

# “Come Lord Jesus And Be With Us”

*Transcribed using turboscribe.ai*

*Sermon Preached: Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> December 2025*

*Preacher: Pastor Jason Sander*

*Location: St Peter's Lutheran Church, Loxton*

*Sermon Text: [Matthew 1:18-25](#)*

My friends, grace, mercy and peace to you, in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Let me pray. Heavenly Father, as we gather around your word here this morning, may your Holy Spirit speak into our hearts and into our lives, firstly reminding us of your grace that you have for us through Jesus, and from that place of grace, transforming us into his likeness.

Come Holy Spirit, and may the words that I've prepared and that I speak here this morning, may they be pleasing to you, for the benefit of your people gathered here. In the name of Jesus we pray, amen. There are moments when news arrives that interrupts perhaps a stable life that we thought we were living, a phone call that changes the afternoon, a conversation that quietly rearranges the future, or a news report of unspeakable violence that gets close to home, as we just witnessed last weekend.

Bad news unsettles us, threatens the assumptions we didn't even realise that we were living by, and in those moments we wait, we hope, we might tune in more, we look for a sliver of light amid the dread and chaos. Sometimes that hope appears quickly, stories of courage, people running towards danger to protect others, yet other times we search deeper and deeper, staring into what feels like a fog, a fog of grief, of fear, a fog of uncertainty. And it's in that space, when the ground beneath us shifts, it's not stable anymore, that today's readings meet us.

King Ahaz and Joseph are two people standing in the fog, trying to work out their next move, working out the pros and cons of a decision they need to make, and it's precisely there that God speaks to them, not with easy answers, but with a promise, not with control, the promise of his presence, and with a call to trust, a call to trust that what looks like disruption may somehow be the beginning of grace. Because when God speaks, God is at work, and when God is at work, there can sometimes be disruptions, disruptions to our lives, disruptions to what we thought we had control of, our sense of control is challenged, our plans become unsettled, and yet that same voice speaks hope that cannot be shaken, that same voice speaks hope that cannot be shaken, that same voice speaks into the frustration and fear. Frustration and fear is met by a deep, immovable love, and that love has a name, Emmanuel, God with us.

In 735 BC, Ahaz was the king of Judah, and fear and dread was closing in from every side, the once united kingdom of Israel had split into two, as you can see on this map, in a sense towards the bottom, the kingdom to the north Israel, the kingdom to the south Judah, north of Israel is Syria, above that is the great kingdom at that time of Assyria, Ahaz is vulnerable, he's afraid, and into that moment God sends Isaiah, not with military strategy, but with a promise, a promise that Judah will stand, within that promise there will be hardship, but God will remain faithful, Isaiah says to Ahaz, the future is safer in God's hands than in any

