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***Living in HisStory: Revealing the True Wonder of Who God Is
God With Us***
Isaiah 7:14; 9:6; John 1:1-5,14; Matthew 1
December 10, 2017, Jeff Germo

Every year when the Christmas season rolls around, pastors all over the world need to find new ways of telling the Christmas story so it doesn't get old. There are four weeks of Advent. Many times that means we will have four Christmas sermons in the season. So, if you are 50 years old and you grew up the church, there is the potential that you have heard two hundred Christmas sermons.

For the pastor who has to try to keep the attention of his listeners, this poses a problem, because how many different ways can you tell the same story and keep it fresh? It's always a struggle. "We've heard that one, pastor. Tell us something we don't know."

Today what I want to do is carry on the same path we have been traveling since we started our series, *Living in HisStory: Revealing the True Wonder of Who God Is*.

What we have been doing, since September, is journeying through the whole Bible starting from Genesis. Ever since the fall of humankind in the Garden of Eden, God had been moving all history to its hinge point, the coming of Jesus who would be the Saviour of the world.

The Advent theme for today is "peace." Peace with God was lost when Adam and Eve chose to believe the lie of Satan that they could find satisfaction and reach their full potential without God. Jesus came so that peace could be restored, peace with God, and peace with each other.

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I hope it's becoming clear that **Jesus did not come to start a new religion called "Christianity."** That truth should be getting more clear as we go along.

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So far we have worked our way through the Old Testament to 1 Samuel where Israel asked God to give them a king like all the other nations had. Saul was anointed as their first king. He had what looked like a humble beginning, but because of his pride, he spiralled out of control. We are going to carry on with that story after Christmas.

Today though we are going to fast forward through a whole lot of Biblical narrative and jump right to the Christmas story where Jesus is anointed as the one true Eternal King of kings.

There are many people who, for various reasons, have a difficult time in the Christmas season. Christmas has a way of bringing some emotions to the surface that we have tried to ignore the rest of the year. Christmas is a time when families are supposed to get together and share joy, love, laughter, great conversation and lots of food. That's what it's supposed to be.

But, for many tis the season that reveals just how strange and dysfunctional your extended family is. Can anyone relate to that? I have a friend I've known for about 25 years and he used to tell me crazy stories of his family at Christmas and how they would vow to each other that they were going to have a peaceful and fun filled time at their Christmas meal. It would

invariably end up in a huge fight which would often times included the Christmas turkey being flung across the room.

There are so many reasons why Christmas can be a difficult season for some. If you have recently lost a loved one, or if there are relationship problems in your family, or if you don't have family around, you see everyone else excited about the season and for you it's a miserably lonely time.

If you find Christmas a difficult time, for whatever reason, you need to know that the Nativity story is much more than just a heart warming story about a pregnant lady and her husband who couldn't find a room to give birth to their baby. You need to know for certain that Jesus does really bring hope, peace, joy and love.

There are others who might actually like the Christmas season because of the sentimentality, but they are skeptical of the historical Jesus. They might think the Nativity is a nice fairy tale to tell your kids, just like you would tell them about the Easter Bunny, Santa Clause, and the Tooth Fairy, but that's about as far as they would go with it. And of course, one day, they would break it to their kids that, along with the Tooth Fairy and those other fictitious characters, baby Jesus is just a nice heart warming story to give you some joy in the moment, but it has no relevance to real life. To them the idea of Jesus is a placebo at best.

Many others love Christmas because it sells. Every year recording artists put out new Christmas albums, even if they don't believe what they are singing, because they know Christmas sells. You can do a Google search for the top ten new Christmas albums for 2017.

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Here were the 10 biggest shopping days in 2016:

1. Friday, December 23
2. Saturday, December 17
3. Friday, November 25 (Black Friday)
4. Thursday, December 22
5. Wednesday, December 21
6. Sunday, December 18
7. Saturday, December 24
8. Saturday, December 10
9. Friday, December 16
10. Saturday, December 3

What does that tell you? Christmas sells. But, it has, unfortunately, been airbrushed, sanitized, doctored up and marketed so it is palatable and profitable.

I don't know about you, but it's important for me that my faith in Jesus is built on something more solid and substantive than a Tooth Fairy like fantasy, or a warm fuzzy feeling, or a profitable commercial enterprise. Because if Jesus is just a fairy tale, or any of those other things we are in big trouble. He is the only way we can make sense of life, death, eternity, and even all the evil in the world.

