

12/24/24 - John 1:14 - "Will Jesus Dwell with you Tomorrow?"

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[0 : 00] Amen. You may be seated. This is God's word for us tonight. And again, welcome. My name is Brent and I serve here as the lead pastor. Praise the Lord for this music team. Praise the Lord for Cassie. Where's Cassie? For getting the kids singing like this. Praise the Lord.

She is awesome. Missy, she's the miser behind the scenes. She'll never take credit for it, but thank you, Missy, as well for working with Cassie. Well, we unfortunately don't have coffee for you, so this is going to test your endurance of making it through one of my messages. If you fall asleep, it won't be personal. I'll know that. I'll just blame it on coffee to help my ego, right? But it's great to be gathered here. And yeah, we don't have coffee. And so Carmen, we'll blame Carmen. He's down in Texas right now, all right? So when he gets back, you can put him in a chokehold. But we are going to look into this mystery in John chapter one briefly tonight. And growing up, Christmas was always sort of marked by two things. When Christmas would happen, it would be family gatherings and presents. Family gatherings and presents, those two. We would travel Christmas morning. We would get up. My dad would have his video camera. He was weird like that. And he'd have a happy, you know, with the, it's like the real video cameras. Kids today don't know. It's the camera that sat on your shoulder with the VHS tape in there. All right?

Yeah, let's, let's make, let's make video cameras great again. Amen? So it sat on his, his shoulder. He'd be down in the hallway, getting us coming out of our rooms to see the first reaction of opening the presents. This was Christmas. It was all about presents. And throughout the day, we'd be traveling from one grandmother's house to another grandmother's house, food and food and mischief in many of those cases. And then we'd finally land at my uncle's house where we would feast again. And we would play games and watch some classic Christmas movies. This drowned out a lot of the meaning of Christmas growing up. It was all about that. Those two items. Often slipping my mind amid all that hustle and bustle was what happens the night before Christmas. Right? Not the nightmare before Christmas, but the night before Christmas where we were all dressed up like we are tonight, looking fancy tonight. Amen.

All dressed up. We would actually head out to an 11 o'clock candlelight service growing up. Let's make candlelight services great again too. 11 o'clock. Come on folks. At this rate, it was 5 o'clock last year, 6 o'clock. We'll be there in about six years. All right? Keep pushing it back. It's just me gathering here. Where's everyone at? But 11 p.m. was the candlelight service. And obviously being a kid, you were more interested in the hot wax than usually anything. You got to hold fire that your parents would never let you hold before. But unfortunately for me, the one-hour gathering didn't really have the impact needed to remain upon my mind the next day. It was nearly an afterthought the minute that Christmas morning began. We never remembered Christmas night. Isn't this a sad reality for many many of us in our lives? Many of you will wake up tomorrow. All of this, all the singing, the glory of the message and the splendor and the glory of Christmas all just kind of an afterthought as we're trying to please other people, make their gatherings, go from one place to another. It's a sad reality that the meaning of Christmas is drowned out by twinkling lights, joyful carols, and festive gatherings. And not saying that any of those are inherently bad. But what we know, if they're getting clouded out, the problem is here. The problem is with us. Because we allow it to cloud out our minds. And the Bible reinforces our forgetfulness constantly. And as wonderful as this one hour is to get together tonight, we cannot expect such a short amount of time to remain upon our minds tomorrow unless we do the hard work needed to remember tomorrow. And so tonight, my hope is that I give everyone, every one of us something to remember. And it's from John chapter 1, verse 14. And I want us to ask a question, will Jesus Christ dwell with you tomorrow? Will

Jesus Christ dwell with you tomorrow?

And let's ask this question at the forefront of our minds as we remember what Gracie so beautifully read in John chapter 1, verse 1, which reads, So let's dive into that.

