



## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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February 20, 2013  
Midweek Lenten Worship  
Sermon Text: [John 18:3-12](#)  
Pastor Randy Ott

### **Names of Wondrous Love - Immanuel**

Grace and mercy are yours from God the Father. Amen.

In Christ, dear fellow redeemed:

I suppose there is no real way for us to think about it except that the Father and the Son had a conversation because I don't know for sure how the members of the Trinity, the three persons in one being, communicate with each other. We are told in one place the Spirit intercedes for us with groans that words can't express. If you and I are going to think about it, as simple human beings the only way we can think about it is that the Father and Son had a discussion. This discussion took place before there was dirt, before there were people, before there was the universe...when there was only God. If they had this discussion, I think you and I would have to imagine it going something along this line. The Father looks at Jesus and says, "Son, the only way to free mankind (the mankind we haven't created yet) from the sin that they are going to fall into (even though we are going to create them holy) is that you are going to have to leave heaven and become one of them. You are going to have to fulfill all the laws perfectly in their place because they just can't do it. Then you are going to have to take all of the punishment, all of the wrath that their sins deserve. You are going to have to put them on your shoulders and hang on a cross." I don't know how else to imagine the conversation.

I don't know how to imagine what Jesus said, but I know what he did. He left heaven and became one of us. The God who gave all the laws became true man. As true man, he lived under all the laws. As the God-man, his perfect life counts for every person that ever has lived or ever will live. I know the God who is incapable of dying or ceasing to be because as man, he was mortal. I know that the One who is God and man died and endured all the agony of hell that you and I deserve to have. It shouldn't really surprise us though.

Seven hundred years before it happened, the Holy Spirit spoke through the prophet Isaiah in Chapter 7 and said "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and you are to call him Immanuel," which means "God with us." God with us. Immanuel. This name of wondrous love that we look at today. Think of what it means for us as we look at it. We look at these brief paragraphs that I read to you from John 18 and even

there we see the proof that this is God who is with us. Then as we consider all of this again, we see the promise that there is for you and for me in that name, "God with us," this name of wondrous love.

When you consider the promise that is implicit in this, it makes a difference in your daily life. It's not pie in the sky, by and by. This is where the rubber hits the road each and every day of your life. I feel for you and I feel for me when we go out into our daily life without God with us.

If you saw Jesus walking around if you happened to live at that time, there was no big neon sign flashing above his head saying this guy is true God. He didn't have this faraway look like you always see in the movies, like he's not really there, like he ate some wrong mushroom or something. That's what you see in the movies all the time. They are trying to make it look like he's God. He didn't. He looked like any one of us. You wouldn't have thought anything different about him just by looking at him or seeing him. Because of the events of that night outside of the Garden of Gethsemane that I just read to you, there are a few guys that had to be wondering who this guy was.

Did you ever have to knock something away from your ear when something was buzzing near your ear, or have an itch in your ear and knock a fly away from your ear and bump your ear? What do you think Malchus thought the rest of his life every time he did that? Do you think often he went back to that night where he couldn't possibly have done that...where that ear got cut off by a sword, where the blood was flowing down his face and then all of a sudden this Jesus, who he had come there to be a part of the group that was going to arrest him and bind him and lead him away, picks up the ear, puts it back on and it works, and there's no blood and it's there and everything is fine again? That's not normal, right? I don't care how many episodes of House you watch, you aren't going to see that happen because that doesn't happen. Yet it did.

You just have to wonder, did Malchus think to himself, "This guy is something more than just a man. I don't know why we are arresting him." You just have to ask that, don't you? The rest of his life, did he wonder if this guy had to be something more than just a man.

Or the soldiers that were there. Think about them. The leaders of the Sanhedrin, the teachers of the law, they are soldiers that were under their command as the governing body of the Jews there. They get their weapons. They get their torches. They get their lanterns. They go out into the dark night. They go around, I suppose, expecting to stick their torch in all the different corners and crevices and bushes that are in this dark garden at night because they are finding a fugitive, someone that they are going to arrest. They get there and they walk in and someone is walking toward them. He asks them, "Who are you looking for?" They say, "Jesus of Nazareth. This is the guy we are coming to arrest." Their weapons were probably obvious. Jesus says, "I am he." Not exactly a scintillating manhunt on Cops, is it? He walks right up to them.

They might have thought that some of his followers might be there and maybe they were going to give a battle. One of them does. The guy they came to arrest tells him to put it away. I have to believe that's not exactly what they expected to hear.