There are a few hundred Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah that were fulfilled in Jesus. Let's take a look at just a couple. Isaiah was written in the 8th century BC. That's over seven hundred years before Jesus.

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Isaiah 7:14 (NLT)

14 All right then, the Lord himself will give you the sign. Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel (which means 'God is with us').

The first question I have when I read this verse is that it seems like Mary and Joseph gave their son the wrong name. Why did they name him Jesus if this prophecy seems to say they were to name him Immanuel? Let's look at another prophecy from Isaiah.

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Isaiah 9:6 (NLT)

6 For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

This could be confusing. Was the Messiah supposed to have that many names? None of these were, actually, to be his name. They are descriptors of who he is. *Immanuel* describes him as God incarnate. God made flesh. God with us. That is why Jesus is good news.

The other names are also descriptors: Wonderful Counselor; Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. These all describe who Jesus is. He was and is God made flesh.

Let's quickly take a look at the beginning of John's Gospel.

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John 1:1–14 (NLT)

1 In the beginning the Word already existed.

Notice the word "Word" is capitalized here. "***In the beginning the Word already existed.***" Some translations simply say, "***In the beginning was the Word.***"

1 In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God...

"***The Word,***" whatever "***The Word***" was, existed *with* God in the beginning. And not only did the Word exist *with* God, but look at this:

...the Word was God. That puts an interesting spin on things. The Apostle John is describing God here. The narrative we have been looking at since the beginning of this series is coming to this climax.

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2 He [Notice the personal pronoun, "He," referring to the Word] ***existed in the beginning with God.***

³ God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him. ⁴The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.

So, **The Word** was with God and was God and was the creator of everything. That's pretty cool, but it gets even cooler. Jump down to verse 14.

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¹⁴ So the Word became human and made his home among us....

You may have a Bible that translates the Greek like this: "**The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.**"

The Word, that is God, who created the the heavens and the earth, became human and made his home among us. Or as Eugene Petersen translated it, "**The Word became flesh and blood and moved into the neighbourhood.**" He moved near us so we could get to know him.

Last week we looked at Philippians 2 where Paul said Jesus left his heavenly throne, humbled himself, became like us and died in our place so we could have life. That is why he made his home among us. That is why Jesus is good news.

¹⁴...He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son.

This has been God's plan all along. That is the main thread we have been following all through this series. God is up to something pretty amazing. He is all about restoring the *shalom* that was lost in the Garden of Eden at the beginning of time. Jesus came to bring that *shalom* by bridging the gap between us and a holy God.

Let's read the narrative of how Jesus was born from the Gospel of Matthew.

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Matthew 1:18–25 (NLT)

¹⁸ 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, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Of course, skeptics will look at this and say, "That's biologically impossible." How can she be pregnant if she was a virgin? Yes, of course it's impossible. That is why it's called a miracle. Over 700 hundred years before Jesus was born, God, through the prophet Isaiah, foretold that the Messiah would be born of a virgin. This is the fulfilment of that prophecy. It is a miracle of God.

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¹⁹ Joseph, to whom she was engaged, was a righteous man and did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement quietly.

That was a big deal back in those days. To break an engagement was as serious as getting a divorce. People did not do this easily because there was shame attached to divorce, far more

than there is today. Joseph didn't know, initially, that she was pregnant by the Holy Spirit. For all he knew, she had cheated on him. The punishment for adultery, according Old Testament law, was death. So, this was a pretty serious matter.

20 As he considered this, 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. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit.

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21 And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

This was God's big plan. This is the scarlet thread which has been weaving its way through everything we have looked at in this series to this point.

22 All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord's message through his prophet: 23 "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.' "

That is from Isaiah 7:14, written over 700 years before Jesus was born. God made flesh. God coming to earth to fix what was broken at the fall of humankind in the Garden of Eden. He came to restore the peace that was lost.

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24 When Joseph woke up, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded and took Mary as his wife. 25 But he did not have sexual relations with her until her son was born. And Joseph named him Jesus.

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Next week we will continue on with that narrative. For now what I'd like to do is back up and look at the beginning of Matthew at what I used to think of as the most boring passage in the New Testament, the genealogy of Jesus. Whenever I would read through the New Testament, I would skim past these 18 verses to get to the story. But, when you dig into the family tree of Jesus it is quite fascinating and faith building. It is actually the link between the Old and New Testaments. This is the hinge point of all history. There are some amazing God stories in here and everyone of them miraculously points to Jesus as the Messiah of God.

