Whispers – Part 4

# Forever

# (Matthew 1:18-25)

Welcome to Christ’s Community Church. We’ve been in a message series called Whispers and we’ve been considering the promise that God is with us. And so today, I want to talk about that promise through the lens of the birth of Jesus Christ. Now, maybe you’ve noticed that there’s a whole lot of tension around the birth of Jesus Christ. You know, the entire Christmas season is filled with this tension, as you gather together with family, when you’re seated around the table, whenever you talk about God becoming one of us there’s this tension. And maybe you’ve noticed that you can talk about spiritual things, you can talk about God all day and everything’s okay, but as soon as you bring up the name of Jesus there’s a whole lot of controversy.

The problem is that we want to build bridges to people because we have a message of hope, that God is reconciling with us through his Son Jesus Christ, he is restoring our relationship with him that’s been broken because of our sin. And it is that very fact, the fact that God sent his Son Jesus Christ, it’s that one thing that we celebrate on Christmas, that’s a cornerstone belief for all of us who are Christians. And so, that’s what I want to encourage you in, building your faith, and talking about this thing called the incarnation, that moment in time when God became flesh, that miracle of Christmas morning, where we encounter Jesus Christ who is both fully God and fully man. Two natures, one spiritual and one physical, but both joined together as one in Christ.

That’s what John describes in his Gospel. He says it this way in chapter one,

“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” (John 1:1, 14).

And so, that is the incarnation in a nutshell. It was that specific moment in time when God the Spirit entered into our world in the flesh, in the person of Jesus Christ, who was a man and God all at the same time. That’s what I want to talk about today, because what I want to do is to exalt the name of Jesus, to magnify the name of Jesus in this church, in our lives, and around the world. And so, as we begin, I want to read to you from Matthew chapter 1, a passage of Scripture that will drive home this point, this concept of the incarnation. Verse 18 says,

“This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.”

“But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 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."

“All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"—which means, "God with us."

“When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus” (Matthew 1:18-25).

What I’d like to do in the rest of our time together is to focus in on verse 23, that one verse that has been the theme of this series. Now, this passage of Scripture is a quotation from the Old Testament book of Isaiah, and we find that there’s a bit of tension, not just because of the name of Jesus, but because of the impossibility presented, the historical fact that’s stated,

"The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son… (Matthew 1:23).

You see, it just doesn’t happen this way, virgins don’t bear children. Mary had never known a man and so this presented an improbability. This was a dead-end for her, for Joseph, and for 42 generations of Abraham’s descendants. But today you need to know that on Christmas we celebrate the day that God pronounced every dead-end as an opportunity for a new beginning. And so, whatever dead-end you’ve been struggling with, whether it’s guilt or shame, bondage to an addiction, wrestling with doubts and fears, the burden of financial debt, whatever name you might give that dead-end, this morning I want to talk to you about this opportunity for a new beginning. And the first thing I want to consider, to provoke your thinking, and open your mind to the opportunity before you, is why God would open the gospel with a dead-end, specifically why a virgin? The Bible says, number one, Jesus was born of a virgin.

## 1. He Was Born of a Virgin

Let me begin by giving you a little bit of context. This was a time of great spiritual unrest for the people of God, there was quite a bit of tension politically, but God was about to bring hope to his people. This prophecy was actually given over 2,750 years ago, 740 years before the birth of Jesus, when Isaiah told the people, the Lord himself will give you a sign. And what was that sign? Isaiah said that sign was that a…

“Virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14).

Now this is important, because if Jesus Christ were conceived and born like any other baby then he couldn’t fulfill his purpose. It was necessary for him to enter this world through an earthly mother, a pure virgin, but not by an earthly father so that their offspring would be Immanuel, which means God with us. Therefore, it was by a miracle of the Holy Spirit that Jesus was conceived in the pure virgin womb of Mary. He was born of a virgin.

Now, like I said this creates a bit of tension, but for us to miss this important detail of the Christmas story is to miss a glimpse into the way God works, because when God wanted to come into the world he chose a womb that represented an impossibility. God picked a virgin, so that that impossibility could give birth to the unlimited possibilities, the infinite potential, of his Son Jesus Christ. You see, God picked the most unlikely, the most improbable, the most difficult situation to bring forth his Son, because he’s a God of the impossible. Jesus described this one time as he was talking to his disciples about salvation. He said,

"How hard it is to enter the kingdom of God!” ...The disciples were amazed and said, "Who then can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, "With man it’s impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God" (Mark 10:24-27).

And so, the impossibility that God presented through the virgin birth was the catalyst to unleash the potential of our salvation because God said that all of us have fallen short, all of us are sinners following the path of our first father Adam. And so, unlike Jesus, we’re all born in sin because we’ve all inherited our sin nature from Adam. It’s been passed down through the seed of our fathers, but unlike us Jesus wasn’t born of the seed of a human father, he was conceived by the Holy Spirit, and so he was born without sin. Jesus is the pure and Holy Son of God, born for the very purpose of being the innocent, pure, spotless Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world. And so, number two, he was born to be a sacrifice.

## 2. Born to Be a Sacrifice

And so, the Creator of the universe was born, not in a palace, but in a barn. Instead of being surrounded by great riches he was surrounded by filth, being born in the lowliest of places. It’s almost as if God was whispering, “There’s no one beyond the reach of my love.” And Jesus was born of a virgin, he is God with us, he was born to be a sacrifice, and he broke forth from that virgin womb only to find himself 30 plus years later being laid in a tomb. But as he met with his followers just before his execution, he promised,

“I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you” (John 14:18-20).

