

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ!

Are you ready for Christmas? All your presents bought and wrapped? Tree up and decorated? Cookies made and frosted/decorated? Travel plans made or are you hosting this year? This can be a pretty frenzied month, at least the first twenty-days or so. During this Advent season we're in right now, have you also gotten ready for the true reason we celebrate Christmas?

For the world around us, Advent means "shop 'til you drop" and listen to Christmas ads, jingles, songs until you're ready for absolute peace and quiet. For the world around us, Advent brings a series of questions; what's first on the list? What's next? After that? How much time is left until?

But it's nearly Christmas and the real meaning of this celebration is a baby, "a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means, 'God is with us,' and "you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." He is named Jesus, Emmanuel, Son of David, Son of Man, Son of God, Lord, Messiah, Savior, Christ. Names that speak of lepers cleansed, sight for the blind, hearing for the deaf, walking for the crippled, the dead raised, good news shared with the poor. Names that speak of rejection, denial, denunciation, betrayal, persecution and crucifixion. All these things wrapped up in the names to be given to this as yet unborn son.

A baby, a son who becomes a child, who becomes a man, who carries the sin of all humanity. But neither Joseph nor Mary has any inkling of that as of yet.

Now this is the child for whose birth you have been preparing to celebrate. All the frantic days focus on this child, not the presents, family and partying, but the Christ in whose name we celebrate.

God came into the lives of Mary and Joseph, they prepared for a son of whom the angel said "the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit." An unlikely birth in an unlikely place and I tell you that God who came into the lives of Mary and Joseph, is also coming into your lives with the real meaning of what we are preparing to celebrate.

So let's leave here this morning with this question in mind: which name dominates in your lives as you prepare to celebrate the coming of the child whose birthing is next Sunday?

AMEN