In recent years, since DNA testing has become easier and more mainstream, more and more people have been excited about genealogies. You can buy a DNA kit and spit in a tube and find out your ancestry, and what part of the world your forefathers came from. It's quite fascinating. As far as I know, mine would be pretty boring. I am Norwegian on both sides from way back. Some day I may splurge and check it out. You never know, there may be some surprises.

Let's take a look at some of Jesus' genealogy and see if there are any surprises there. We'll read through the whole, "boring" list and stop along the way at various points. You will recognize some of the names as we read through it. Some are kings. Some are ordinary folk. There are some pretty sketchy characters in the list. And all of them were broken individuals just like you and me.

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Matthew 1:1–17 (NLT)

1 This is a record of the ancestors of Jesus the Messiah, a descendant of David and of Abraham: 2 Abraham was the father of Isaac. Isaac was the father of Jacob. Jacob was the father of Judah and his brothers.

The genealogy begins with Abraham. Remember the promise of God to Abraham in Genesis 12 that he was going to make Abraham and Sarah into a great nation that would be a blessing to every nation on earth? This is the story of how that happened. Judah was one of Joseph's brothers who sold Joseph to some slave traders and told their father that Joseph had been killed. Joseph, providentially, became the head of Egypt, second only to the king.

Meanwhile, Joseph's brother Judah was in the middle of some drama. The story is too long to tell this morning, but you can read it in Genesis 38. It is quite the 'soap opera'. Judah found a wife named Tamar for one of his sons. He died shortly after, however, so according to their custom, his brother married her, and then he died as well. Judah sent Tamar away to wait until another son became old enough to marry her, but he really had no intention of doing that because he didn't want another son to die. I told you it was a soap opera. It gets worse.

In the meantime, Judah's wife died. After a period of grieving he went to town and hired a prostitute, who, unbeknownst to him, was Tamar, his daughter in law, disguised so he would not recognize her.

She became pregnant with twins from Judah.

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Genesis 38:27–30 (NLT)

27 When the time came for Tamar to give birth, it was discovered that she was carrying twins. 28 While she was in labor, one of the babies reached out his hand. The midwife grabbed it and tied a scarlet string around the child's wrist, announcing, "This one came out first." 29 But then he pulled back his hand, and out came his brother! "What!" the midwife exclaimed. "How did you break out first?" So he was named Perez. 30 Then the baby with the scarlet string on his wrist was born, and he was named Zerah.

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Let's go back to the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1.

3 Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah (whose mother was Tamar). Perez was the father of Hezron. Hezron was the father of Ram.

You thought your family tree was messed up. This is the family of Jesus. The amazing part we talked about before was the scarlet thread that weaves its way through the Biblical narrative. This is mind bogglingly amazing. There is purpose in everything written in the Old Testament. It all leads to Jesus. Let's continue.

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4 Ram was the father of Amminadab. Amminadab was the father of Nahshon. Nahshon was the father of Salmon. 5 Salmon was the father of Boaz (whose mother was Rahab)...

Do you remember Rahab? She was the Gentile prostitute in Jericho who threw herself at the mercy of God and she was saved by God. She was told by the spies to tie a scarlet rope to the

outside of her window so the Israelite army would know to save her and her family. This Gentile prostitute was a part of Jesus' family tree. There is purpose in everything written in the Old Testament. All of it was fulfilled in Jesus.

5...Boaz was the father of Obed (whose mother was Ruth). If you don't know the story of Ruth, make sure you go back and read the book of Ruth in the Old Testament. It is one of the best stories in the Bible. Ruth was another Gentile. She was a widow, and Boaz, a Jew, fell in love with her and brought her into the family of Israel. She is in the genealogy of Jesus. They had a child together named Obed.

Obed was the father of Jesse.

We are going to just read through the rest of this quickly now to show just how amazing God is. He has been up to something ever since the fall of humankind in the Garden of Eden. He has been restoring the *shalom* that was lost when Adam and Eve chose to believe the lie of Satan that they could find satisfaction and reach their full potential without God. The scarlet thread, painted with the blood of Jesus, has been weaving its way all through history to the hinge point which is God proclaimed and revealed in Jesus.

