don't know exactly which scriptures he called upon and recited in those moments, but I think I have figured out one of them. He knew God would take care of him. He had to understand that God was close to the broken hearted, so I think he held onto a promise from the Psalms. I think he held onto a promise in a Psalm of David. Remember, this is Joseph; he's in the blood line. This is not just King David, this is relative David.

Look at Psalm 34 – ***The Lord hears his people when they call to him for help.*** Some of you need to underline that in your Bible. Because it's fact. There is no question mark at the end of that. He hears his people when they call to him for help. He rescues them from all their troubles. The Lord is close to the broken hearted. He rescues those whose spirits are crushed.

I've been studying this Psalm these last few days trying to think how to make this memorable and portable where it walks out of here in your heart and in your mind. The truth from this psalm that God is close to the broken hearted. It's not just when something breaks your heart. It's when something feels broken or anything gets you off track. Here's the phrase that I've come up with and I hope it makes it memorable for you. **"When life gets crazy, God gets close."**

Here's the lesson I want you to get today. When things go crazy, when things go sideways, and they will, when life throws you a curve ball, there will be times when the pieces don't fit, there will be times when there is a piece left over. There will be times when you shake the box, and it feels like there's nothing in there. There are times that you will feel broken. Remember in all of those moments for the rest of your life that God is close to you. In fact, he's probably closer than he's ever been.

A crazy life is an indication of the closeness of God. And when you get that call at 2:00 am that you never thought you'd get, when you have a tough conversation at work, when the market takes a plunge, but only in your sector, right? Or, when the mail comes, and you get bad news. Or the balance of your account is larger than the balance of your bills, those things should be like an alarm clock going off, indicating the proximity of the only one who can actually help you. He's close in that moment. That's the promise of scripture.

He's close in those moments. You're always on God's heart. He's always paying attention, but he seems to draw himself near to those who are broken hearted. And when we are broken hearted, the temptation is to think *no one understands us, no one gets this, no one knows what's going on, no one has been through what I'm walking through at this moment*. We feel so alone in those moments, but the truth is God is watching, God is listening, and he cares about you and he understands you. In Hebrews 4, the Bible tells us that Jesus understands because he went through it. Verse 15 says, Jesus understands our weaknesses for he faced all the same things we do. He gets our broken heart because he was broken hearted. He gets our frustration because he was frustrated. He gets our feelings of weakness because he felt weak too. And if in those moments, we would only turn to him, we would hear the alarm going off, the proximity alert sounding that God is close and he is near and he is breaking into your world at that very moment to rescue you.

Go back to the Psalm really quick and look at it again. ***The righteous person faces many troubles, but the Lord comes to rescue each time.*** You could circle that word troubles in your Bible. That's the same Hebrew word for the English word *evil*. It's not just trouble like you and I would translate into English, it's evil. Sometimes there is evil behind your troubles. Do you want a phrase to understand this theology? "Good God – bad devil." When life throws me a curve ball, I recite that one on a regular basis. "Good God – bad devil." He can't help but be good. That's all he is is good.

But there is evil in this world. But he's not the author of it. So, when evil comes, sometimes you need to understand there is a sinister one behind your problems. You have an enemy that has only come to kill steal and destroy. He has not come for any other reason. Only, which is what the scripture says, to steal, kill, and destroy. Don't just discount that and throw your hands up and go, "Well, that's just life." No, it may be bigger than life. It may be a real enemy who has come to destroy you.

But here's the good news. The Lord can rescue you from that enemy. How are we rescued? This is so important because this is what ties this whole thing together. Your rescue comes from the Lord. It comes from the Lord; it's Jesus. The name Jesus means Yahweh saves. Yeshua – Yahweh saves. He saves us from our troubles, from our problems, from the Evil One. And when you feel broken hearted, that's an indication that something is wrong, but it is also a very clear sign that God is near, and he will save you.

