

**Jesus – God With Us**  
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The 87 year-old man was living in a sleepy village outside of Rome in Italy, with his books and seven cats. His wife had been dead for 12 years, and his only daughter worked in Afghanistan. He seldom ventured outside. Rarely spoke to others.

Life was colourless, and extremely lonely. And on the day he decided to do something about it, Giorgio Angelozzi put himself up for adoption. That's right – the octogenarian placed a classified ad in Italy's largest daily newspaper: "Man seeks family in need of a grandfather. Would bring 500 dollars a month to a family willing to adopt him."

The ad changed his life.

The paper ran a front-page article about him. Inquiries poured in from as far away as Columbia, New Zealand, and New Jersey. Angelozzi became a celebrity overnight. He went from having nothing but time to having scarcely enough time to handle interviews and requests.

A pop star responded. A millionaire offered servants and a seaside villa. But one letter stood out, Angelozzi explained, because every member of the family – father, mother, sister, brother – had signed it.

He settled into their ground-floor apartment, taking walks in the garden, helping with dishes and homework. "I couldn't have chosen better," he says. "Maybe it was luck, or maybe it was God looking after me. I don't know...I knew right away I had found my new home."

God is not the author of loneliness. Among our Maker's first recorded words were these: "It is not good for the man to be alone" (Gen. 2:18 NIV). Yet far too many people suffer from loneliness.

*No one knows me*, we think. People know my name, but not my heart. They know my face, but not my feelings. No one really knows me. And...

*No one is near me*. We hunger for physical contact. We need to make a connection. And we need to make a difference.

The anthem of the lonely heart has a third verse: *No one needs me*. The kids used to need me...General Motors used to need me...My spouse never needs me...

What do you do with such thoughts? No one knows me. No one is near me. No one needs me. How do you cope with such cries for significance? Some stay busy; others stay drunk. Some buy pets; others buy lovers. Some seek therapy. And a few seek God.

God's treatment for insignificance won't lead you to a bar or dating service. God's ultimate cure takes you to a manger. The babe of Bethlehem. Immanuel.

Remember the promise of the angel? "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated 'God with us'" (Matt. 1:23).

That is such an important line in the story of Christmas! Mary was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took place, while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit. Joseph, her fiancé, was a good man and did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement quietly.

Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and counseled him to take Mary as his wife.

The Bible says, in Matthew 1:22-23 NLT

All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord's message through his prophet:

"Look! The virgin will conceive a child!

She will give birth to a son,  
and they will call him Immanuel,  
which means 'God is with us.'"

Jesus Christ is Immanuel, God with us. Not God above us. Or God-in-the-neighbourhood. Jesus came as God with us. Not "God with the rich" or "God with the poor" or "God with the religious." But God with us. All of us. Mexicans, Germans, Chinese. Truck drivers, school teachers, and factory workers. God with us.

Prophets weren't enough. Apostles wouldn't do. Angels won't suffice. God sent more than miracles and messages. He sent himself; he sent his Son.

The virgin will conceive a child!  
She will give birth to a son,  
and they will call him Immanuel,  
which means 'God is with us.'

But why? Why did Jesus come?

## **1. Jesus came as a ransom**

Mark 10:45

*The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many.*

The reason we need a ransom to be paid for us is that we have been alienated from a holy God because of sin. When Jesus gave his life as a ransom, our slavemasters, namely sin and death and the devil, had to give up their claim on us. And the result was that we could be adopted into the family of God.

Paul put it like this in Galatians 4:4-5 NASB

*When the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman...that we might receive the adoption as sons.*

We had run away and sold ourselves into slavery. But God pays a ransom and redeems us out of slavery into the Father's house. God's Son had to become a human being in order to suffer and die in our place as a ransom.

## **2. Jesus came to call sinners to repentance**

Luke 5:31-32 NLT

*"Healthy people don't need a doctor—sick people do. I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners and need to repent."*

Jesus came to call sinners to repentance. First, there needed to be a ransom to be paid for sinners. Then, there could be a successful call to sinners. The call is based on the ransom. And Jesus says he came for both of these things.

## **3. Jesus came to give us spiritual understanding**

In giving the promise of a Messiah, God was also promising to give us spiritual understanding.

Listen to what John wrote in 1 John 5:20 NIV

*We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true—even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.*

Immanuel - God is with us to give us spiritual understanding; to instruct us, to enlighten us, so that we may know him.

#### 4. Jesus came to save us

The angel of the Lord declared to Joseph that Mary "will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." The need for salvation implies that there is a danger we need to be saved from.

In his gospel, John would say, in John 3:17-18 NIV

*For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.*

The danger we need to be saved from is sin and death and the devil. But the most serious danger of all is the danger of the condemnation of God. If God is for us, then sin and death and the devil will fail to destroy us. But if God is against us, then nothing can save us.

Christmas, the coming of Jesus, is God's way of being for us—if we will believe. "He who believes is not condemned, but he who does not believe is condemned already."

Furthermore, John writes in 3:16,

*For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.*

Eighty-seven year old Giorgio Angelozzi was so lonely that he put himself up for adoption. But Christmas means that God is with us and we never have to be lonely again! God sent his Son Immanuel to be God with us so that we could believe and have eternal life and enjoy a personal, meaningful relationship with God.

I want to close this message by urging you to believe in Jesus and to receive this gift of life and to set out on a course in life that magnifies God and his rich grace.

There is a way for all of you to respond wherever you are on your spiritual pilgrimage.