[5 : 58] Asking the question, will Jesus Christ dwell with us tomorrow? This verse that we read, and that was read within its context, really packs a punch, a powerful punch, in light of how God has historically revealed himself to his people. And that is because when John uses the word dwelt, the word dwelt, as it's written in Greek, well, translated from Greek in your Bible, the word dwelt can also be translated as tabernacles.

He tabernacles with us, among us. And this deliberate choice of language here in Greek is to tie Jesus' incarnation, his bodily appearing, to the imagery of Old Testament tabernacling.

Isn't that fancy? The physical location on earth where God's glory dwelled among his people was found in the tabernacle.

This is seen in Exodus 25. The most sacred part of the tabernacle was that innermost part, the Holy of Holies. And in the Holy of Holies housed the Ark of the Covenant where God's presence was most concentrated.

In Exodus 33, the tabernacle was placed at the center of the Israelite camp. It was the center of the town. It's symbolic that God's presence was central in their lives.

[7 : 32] In Exodus 40, it's made known that the tabernacle was where God's presence visibly dwelt, in the form of the Shekinah glory, a cloud by day and a fire by night.

And Leviticus 1 and Leviticus 4 speak of the tabernacle being the central place of offering sacrifices. And as we read, And the word became flesh and tabernacled among us, dwelt among us.

Most of all, in all of this tabernacling, God's physical dwelling served as a tangible reminder that God was with his people, with them.

It was the place where heaven touched earth, where God's glory could be seen, where God's glory could be experienced.

And you see, it was the divine presence among them. God dwelt in their midst through the tabernacle, his glory visibly resting in the cloud and fire, guiding them and protecting them.

[8 : 46] However, as it were, for those of the Old Testament, the true glory had nothing to do with this physical radiance, right?

Like the cloud over the tabernacle. But it was the spiritual beauty of God's character and God's love revealed by dwelling, by having a desire to dwell with his creation.

Right? Past the cloud, past the fire, was a loving God who wants to dwell with his people. And just as John says here, we have seen his glory.

Glory as the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. And as we celebrate God's dwelling with us on Christmas Eve, with great splendor, with lights and decorations, we keep this in mind in a sober reality, that the true beauty of the season isn't about these glittering decorations or the warm traditions, but solely the presence of God himself in Jesus Christ, full of grace and truth, dwelling among us, tabernacling among us.

In other words, just as the tabernacle was the center of the Israelites' camp, Jesus, the living word, is the center of Christmas. Jesus, Jesus as the incarnate word, is the ultimate meeting place between God and humanity.

[10 : 25] And just as the tabernacle housed the presence of God, Jesus' human body housed the fullness of God's deity, as Paul writes in Colossians 2.9, for in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.

I love how our English translates that, the whole fullness. It's like, okay, he's trying to reinforce something, and he is. There's not an ounce that was not God in Jesus Christ.

He's certainly tabernacled with humanity. You see, Jesus didn't simply bring God's presence near. He is God.

He is God's presence. His life radiated the glory of the Father, not seen by a cloud or fire, but in his perfect, obedient life, death, and resurrection.

This glory surpasses all earthly, all earthly splendor, revealed in his humanity as a baby, in a manger, in his compassion for sinners, and ultimately in his sacrifice upon the cross.

[11 : 42] All of that. So the invitation is available to us. Just as Israel worships at the tabernacle, Christmas invites us to worship Jesus tonight.

This is a time of beholding his glory through his word. As we open this book, it's no ordinary book. The book has stood the test of time.

And it's here for us. It's open to trust in his promises and proclaim his grace to others. And just as children can say, go tell it on a mountain.

Because I was even gifted a nice necklace. What a mystery this is, isn't it? That God dwells in tabernacles among his people.

Why? Why? That an all-sufficient God demonstrates his love and commitment to save undeserving people?

[12:43] C.S. Lewis writes in his book called Miracles. The central miracle asserted by Christians is the incarnation. They say that God became man.

