

## **SERMON:** God Keeps His Promises: To Be-With us.

Rev. Geoff Ross Sunday, January 10, 2021

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church.

*[Christmas. Let me ask: Wish list-PS5/game/phone/toy/gadget/clothes? Is that what you used your 'wish' on? Did you get what you wished/asked for?/Get anything you didn't ask for?Me too!/Moustache brush! What about health/safety/no more COVID19/world peace? Let me ask you this:When did Christmas become about material things?/Gifts/Presents?/Getting instead of giving?]*

Now, I'm sure you're saying it wasn't like this 'when you were a kid'/'not this bad' – but the truth is; that was a trick question: the very first Christmas was about getting – as well as giving material gifts. Christmas is the celebration of what God did for us that first Christmas/greatest gift/God's present – His presence. God knew our/humankind's weaknesses/failings; but despite this/still loved us/longed to be-with us. Over the millennia God heard our sighs of pain/cries/prayers;He had seen our tears. God knew how much we needed His presence in our lives/His compassion/guidance. But how could a Holy God lower Himself to our level? Then God found a way/love found a way:nothing is impossible for God – for, as the title of our Epiphany series says; God keeps His promises!

*[“The LORD is trustworthy in all he promises and faithful in all he does.”(Ps145:13NIV) Faithfulness/Promises-synonymous:God is faithful-steadfast/trustworthy:keeps promises! Epiphany series:study/examine God's Promises: Promises made/fulfilled. William Barclay: “Jesus is the ‘YES!’ to every promise of God.”]*

Last week we heard about God's promises/that they were made to help restore our relationship with God/to redeem us before His sight. As I mentioned, the OT is a document of the promises – made by God through the Prophets to/for a people in need of hope/a people waiting in darkness/filled with doubts – “*But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might*” be saved.(Gal 4:4-5) This “coming” is marked by Christmas – the birth of the One promised/promised One/Emmanuel/God with-us – fulfilled a promise God made long ago through the Prophet Isaiah that; “*the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel.*”(Isaiah 7:14) A promise repeated by an angel to Joseph in a dream, revealing that Immanuel/Emmanuel means, “*God with us.*”(Matthew 1:23) A promise God kept by giving Himself.

*[Presence/not presents: to be present/exist in physical form:such as a person/thing that is extant or corporeal – a manifestation/sign of something bodily visible/present. God kept His promise by giving Himself/stepped, personally into our fallen creation/world/lives – flesh. John: “And the Word became flesh and lived among us”(John 1:14-2<sup>nd</sup> reading) Incarnation: “Embodiment/materialization of God into human form – flesh/blood – to be-with us/live as-us – to later die for-us/save us.The question is:WHY?]*

One reason was to reveal to us what **He is like**. By being born – in a stable no less – God presented/revealed His presence to us in a way that we could understand/see/hear/experience: in bodily form God/He became tangible-material/substantial/perceptible. Prior to that moment God was inaccessible/beyond our understanding/imaging – unseen/unknown/His nature/“*His greatness, unsearchable.*”(Ps 145:3) So far removed from His creation/creatures, God was/is/will ever be a mystery: That is, until God in/through Jesus came to be-with us/on of-us. Jesus told His disciples: “*I am in the Father, and ...the Father is in me.*”(John 14:10) and Paul professed/taught/witnessed to this truth by writing that Jesus “*is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being.*”(Heb1:3NIV)

And God also came to be-with us to show/reassure us that He knows what **we are like**. God made us/in His image/from His heart – and wants to walk-with us/to be-with us/together/be present/in a relationship/together: to do this God had to be-one like us. To do this the incarnation/manifestation/birth had to happen: Not because God had to/but because God knew us-faults/failings/good/bad/inside/out/everything-from before we were born. God came for OUR sake/for us so WE might be convinced that He really does know/understands us/what we’re going through/what it means to be us so that we might “*approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*” (Heb4:16-3<sup>rd</sup> reading) In/through Jesus God entered our world/by coming to be-with us/as/like us God not only revealed Himself/what He was like/but the full extent of His grace/mercy/compassion/love to us.

*[Covenant: Promise/bond/vow-Wedding: “To be-with one another/be-present”/to love/honour/protect/care-for each other.RER/GMR-28yrs-white-kneed nervousness!but knew being “joined together” was RIGHT!/make me whole]*

And, friends, this is the real reason God did all this: He loves you/me/us beyond all measure. And, because of His love, God made us out of love for love/to live in love – together/with Him: God has always loved/wanted a relationship with-us/you/me – saying; “*I have loved you with an everlasting love.*”(Jer31:3) And He showed this love to/for the world/you/me/us when He became flesh/dwelt among/with us, be-came human/share our humanity/to reveal/provide the true cost of His love-by giving/up His Son for/die for us. And, because of this, the Good News/Gospel is, God in/through Jesus/came to us/as a “sign”/baby-one-of us/to. By be-ing with-us/to live as-us/love-us, God has been/is/will be-with you through whatever you’ve gone/you’re going/will go through. Thanks be to God – the God kept His promise – to be-with us. Amen.