

**Reeks:** Want 'n Kind is vir ons Gebore...

**Titel:** ...Immanuel

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Good morning, friends, it's good to be with you again. Been missing you the last few weeks, but it's great to be with you today. I look forward to being with you again next Sunday. You have a bulletin which you received as you entered the auditorium, and if you could reach out for it you'll find the reading there that I'm going to use today, and you may like it follow me as I read it. There's also a place for making one or two notes if there is something that you sense God is saying to you. Sometimes it's always helpful just to make a note of it so that you can think about it as you leave here.

I read from Matthew 1:18-23. This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: his mother, Mary, was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit, and because Joseph, her husband, was faithful to the law, and yet 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, Simon, 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. And all this, and this is Matthew writing here, all this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet centuries before: the virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call Him Immanuel, Immanuel, which means God with us.

We thank God so much for these words from Scripture. We pray that God will speak to us today through them as we focus our hearts and our minds on them. Friends, would you agree with me that if we want to make contact with someone who is not physically present, we need to have the right contact details, otherwise we're in trouble? We need to have the right cell phone number. We need to have the right email address. We need to have the right fax number. We need to have the right contact details otherwise the consequences could be quite dangerous.

I don't know if you heard the story of a couple, from Mosaic in fact, who'd been married for 20 years, and they decided, to celebrate 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, 20 years of marriage, that they would go back to the same hotel where they had their honeymoon 20 years before down in Durban, and because their anniversary was in June, and you know, in June Durban is warm and hot, Gauteng a bit cold, they thought they would go down to Durban and celebrate 20 years of married life together.

Because their schedules were a bit hectic the husband went down the day before, and when he got there it was really lovely. The hotel had changed a bit. He decided to send an email to his wife, but in sending her the email he typed in the wrong email address. There was just one letter wrong, and so instead of the email going to his wife the email popped up on the computer screen of the wife of a Methodist minister in Port Elizabeth. She had just come home from the funeral of her husband and this email popped up on the screen, and she went across, just had come home from the funeral, popped up on the screen, she looked at it, she screamed, and she fainted.

Her son ran in, and this was the email that had popped up on her screen: to my loving wife, subject: just arrived. I know you're surprised to hear from me. They have computers here now, and you are allowed to send emails to your loved ones. I have just arrived, and I have just been checked in. I see that everything has been prepared for your arrival tomorrow. I look forward to seeing you then. I hope your journey is as uneventful as mine. PS: it's sure freaking hot down here.

Friends, if you don't have the right contact details you can get into all kinds of trouble, and I begin like this, friends, because the wonderful news of Christmas is this: God has given us God's contact details, the right contact details, and those contact details are simply this: Jesus Christ. Those are God's contact details. Look with me at that wonderful verse that I just read to you from Matthew. It was the last verse in that reading that I shared with you. The virgin will conceive and will give birth to a son, and they will call Him Jesus Emmanuel, which means God with us.



Jesus Christ is God with us. Those are the contact details. Throughout the Old Testament, and you know this, and I know this, throughout the Old Testament God is constantly saying to the people of God, I am with you, I am with you, I am with you, I am with you. In Jesus those words become flesh and blood. I am with you. Jesus gives form to the formula I am with you. Jesus gives shape to the story I am with you. Jesus gives power to the promise I am with you. We have the contact details, and I'm hoping that this Christmas time we can enter into these contact details very deeply, and I pray so deeply that we'll share them with others.

All this week I have been thinking about these contact details and what it means for us today, 2011, what it means for us as we face Christmas this year, and I have some thoughts, and I just want to unpack them very briefly with you this morning, and I'm praying that somehow, as I do this, that the spirit of God will speak to you and to me, and the first thought I want to share is this: because we've got God's contact details, because we've got them, we can be connected to God. Isn't that wonderful? We can be connected to God. We've got the contact details.

You see, friends, let me explain this: the fact that God is with us doesn't automatically mean that we are with God. Would you agree? Would you agree? Think about that. The fact that God is with us does not automatically mean that we are with God. I know that, as a preacher, every Sunday the fact that I'm with you, the fact that I'm present with you, the fact that I'm conscious of you even as I speak, doesn't mean automatically that you are with me right now. Some of you are thinking about what happened last night. Some of you are wondering about lunch. Some of you are thinking about someone else that you can see in the row in front of you, and you're saying I wish I had that person's contact details.