He goes down to come up again and bring the whole ruined world up with him. This is a miracle. It's a mystery that is indeed, as Paul writes in 1 Timothy 3.16, Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness, that he was manifested in the flesh, incarnated in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by the angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, and taken up in glory. Friends, don't let this remain a mystery to you tonight. Let this transform you today because it is a reality.

And if it is a reality, you better wake up tonight because we're not promised tomorrow. What does this say about God's desire for our salvation?

Well, that he actually stepped into the world and became one of us, born under the law to save those under the law. This shows the value of every human life, given the dignity God gave humans above all other creatures on this earth.

[14:18] And though the power, and through the power of God's word, God is nearer to you tonight than you may want to admit because we have this book open. But the question is, will you trust and praise him tonight, the one who is full of grace and truth?

Tonight, will you all depart this gathering? And when all of our heads hit the pillow at some point tonight, once we get these rowdy kids to bed, we can't escape the question that will resonate in our minds in the stillness and the darkness of night.

Will Jesus Christ dwell with you tomorrow? This makes a few perspectives that need to shift.

If you're maybe an unbeliever here today, this message is an invitation to consider the incredible reality of the incarnation of God in the flesh.

That God steps into humanity to dwell among us, to live in order to die. On behalf of you. Have you ever given the thoughts about what it means that Jesus came near, not just for the world, but for you individually?

[15:47] Not just in a massive quantity. He came into the world for each and one of you. And so ask yourself, what would it mean for Jesus to dwell with you tomorrow?

Could it be that God is calling you to something greater than you've ever known in this life? I'd encourage you to remember that God has the first move.

And he made the first move to you tonight to come to him. And he's offering his presence and his grace no matter where you are in this life, no matter your record of sin.

Maybe you've fallen away from the faith. Maybe you think back upon your childhood. You were the kids that were singing up on the stage. And mom and dad twisted your arm to do and read that scripture, right?

Maybe you've fallen away from faith. And you know that you have. Well, if you once believed but have walked away, this message is a reminder of what you have drifted from.

[16:58] Vivid reminder. Do you remember the intimacy you once had with God? Remember that feeling, that presence that you felt, the assurance that you knew that Jesus loved you because the Bible told you so.

Well, if you have fallen away from the faith tonight, I gotta remind you that Jesus hasn't forgotten you. Consider this. God's glory and grace are still available to you tonight.

You may have walked away, but he's never stopped reaching out to you. And consider this, him reaching out to you tonight. I encourage you, it's not too late to rediscover the joy of walking with Jesus Christ.

He is still willing to dwell with you if you'll be willing to let him. Maybe you're a lukewarm believer. You've heard that term lukewarm.

Not hot, not cold, just somewhere in between, right? Well, if your faith seems lukewarm, this message is a wake-up call to you tonight. Is Jesus truly the center of your life or have other things taken his place?

[18 : 14] Are you living as if God's presence matters every day or is he more of this afterthought? Well, don't let the distractions of life cloud the beauty of God's presence.

You gotta ask yourself, what steps can I take to make Jesus the focus of my life tomorrow where I know I'm gonna forget and beyond?

Well, I'd encourage you that God's grace is still available for you today through worship, trust, and proclaiming his goodness. You can rekindle the vibrant faith that you've once had and rediscover the joy of his presence.

And maybe you're a faithful believer. You've been faithfully walking with Christ. This message is an encouragement to never stop growing, to keep digging deeper in your faith in Christ.

Don't grow complacent in your faith. There's no retirement for a Christian. Keep growing. Keep beholding God's glory through his word, proclaiming his grace to those around you.

[19 : 24] I'd encourage you to remember the privilege of having God's presence in your life. And this Christmas, let it inspire you to worship. Worship him more fully and to share the hope of Christ with others.

This is the good news of the gospel, friends. For each and every one of you, no matter where you're at in life, that by God's love, he came to dwell and tabernacle with us.

And by our faith, we are given the opportunity to tabernacle with him. This is the good news of the gospel. So the question is, will Jesus dwell with you tomorrow?

And only the Lord knows. Let's pray.