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6 Jesse was the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon (whose mother was Bathsheba, the widow of Uriah). 7 Solomon was the father of Rehoboam. Rehoboam was the father of Abijah. Abijah was the father of Asa. 8 Asa was the father of Jehoshaphat. Jehoshaphat was the father of Jehoram. Jehoram was the father of Uzziah.

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9 Uzziah was the father of Jotham. Jotham was the father of Ahaz. Ahaz was the father of Hezekiah. 10 Hezekiah was the father of Manasseh. Manasseh was the father of Amon. Amon was the father of Josiah. 11 Josiah was the father of Jehoiachin and his brothers (born at the time of the exile to Babylon).

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12 After the Babylonian exile: Jehoiachin was the father of Shealtiel. Shealtiel was the father of Zerubbabel. 13 Zerubbabel was the father of Abiud. Abiud was the father of Eliakim. Eliakim was the father of Azor. 14 Azor was the father of Zadok. Zadok was the father of Akim. Akim was the father of Eliud. 15 Eliud was the father of Eleazar. Eleazar was the father of Matthan. Matthan was the father of Jacob.

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16 Jacob was the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary. Mary gave birth to Jesus, who is called the Messiah. 17 All those listed above include fourteen generations from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the Babylonian exile, and fourteen from the Babylonian exile to the Messiah.

Through these forty-two generations God weaved his story to bring it to this amazing climax where he became like us, a human, born as a vulnerable baby into a very normal, broken family. He would live the perfect sinless life until the age of thirty three when he would give himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the world so we could have life. That is the unsanitized,

unairbrushed version of the nativity story. It is not neat and clean and pretty, but it is the most exciting story of the greatest rescue mission in the history of the world.¹

The story begs for a response from us. It asks, "What will we make of Jesus?" Will you make him your Saviour and Lord and place your trust fully in him?

Watch this short video that Callista made before the worship team comes up and leads us in *O Holy Night*.

[22-video]

¹ For more on a clearer picture of God's big rescue mission and the advent of Jesus read, Isaiah 2:1-5 and Isaiah 9:1-7



***Living in HisStory: Revealing the True Wonder of Who God Is
God With Us***

**Isaiah 7:14; 9:6; John 1:1-5,14; Matthew 1
Week of December 10, 2017**

Objective of this study: To see the big picture of what God is up to in the world so we can purposefully join him.

[Remember, the main goal of each Growth Group is to allow God's Word to change your heart so that others would see Jesus in you and be likewise changed to be like him. He wants to change the world through us]

Worship (5 – 10 minutes)

1. Sing a song or two of praise and thanksgiving to God.
2. Spend five minutes in silence asking God to prepare your heart for how he wants to speak to you.
3. After the five minutes have someone interrupt the silence and read **Isaiah 9:1-7** meditatively to the group. Pause after each phrase letting God speak to you. **Did anything “jump out at you”?**

Welcome (5 minutes)

What was the most memorable Christmas gift you received as a child?

[It's really important when doing this study that we each think about ourselves specifically and ways we need to grow, not how Christians in general need to grow. Do the hard work of letting the Holy Spirit speak to *your* heart.]

Word/Work (60-90 minutes)

1. Read John 1:1-5, 14; Matthew 1. After you are done recount the stories you know from the genealogy of Jesus. Note what kind of people there were? How does that make you feel?
2. Read Isaiah 2:1-5; 9:1-7. What does this say about how things have changed from Old to New Testament, with the coming of Jesus.
3. Looking back over the sermon series, what were some highlights for you? How has God been speaking to you? What heart changes has the Holy Spirit been working in you?
4. Has your picture of God's work in history changed in any way through this series?

Prayer

1. Spend some time in prayer. Start by worshipping God for who he is and what he has done.
2. Here are some things you can pray about for the church:
 - A. That, as a church, we would actively and purposefully engage in the mission of Jesus in Campbell River.
 - B. Our church board and staff as they lead us to live out the mission of Jesus
 - C. **Our church finances.** We are about \$20,000 behind. Pray that God would supply our needs so the mission can be carried on in Campbell River and around the world.
 - D. **Our missionary of the month:** - Rod and Donna Black in Pakistan - check them out on our website and on the big chalkboard in the foyer. Pray about how you might be a part of supporting them.

E. **Our missionary of the week:** Debbie & Ken Dewar - based in Ontario with Ethos (formerly New Tribes Mission)

F. **Local CR church:** Pastors Larry (& Sharon) Martin and Dave (& Kim) Dickson at Discovery Community