Now, let me just switch gears a bit. What I've done is just set the context for you here. Now let's just switch gears and get really pragmatic into our own lives and to what we're dealing with and to what we're walking through because God will save you from your troubles, right? But if he's omnipotent and omniscient and omnipresent, right? Think about those things for a moment. If you ever need hope, think about those three words. He's omnipresent. Do you know what that means? That means he's everywhere. He's omniscient. Do you know what that means? It means he has all knowledge. Sometimes people say, "Well, we need to believe science." We do need to believe science. But some science that we call science is not science. It's wrong. He's the founder of science. He's the founder of all knowledge. You say, "Well it disagrees with him." Well, then it's not right. He has all knowledge of everything of all times. That should give you some confidence in him. You say, "Well, I don't understand what he's telling me to do." Okay. Is he all knowledgeable? Then let's trust him. Let's worship him. Omnipotent, omnipotent. Potent means power. He has all of the power.

Sometimes people say, “ Well, I feel like God is asking me to give this and it’s going to be very sacrificial, and I don’t know what my future is going to hold if I give this away...” Is he all knowing? Yes. Is he all powerful? Yes. Does he have all the resources at his disposal? Yes. You just trust him. You just trust him. But the question, if we’re inquiring minds, and if we’re really honest we would say, “If he’s so powerful and he’s so all knowing and he's infinite and he all places, Why doesn’t he rescue me before the trouble starts?” That’s a good question, right? That question is in my Bible where I was reading it one day and just wrote it down. If he's so powerful and he’s so good and he’s so strong and he’s so mighty and there’s nothing my God cannot do, then why on earth does he not rescue me before my troubles? Now, here’s the question the Holy Spirit posed to me when I wrote that in my Bible. What if, Alex, your troubles and your brokenness and your broken dreams and your broken-hearted condition is a chance for others to be rescued?” What if the light, momentary affliction you're going through, Alex, means somebody else gets to be saved from their troubles. That’s exactly what Matthew indicates in this story.

Go back to Verse 20. ***But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David... the angel said, “Do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”***

She will have a son, you are to name him, and he will save his people from all of their sin. Again, not from Rome, but from sin. Mary is pregnant, Mary will have the son, and Joseph is to name him, and raise him. And part of that role will be taking on the shame and the disgrace of that culture. Raising a son who is not biologically his son. He will have to put his dreams on hold, his plans on hold so that he can help raise the Messiah. She will have a son, you will name him Jesus.

And the third party in this is his people. She will have a son, you're to name him Jesus, and his people will be saved. You and Mary are going to go through this, but it will mean the salvation for all who follow God throughout the future of all of the world. And Joseph’s brokenness was not the major intent of God’s offering here. But it was a part of what he authorized. His brokenness was used by God for the good of others. That’s the key. It helped someone else. It was a Christmas gift in the very real sense of the word Christmas gift. That’s how God operates. And that’s his MO that he uses our troubles and our weaknesses and our problems and our powerlessness for the benefit of other people. You went through a messy divorce, now you can help somebody avoid that. You went through a messy divorce, now you can coach somebody who is walking through that. You got a cancer diagnosis and sat in a chair, receiving chemotherapy round after round. Now you can be there with somebody who is going through that round after round, and you can pray for them and you can speak in faith over them.

You lost a business, now you can coach someone on how not to lose a business. This plays out in infinite items of illustrations and ways in this world. But there is no other way to explain it other than this is how God works. And you may not love it but what Christmas is all about is that God came to fix the broken. And sometimes he comes and in fixing the broken, he fixes other people in the process. It’s how he laid it out. He said, “All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord’s prophecy. . ***21 She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name I, because he will save his people from their sins.”***

Now, I want you to see this because this is where the theology is found in this. You back up a couple of verses and you see that Joseph is scared, he's terrified. We know that because the angel says, "Do not be afraid." The baby that she is carrying is conceived by the Holy Spirit. That's the theology in this whole thing. And they will call him Emanuel, which means what? "God with us." By the way, these are the notes from my Bible. You call him Jesus. They'll call him Immanuel. What? That seems to contradict itself. By the way, the answer to this there, you just have to read it again. You, Joseph, will call him Jesus. They will call him Immanuel. And you say, "Well which is it?" "Yes." Yeshua saves and God is with us. You say that's confusing. Well, let me confuse you even more.