He said, “I’ll ask the Father and he’ll give you the Spirit of truth to be with you forever. He’ll live with you and will be in you” (John 14:16-17). And so, he promised to be with us forever, because he’s our companion, he’s relational, he’s God with us. He’s not some far-off distant God, but he’s a God that can be known and experienced on a personal level. Jesus came into the world to be God with us and now 2000 years later he’s still God with us because he lives in us by his Spirit. That’s why he said,

“Surely I am with you always to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).

As we are gathered here today, he’s with us at this moment, and over the past few weeks we’ve been learning about his presence in the valleys, on the mountain tops, in the wilderness, and in the storms. We’ve discovered that God’s close and that he whispers because he’s that close. He’s God with us forever and he’ll never leave us or forsake us even when we are at our worst.

In fact, Jesus told some men who were intent on bringing charges against him, "Have you never read in the Scriptures:

“The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?” (Matthew 21:41).

And it is marvelous, it’s a wonderful thing, it’s amazing, even when we ignore him, reject him, and turn away from him, he continues to pursue us. You see Jesus was so very focused, he knew his purpose, he knew his mission, and he stated it very clearly,

“The Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost” (Luke 19:10).

Jesus came to be our sacrifice, to forgive our sins, to clear our record, as Isaiah said, “To put our sins behind his back” (38:17). He literally tramples our sins under his feet and throws them into the depths of the ocean. He blots out our transgressions and remembers them no more. He delivers us from our sins, “He takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). In spite of ourselves, in spite of our rebellion, he came to seek and save what was lost.

The apostle Paul confirms this, testifying, quoting the prophet Isaiah who boldly proclaims the word of the Lord, saying in Romans chapter 10,

"I was found by those who did not seek me; I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me… All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people" (Romans 10:20-21).

And so, Jesus came on a mission to seek and to save the lost, to rescue those who were dead in their transgressions. He was a light shining in the darkness, but the darkness hasn’t understood it. “He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world didn’t recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him” (John 1:10-11).

Jesus was a man on a mission, God incarnate, God in the flesh, the God man who came to seek and save the lost. He recognized that it wasn’t the healthy who needed a doctor but the sick. He said in Luke chapter 5,

“I haven’t come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:32).

And so, as he went through the towns and villages teaching the people, healing every disease and sickness, and as he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a Shepherd” (Matthew 9:36). And so, number three he came to be our shepherd.

## 3. A Shepherd of God’s People

The Scriptures record that during the time of King Herod, magi from the east came to Jerusalem looking for the one who was born King of the Jews. They’d heard of a Savior, a Ruler, this King, this Shepherd of Israel, and so they inquired of his whereabouts. Of course, King Herod became disturbed by this news, he was threatened, and so he inquired of the priests and teachers of the law. They informed them that it had been written:

“But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel” (Matthew 2:6).

Jesus is that Great Shepherd of the sheep (Hebrews 13:20). He saw that we were harassed and helpless, he looked down from his sanctuary on high, from heaven he viewed the earth, he heard the groans of the prisoners, and came to release those condemned to death (Psalms 102:19-20). He saw us in our sickness, he saw that we were like sheep without a Shepherd, and he came to give us life, a full and abundant life, so that we would be able to say, “He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness” (Psalm 23:2-3). And we can say that because he’s our shepherd. Jesus said,

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (John 10:11).

Jesus is our shepherd and he did. He laid down his life as a pure and holy sacrifice, he demonstrated his love on the cross just like he said he would, and he promised,

“When I am lifted up from the earth, I’ll draw all men to myself" (John 12:32).

You see, he didn’t shout from heaven, but he came to earth, and he whispers, “I’ve come to seek and to save what was lost (Luke 19:10). He came into the world as a light, so that anyone who believes in him would be released from the darkness” (John 12:46). And he said in John chapter 8,

"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life" (John 8:12).

It’s just as the prophet Isaiah said, “the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned" (Matthew 4:16). In fact, Proverbs says, “The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter till the full light of day” (Proverbs 4:18). This is the essence of the love of God, and I love the fact that he came to show us, he demonstrated his love, because it’s he who whispers.

We started here in Matthew chapter one, but I want you to hear it again in the context of the incarnation:

“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." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"—which means, "God with us" (Matthew 1:21-23).

This morning, if you’ll believe on him, his life, his death, and his resurrection. If you’ll put your trust in the Son of God, he’s with you forever, his Spirit lives inside of you, and he whispers because he’s that close. And that’s such good news, because he didn’t just shout from heaven, but he came to earth, he came to save his people from their sins, and he whispers. He’s God with us, he was born to die, to be the ultimate sacrifice so that we could know his love forever.

God is with us and his greatest desire is for you to know who he is, that he loves you, and that he’s with you. He left heaven, coming to earth to be born of a virgin, lived without sin, died the most horrible death you could imagine, but he didn’t stay dead, because he’s with us. Every single day of your life he wants to be with you. He’s here and that’s what we celebrate today. Now 2000 years later, he’s still with us, he still lives in the hearts of those who believe, because he promised,

“Surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).

Pastor John Talcott

Christ's Community Church

303 West Lincoln Avenue

Emmitsburg, MD 21727

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[www.cccaog.org](http://www.cccaog.org)

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