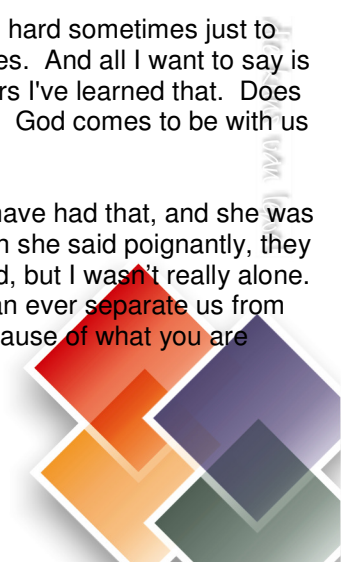
The fact that God is present with us does not automatically mean that we are connected, and you know, you know how we so often choose to be disconnected from God. We say to God, God, You stand back. I want to live my life without You. I will call the shots. I want to be in control. And that's what sin is all about. That's what sin is all about. It's the refusal to let God be God in our lives, and God lets us live without Him. He says, if you want to live without Me go ahead, but we have to pick up the consequences, and the consequences are tragic. They are tragic in our lives, in our relationships, in our nation, in our world, in our universe, and some of us today are living in a tragic disconnection from God, and I want to reach out to you today, and I want to say we have the contact details. We can get reconnected.

The contact details are Jesus Christ, and as I receive Jesus Christ into my life, as I trust Him, as I begin to follow him, as I begin to immerse myself in the story of Jesus, as I begin to live in that story I find myself reconnected in a living relationship with the living God who is with me, and I'm hoping that this reconnection can happen today for someone. I pray for that. I pray for that. But can I say something more? Because we've got God's contact details we don't have to face those dark and difficult things that some of us are facing alone. We don't have to face them alone.

I know that as we head towards Christmas it's a very difficult time for many people. I know that. I know that. Yesterday I was doing a wedding, and I bumped into a lady and I said, hi, I haven't seen you for some time. She said, yes, she said you buried my sister 13 years ago, and I said, how has it been, and as I said that she just broke into tears and she said it's just so hard, this time of the year. It's just so hard, this time of the year. And some of you are going into Christmas without the presence of someone that you've known and loved, and it's just so hard. And some of us are in marriages that are really taking strain, and somehow during the year you can work and you can avoid each other, but now it's holiday time and you are together, and you are saying, deep down, I don't know how we're going to just get through this holiday together.

And some of us are battling with addictions, and with Christmas parties happening it's so hard sometimes just to stay sober. And some of us are battling with illness in our bodies, the illness of loved ones. And all I want to say is we don't have to face it alone because we've got God's contact details, and over the years I've learned that. Does this make sense? God doesn't airlift us out of our difficult situations. God parachutes in. God comes to be with us in Jesus Christ. We don't have to be alone.

I was speaking to a woman just the other day. She had an MRI scan, and some of you have had that, and she was describing to me this experience. She said, Trevor, they took everything off me, and then she said poignantly, they even took my wedding ring, and I went into that MRI scan totally alone, and then she said, but I wasn't really alone. She knew the presence of Emmanuel. Paul said there is nothing in all of creation that can ever separate us from God's love in Jesus Christ, in Jesus Christ, and some of us need to know that today, because of what you are facing.



Can I say one more thing? Because we've got God's contact details we can share them with others. There are other people that we need to share these details with. We really do. We are surrounded every day who do not feel God's closeness, who do not... they... people who feel abandoned, forgotten by God, every day, and someone needs to embody God's presence for them. Someone needs to embody God's contact details. It's like that little girl who couldn't go to sleep and mum said to her, go to sleep, and she said, no, I'm scared, and then mum said, but Jesus is with you, and the little girl said, that doesn't help. I need someone with skin on. Hey, I need someone with skin on. And we are surrounded by people who need God with skin on, and as we receive Christ into our lives we become the body of Christ to others.

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I get very strategic during December, and I begin to say to God, God, I want to be strategic. I want to know who do I know who's suffering this Christmastime, because I want to enflesh you, I want to embody you to this person, and we don't do it by giving presence. We do it by being the presence of God, not presence of money and it's the... it's our presence that is needed, our presence, our presence.

I was called to the Sunninghill Hospital this week, beautiful woman with her husband, a stillborn child. She just wanted us to name the child, to hold the child, to commit the child to God. What do you say when you walk into a room like that? What do you say? You don't say anything. You just need to be there. And yesterday I get a call, and she says, and these are her words: Trevor, just thank you for being there, being there, being there, being there. It's presence, presence. Who can you be there for this Christmastime, so that when people are with you they can feel in you the reality of Christ's real presence?

I don't know if I've been helpful today. Let me end. The wonderful, wonderful news of Christmas is this, don't ever forget it: God has given us God's contact details. We've got them. We've got them. He says here are My... here are My contact details. If you want to be in touch with me, here are the details. Jesus Christ, God with us, Emmanuel. We've got them. The next move is yours and mine today. Amen, amen.

We're going to have communion, and it's a time when we receive God's contact details, Jesus, in the bread and the wine, again into our lives, and we remember how, on the night in which Jesus was betrayed, Jesus took bread, and when He gave thanks He broke the bread. He broke the bread and He said, this is My body, this is My body, broken for you for the forgiveness of sin, and you will remember too that on that same night He took wine and He gave thanks, and He said this wine is My blood which has been shed for you for the forgiveness of our sins, and so today we receive, as you receive it now, where you are seated, we receive the body and the blood of Christ into our lives by faith.

die leuens wat leed!