A few weeks ago, we were studying Colossians and I was just preaching and thinking and pondering on the preeminence of Jesus Christ. That all things are by him, for him, in him, and through him, and all things are held together by him. The preeminence of Jesus is the theme through that Book of Colossians that I just spent five weeks preaching through in my church. One day, in my quiet time, as I was preaching this text, I just began to think about the preeminence of Jesus, and I just started writing down names. I know there are more. This is not an exhaustive list. But in that moment, I wrote down 57 names for Yeshua, Immanuel. I just want to read this list to you. And while I read this list to you, I just want you to allow the Holy Spirit to take his Word and for it to birth within you courage. I don't know what name you need today. It may not be Yeshua Saves because you're already saved. It may not be Immanuel God with us because you already know God is with you. But there is a name given to the Son of God, the person of Jesus Christ, that is relevant to your situation today because that's God's MO. Listen to who Jesus is.

Jesus is the Son of God
The second person of the holy trinity
The Word of God
The Son of man
The second Adam
The Seed of the woman who crushes the serpent's head
The Angel of the Lord
The Seed of Abraham
Jacob's ladder
The lion of Judah
The root of Jesse
The son of David
Immanuel – God with us
The Prince of Peace
The Wonderful Counselor
The Everlasting Father
The mighty God
He's the prophet
He's the high Priest from the Order of Melchizedek
He is our Passover Lamb
He is our Messiah
The anointed one

Our Savior and the light of the world
He's the bread of Life
He's the Giver of living water
He's the Rock of our salvation
He is the Healer
He is the Redeemer
He is the Sanctifier
He is your Intercessor, advocate, mediator, and your mystery
He's the gate
The Shepherd
The vine
The resurrection and the life
He's the way, the truth, and the life
He's the narrow path
He's the first-born over-all creation
He's the first born from the dead
He's the Bridegroom
He's the Head of the body
He's the Church
He's the Radiance of God's glory
He's the exact representation of the Nature of the Father
He's the Author and the protector of faith.
He's the Alpha and the Omega
He's the King of kings
He is the Lord of Lords
And all things have been created by him and for him
He is before all things and in him all things hold together
He is seated at the right hand of the Father and there will come a day when the trumpet will sound and the Lord will descend and all things in heaven and on the earth and under the earth will bow before him for God has highly exalted him and given him a name that is above every name that every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the Glory of God the Father.
Amen and amen and amen and amen

If you're here today and none of those made sense to you, none of those are relevant to you, then you are here today because God wants to save you. He wants a relationship with you. He doesn't want to be just God with us. He wants to be God with you today. And he drew you into this place so that you could have a relationship with him and that today could be the day of salvation for you.

So, with every head bowed and every eye closed, I want to lead you in a prayer helping you to trust Jesus as your Lord and Savior. I'm going to ask those that are already believers to pray out loud with me as an encouragement to you so that no one will pray alone. Today, if you want to trust Christ as your Lord and your savior, would you repeat after me out loud. Would you say, "Dear God, I know I'm a sinner, but today I ask you to forgive me for all of my sins. Jesus come into my life to be my Lord. You call the shots in my life. Come in as my Savior, my Forgiver. In the best way that I know how, I turn my

back on my sin and I trust you alone, Jesus, to save me. Thank you for saving me. I receive you and I receive salvation.

If you just prayed that prayer and for the first time in your life you meant business, can I say to you, congratulations. Welcome to the family of God. Today, when everybody else is exiting this worship center, the prayer team is going to be here. In fact, Prayer Team, come now if you would. They are just going to be standing here across the front. They'll have lanyards on that identify them as to who they are, but would you just come tell them you prayed that prayer and they will help you. They'll encourage you in your new walk with Jesus.

You may already be a believer, but you need somebody to pray with you, somebody to be Jesus with skin on today in this place. They would love to do that for you. They would love to say a word of encouragement, a handshake, a high five, a hug. They want to just pray over you and help you find a path forward where you feel like there may not be a path forward.

God, I pray your blessings on this church and on your kids, over all of your people. As we begin this Advent season, would you make us know, feel, experience, and understand God with us, Immanuel.

In Jesus's name we pray and together we all say... Amen and Amen