

Fourth Sunday of Advent
Ancestry.God
Matthew 1

Have you tried Ancestry.com?

Jesus' ancestry report was odd for several reasons.

Especially...

- **Reporting about _____.** (verse 16)

- **Reporting about the _____.** (verse 23)

Have you ever wondered how Joseph felt about all of this?

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Message Application:

I came across the following meditation several weeks ago. It centers on the theme of our message for the Fourth Sunday of Advent. Please read it then let me suggest a crazy application.

The following was taken from Advent Resources:

Sunday School Christmas programs in the history of the Church would have been pretty short affairs if Matthew's account of Jesus's birth were all we had to go on. You wonder if the Church would ever have even tumbled to put on Christmas pageants were it not for Luke 2. Because the eight verses Matthew gives us—only the last couple of which actually even mention Jesus's birth—are not the stuff of stirring drama. In fact, considering that Joseph had concluded that his fiancé Mary had been sleeping around on him and ended up pregnant as a result is not the kind of story we tell in Sunday School settings. This all traffics in the awkward.

Joseph is the silent partner in God's drama of redemption. He never speaks a word in the Bible. He is a righteous man who lets his actions do the talking for him. He is also the first "righteous" man in Matthew's Gospel who is forced to revise his definition of righteousness. Fast forward four chapters in Matthew and you get to the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus repeatedly upends conventional definitions of the Law and what it means to be a righteous person (and it mostly was not what the Pharisees and others thought at the time).

Short though these verses are, Matthew gives us one other lyric truth: the child to be born of Mary would be named "Jesus" all right but his deepest name would be Immanuel. This is the theme of Matthew's Gospel: God is now "with us." And Matthew will make sure to bookend his Gospel when at the very end in chapter 28 Jesus assures his disciples "Surely I am with you always." Once God came to be "with us," he never stopped.

*So yes, it is great to celebrate in our Christmas programs the stable and the manger and the angels and the shepherds and the (somewhat misplaced) Magi and all the rest. But in his concise account of Jesus's advent, Matthew gives us the one piece of Good News that alone makes all of the other trappings of Advent and Christmas worth anything: what it all means is that God is with us and nothing will ever change that fact. "What can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus the Lord?" Paul will ask the Romans decades after Jesus's birth. Because of the truth of Immanuel, Paul knew that this was all-but a rhetorical question. Because what can separate us from the With-Us-God? **Nothing.** <https://cepreaching.org/resources/liturgical-season-resources/advent-resources-year-a/#advent2>*

The Apostle Peter, in his second letter to the Church, is reminding the believers of the promises they have from God. Peter makes this amazing statement. He writes, ***These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires.***
2 Peter 1:4b

Peter agrees with Matthew! Immanuel, God with us, has come. Not only is Jesus with us, he is in us. This week as you meditate on this truth ask yourself, "How would my actions change if I went through the day believing Jesus is really with me?"

I mean really, dear friend, where won't you go? What won't you look at? What wouldn't you say if you believed Jesus was right there? Then ask yourself. Where would I go, do, and say if I believed Jesus was with me right there. The truth is

my friend, Jesus is there, right there! This fact should be at work in us monitoring our actions. God loved us so that he came. God loved us so that he came to live with us. God loved us so that he came to live with us and in us.

Do you really believe this is true?

Grace & Peace,

Wm. Lyons