Even more than that, they had to know, they had to have had this opportunity to at least think this Jesus has got to be something more than just a man because he asked them, "Who are you looking for," and they said "Jesus of Nazareth." When he said "I am he," it just knocked them right on their can. They had to get some dirt out of their garments when they got home that night. That's not normal. That's not the way it normally works.

You have to wonder if some of these guys, who had every opportunity to know the Old Testament, thought back to what is said in Isaiah 53 where it said, "He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth." The coming Messiah was not going to be the expected but the unexpected. That's exactly what Jesus did. There's the proof.

When you are going to trial, you want the person himself, the accused himself to testify, right? You put Jesus on that stand, what is he going to say to you? He can't hardly say, "I didn't know what was going to happen." We are told, "Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, 'Who is it you want?'" He knew what was coming. He knew what this mob was there to do. He knew the beating that awaited him, the blindfold, the spittle that would be running down his face. He knew the metal that would tear open his back. He knew the nails that would pierce his hand. He knew the spear that was coming for his side. He couldn't say, "I didn't know it was coming." He couldn't say, "I was overpowered." "I am he," boom. They didn't overpower him.

He really couldn't say anything except it was all about willingness. It was all about doing the Father's will. He couldn't really do anything except say what he had already said in John 10..."The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again."

If Jesus was on that stand and you were asking for proof, the only testimony he could give was that it was willingness. It was willing love for sinners that led him to have his wrists put together, tied by these soldiers and taken off to an unfair trial, to an unjust sentence.

If you want proof that Jesus is truly Immanuel, God with us, it's right there and it's throughout the rest of the Gospels. It's throughout Scripture. There's no denying it. God became one of us. God is with us. Immanuel was not just a neat sounding name that God spoke of 700 years earlier. God with us is the only answer to your sins and to my sins. That's why it's a name of wondrous love. So there's your proof.

Now what is the promise that is inherent in that proof that God gives you? What's the promise that makes a difference for your daily life? Our God is with us. He is with us in our sin. All the times we doubt God, all the times we wander down paths where he has told us not to go, all the times we hate, lie, gossip, whatever we might be caught up in, he's there with us. But he's not there to pounce. He's not a distant God who only glances at us every now and then and comes and torments us to get some kicks. He's with us. He's with us in our sin, not to judge us, not to condemn us, but to say "I died for that sin. I carried that sin to the cross." He's there with us to say and to whisper in our ears, "Go in peace, your sins are forgiven." He's there in the body and the blood to tell us this truth and to point us to this truth and to focus us on this truth. He's there with us. He'll never forsake us. He's there with his forgiveness.

Our God is with us in our troubles. As we heard this past Sunday, he knows what our troubles are like. He was like us in every way, right? If you are grieving for the loss of a loved one, Jesus is right there with you. He did the same thing, didn't he? Standing and weeping with Mary and Martha at the grave of Lazarus. He's there with you in your troubles.

Is he there with you when a close friend, maybe even a spouse is unfaithful to you and it just tears your heart apart and turns your world upside down? Judas, Peter...we read about them tonight. He knows exactly what that is like. He's been through it. He's there with you when you feel like you're all alone. He's not going to desert you. He is there with us even when we make our halting attempts to serve him. We love him. We know he's taken away our sins and we want to serve him, but every time we serve him and take two steps forward, it seems like we take 10 backwards. We mess things up. We sin against God in so many ways. Our service becomes tainted with pride. It goes in many different directions except just love for God. It happens to us. Yet he is there with us. He is there to whisper in our ears, "Don't give up. This is why I came and I paid for your sins. This is why I allowed my hands to be tied together because I'm there to forgive you for all the things you've done."

Then he is there with us as we go through the Valley of the Shadow, right? He had already gone through it once for us. So the fear that death is going to lead to something worse is removed for us. Sure there are lots of worries about death. We haven't gone through it. We don't necessarily look forward to it, but we do have this comfort of knowing that the One who died in our place, the One who has already defeated death, the One who has risen from the grave is right there at our side. He will never leave nor forsake us. That's his promise. He says, "I am always with you."

This is where we live. This is daily life. The promise "God with us," the name "God with us," Immanuel, that's what you live in every day of your life. So take it with you. Focus on it. Don't just leave tonight. Look back in the Garden of Gethsemane at Jesus. See him with those hands bound together and know that they were tied together so that the sins, the guilt of sin that was tied to you would be broken loose so that the scissors of

his blood would cut loose those bonds of sin that Satan wants to make stick to you. He set you free. Now he stays with you each and every day of your life. He's always there to say, "Don't you see? I did this for you. Now I'm with you always to the very ends of the age." Amen.