

East Hill Church Sermon Discussion Guide:

God With Us: Understanding the Incarnation

Speaker: Pastor Steve Mickel (Northwest District Supervisor, Foursquare Church)

Date: December 1, 2024

Introduction:

In this powerful message launching the Christmas season, Pastor Steve Mickel explored the profound implications of the incarnation - God becoming human in Jesus Christ. Through personal stories and biblical insights, he emphasized how God's choice to be "with us" transforms both our relationship with Him and our relationships with others.

1. The Revolutionary Nature of the Incarnation:

Pastor Steve discussed how God's choice to come as a baby transformed our understanding of relating to Him.

Discussion Questions:

1. How does understanding Jesus' full humanity change your view of God?
2. What surprises you most about how God chose to enter our world?

Supporting Verses:

John 1:1-2, 14 - "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us."

Context and Reflection:

- Historical/Cultural Context: No one expected God to come as a vulnerable infant.
- Theological Significance: God chose to fully enter the human experience.
- Application: We can relate to God personally because He chose to relate to us personally.

2. Approaching the Throne of Grace:

Pastor Steve emphasized how Jesus' humanity allows us to approach God with confidence.

Discussion Questions:

1. What prevents you from approaching God confidently?
2. How has your understanding of God's grace grown through experiencing His presence?

Supporting Verses:

Hebrews 4:15-16 - "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence."

Context and Reflection:

- Historical/Cultural Context: Previously, access to God was limited and required intermediaries.
- Theological Significance: Jesus' humanity makes Him an empathetic high priest.
- Application: We can approach God directly and confidently because of Jesus.

3. Living Out Empathy:

Pastor Steve challenged the congregation to extend Christ-like empathy to others.

Discussion Questions:

1. How can we better empathize with those around us during the holiday season?
2. What prevents us from entering into others' struggles?

Supporting Verse:

Galatians 4:4-5 - "But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children."

Context and Reflection:

- Historical/Cultural Context: God's timing in sending Jesus was perfect for maximum impact.
- Theological Significance: Jesus came to adopt us into God's family.
- Application: We should extend the same welcome to others that God extends to us.

Conclusion:

Pastor Steve Mickel's message reminded us that Christmas celebrates not just a historical event but God's ongoing desire to be with us. Through the incarnation, we gain both confidence in approaching God and a model for relating to others with empathy and grace.

Reflection Questions:

1. How can you make more room for God's presence in your life this Christmas season?
2. Who needs you to be "Jesus with skin on" in their life right now?
3. How can you better reflect God's empathy and grace to others during the holidays?

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank you for choosing to be with us through sending Jesus. Help us to approach you confidently, knowing that Jesus understands our struggles. Give us hearts of empathy for those around us, especially during this holiday season. May we reflect your presence to others as you have been present with us. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

References:

Primary Sources:

"God With Us: Understanding the Incarnation," East Hill Church, 12/01/2024. Delivered by Pastor Steve Mickel.

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Secondary Sources:

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Collaborative Contributions:

LLM Contributions: Based on a mixture of licensed data, data created by AI models, and publicly available data, synthesized for the study of the provided sermon notes and biblical passages.

LLM Training Data:

LLM Training Data. Includes a diverse range of texts (books, websites, and other publications) up to April 2024.