

Text: Matthew 1:21-23.

Christmas Eve.

December 24, 2015.

You are to give him the name Jesus because he will save his people from their sins! Amen.

Ever been in a situation you couldn't get yourself out of, when you desperately needed some help? A couple of weeks ago, I backed out of our garage, I'm sorry, the garage God gave us. And a hinge fell to the ground. Strange? I was in a rush, couldn't deal with it then. Just set it aside. When I got back home, I popped the hinge back into place. No big deal. You have to understand. I am the least handy person on earth, so when something goes wrong at the house, I freak out. But seemed like no big deal. The next time someone used the door, it fell off again. Then I noticed two other hinges falling off. The door still works. No big deal. We call the garage door company. They send a nice man out. We have two bent door panels. They can be replaced. No big deal. Then we get the cost estimate. Big deal! Might as well get a whole new door. Bigger deal. Might as well get the lifetime warranty. Now it's a really big deal. At first I thought I could do it myself. But I couldn't do it myself. It was a big deal, a much bigger problem than I could ever solve myself.

Let's get more serious. What unsolvable situation did you bring with you tonight? Maybe it was hard for you to come tonight. You walked to the car. Then back inside. You walked back to the car. Prayed it wouldn't start. But it did. You drove into the parking lot. Thought about going back home. Swallowed hard when you got out of the car and took a few brave steps inside. "So long since I've been here, wasn't sure how everyone would react. Honestly, I'm still not sure if God wants me back." The first Sunday I missed thought it was no big deal. The second and third got easier and here we are a year later and now it seems like a really big deal. Are you already dreading the family gathering because there's that one uncle you can't look in the eye, at least not after you lost your temper last Christmas? You thought it was no big deal, but now? Brothers and sister, our sin is a big deal. The guilt we feel shows us we can't solve sin. We can't erase sin. We can't get rid of sin. Sin is the situation we can't get ourselves out of. Sin is the situation in which we more than need help. We need a Savior! We need Jesus.

You are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins. Save his people from their sins. Jesus solved the problem we can't solve: our sin. Jesus gave us the greatest present ever: himself. Jesus gave us the greatest relief ever: forgiveness. He will save his people from their sins. He will save his people from their sins. That's Jesus. That's his name. That's what it means. That's who he is. He will save his people from their sins.

That's why Jesus can be the whole theme for a sermon. You might think, "Well, Jesus is the center of every sermon (at least every good one)." Yes, but the very name Jesus is a sermon itself. The name means, "The Lord saves." Jesus means, "Savior." Jesus. That one word is a sermon. Jesus. That one word is the theme. Jesus. He saved us from our sins. Someone asked me a couple of weeks ago, "Where did the name Jesus come from?" It came from an angel. It came from God himself. Mary and Joseph didn't look through a book of baby names and Jesus sounded nice. God himself named his Son. That name is Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins. And he did save his people from their sins.

There's more though. When God's angel spoke in this part of God's Word, the angel emphasized this: He himself, will save his people from their sins. Jesus himself saved us. Jesus did it himself. Maybe at first we thought like the garage door, I can do it. Simple fix. But there is no simple fix for sin. Our sin required a Savior. It wasn't just a little money or call someone in for a quick fix. It took the blood of God's own Son to pay the price for our sin. It took his death on the cross to fix the mess our sin created. But now

it's fixed! Now the problem is solved! Now sin is gone! Sin is not on our account with God. Sin is solved. You know, after we got our garage door fixed, I just sat and pushed the button a few times to watch a brand new door go smoothly up and down. The hinges stayed in place. No loud creaking sounds as bent panels rubbed against each other. I could only appreciate the new door, when I had understood how bad the old door was. We can only appreciate Jesus, when we know how bad it is without him. Jesus!

Jesus! He is not God's distant gift to us. God didn't send a form letter to us, which said, "Dear, insert your name. A gift of forgiveness has been credited to you. Please consider the matter of your sin resolved." No! God put his present in the flesh. God put his present on this earth. This Jesus is not a distant, far away Savior. This Jesus is Immanuel, God with us. God with us? How can this be? The Greeks pictured their gods as really strong humans who lived among them. That's not Jesus, just a strong human. Jesus is God! There's a view called pantheism, that everything is god. The rocks are god and the trees are god and the soil is god. That's not Jesus! Jesus is the true God, in the flesh! Jesus is the real God, with us! God with us. God! With us! God with us!

Think of what that means! Jesus is God. God dwells everywhere, but especially in heaven. Jesus was in heaven and he gave that up! Can you imagine giving up heaven? Jesus didn't get hungry, or tired. Wouldn't you have loved that this last month? Jesus was everywhere at once. O man! That would have been nice. Jesus never experienced sadness, or pain. No Vicodin for Jesus, not even ibuprofen. And Jesus gave that all up. Why?

Because he couldn't stand the thought of heaven without you. Because for Jesus, heaven is not complete as long as your mansion is empty. So Jesus, always God, gave up heaven and came to earth. He was hungry. And tired. And ate. And slept. And confined himself to one place. And experienced sorrow, overwhelming to the point of death. And sadness. And the pain of scourging and spitting and beating and nailing and bleeding and suffocating and dying. That's Immanuel, God with us. That's Jesus, our Savior.

You see, if he had not been Immanuel, God with us, he could not be Jesus, our Savior. If he had stayed in heaven and been only God, he could not take our place and pay for our sins and count his holiness for us. If he had been just a man, he maybe could have fixed the garage door, but he could never have fixed our sins. We needed our Savior, Jesus, to be Immanuel, God with us. We needed a man to take our place. We needed God to take our sins and their punishment and their guilt and pay for them, in full. That's Immanuel. That's Jesus.

Every year I get at least one Christmas card with what I'll say is my favorite Christmas message. It goes like this. If our biggest problem were money, God would have sent an accountant. If our biggest problem were health, God would have sent us a doctor. Our biggest problem was sin, so God sent us a Savior. Jesus! Our biggest problem was sin, so God sent us a Savior! Jesus. Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins. Jesus, because he did save his people from their sins. Jesus! Amen!