alliance, Ahaz cannot bring himself to trust that promise, he's weighing up the pros and cons of a decision, do I join Assyria, do I ask them for help, from a human point of view, his options seem reasonable, if he does nothing he risks destruction, he risks the Syria-Israel alliance and them getting support from the countries around Judah to come in and destroy him, to overthrow his rule, or he can appeal to Assyria for protection, but underneath that choice though is something deeper, Ahaz needs to remain in control, he needs to secure himself with what looks powerful, visible and reliable, do you want to know more about Ahaz, 2nd Kings chapter 16, gives us this historical background into what's happening in Isaiah chapter 7, Ahaz needs to remain in control, to secure himself with what looks powerful, you know, fear does that to us, when the world feels unsafe, we may reach for whatever feels solid, even if it slowly enslaves us, God hasn't given up on Ahaz yet, God presses further through Isaiah and God, he invites Isaiah for us to ask for a sign, anything, a blank check of grace as such, it's the only place in Scripture where this happens in this way, God is willing to meet Ahaz's fear head-on, to give him something tangible to trust in, but Ahaz refuses, he refuses and he says, I will not ask, I will not put the Lord our God to the test, sounds a little bit pious, faithful, even a little bit theologically switched on because he knows that in Deuteronomy it says, do not put the Lord your God to the test, we even hear Jesus saying that to Satan when he's tempted in the wilderness, however Ahaz, he says it's not as an act of obedience, rather it's avoidance, he doesn't want to hear what God has to say, he doesn't want to see the sign, his mind's made up, Assyria's the best bet, he doesn't want to trust in God, if that trust might cost him too much, so this alliance with Assyria, the power that Syria could give to him, seemed more beneficial and so he turns to Assyria and that very power he believes will save him, becomes the force that actually disrupts him and diminishes him, yes Judah survives from Syria and Israel, but now Ahaz is a puppet king, stripped of freedom, having to pay off Assyria to stop them taking over Judah and with all of this happening, with Ahaz disobedience and he does a lot more bad stuff, again 2nd Kings 16, you'll find out and amidst all this, God does not withdraw his promise to his people, Isaiah declares that a child will be born, not a sign, not of military strength, but a child, small, innocent, peaceful, but in this child is a promise of presence, this child will be called Emmanuel, God with us and as the child grows, the threats will fade, this is God saying to Ahaz, trust in me, over this period of time, Syria and Israel, they won't be any problem for you, that threat will diminish, just trust in me, but he can't, yet through it all God promises never to abandon his people, Ahaz can't step into that trust and so the promise waits for a different kind of king, so we hear of another interruption, another child, the centuries later, Matthew tells a story that begins in the same way, with fear, vulnerability and a disrupted life, Joseph's engaged to Mary, his world is simple, steady, things seem to be going well, he's got his future wife, he's got his carpentry business, he's faithful, he values doing what is right and then suddenly everything collapses, Mary's pregnant, the child's not his, so Joseph must decide what to do, he's weighing up the options, the pros and the cons, he counts the cost, his righteousness, it doesn't harden into control like Ahaz, it actually softens into mercy, he plans to step away quietly, absorbing some of the pain himself rather than exposing Mary to shame, but then God speaks through an angel, God speaks in a dream, he says do not be afraid, when we hear those words in the Bible, something costly is about to be asked, do not be afraid and Joseph's told to take Mary as his wife, to name the child Jesus because he will save people from their sins and then Matthew reaches back across through the centuries and names the promise again, they shall call him Emmanuel, drawing from the Prophet Isaiah and the words spoken to Ahaz. See for Joseph, trusting in God

threatens his reputation, it threatens his future, his sense of normal life, yet unlike Ahaz, Joseph he does not reach for control, he does not look for an escape that protects himself at the expense of others, he listens, he awakens and then he trusts and he trusts before anything makes sense. See Matthew quotes Isaiah not because the first promise failed, because God inspires Matthew to tell us that that promise is unfinished.

In Jesus, God with us becomes more than just reassurance, it becomes a promise of God being one of us, he comes down into the world he created and he walks the road of humanity, he experiences what it is to be human. God doesn't remain distant from our fear and uncertainty, he does not watch suffering from a safe height but he enters into the stories of the vulnerable, he enters into our stories at our most vulnerable points, he's born into uncertainty, living under threat, surrounded by violence and injustice. God with us does not mean God will explain everything, God with us does not mean God will prevent every tragedy, God with us means I am here with you right now, I will never abandon you, I'm here with you right now whatever you're facing.

See in Christ God chooses to absorb the cost instead of passing it on, he calms our fears not through control but through his self-giving love. When facing darkness he doesn't fight with violence but surrenders, trusting the Father all the way to the cross. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote, he said when Christ calls a man or calls a person he bids him come and die, when Christ calls a man he bids him come and die.

Not because God delights in suffering but because real faith involves surrendering control and trusting God with our lives, that's that walking the Christian life, that continual growing, that continual returning to our baptisms for repentance and renewal of faith, surrendering each day to Jesus. So notice that the type of news that interrupts and unsettles our lives, that strips away control, it hardly ever seems like good news at first, it's pretty obvious and sometimes only later, sometimes after a long wait, we may come to learn that what initially unsettled us actually put us on a path that we would never would have chosen on our own strength or understanding and a new life we couldn't imagine living without, that's the promise of God with us, walking alongside us as we come to the closing of our Advent season, we're reminded that the world's most significant interruption, it came quietly and the ordinary moments of life, a child enters the world, a sign from God, a promise that I am here with you and I will never abandon you because in Jesus God enters our story, your story and not after we've figured it all out, not once we feel ready but right in the middle of the fear, the grief, the uncertainty, the unknown and so that's why we pray at Advent, come Lord Jesus, be with us, not as an escape from the world but as a way of living within it. Come Lord Jesus, be with us. Amen.

And my friends, may the peace of God which passes our understanding, may it guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Friends, we're going to sing our next song and during the song we will be taking up our freewill offerings, it's also a time for us to consider too how we give thanks to God and respond to the grace that He's given to us with our whole lives and how we can be a blessing to others.

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