

Monday, December 18

### **God With Us Then, Now, and Always**

*Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, .... They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain.* Revelation 21:3-4 (NIV)

I asked many kids at Bible Camp what the name 'Immanuel' means as we reviewed the Christmas story. "God with us!" the kids chimed in, excited to know this new word.

In Advent, as we recall Jesus' promised birth and get to look ahead in hope to his return at the end of this age, we can really feel how Jesus is with us on earth, and look forward to God dwelling with us. This is comforting: Jesus has been here in our humanity, is still present in our fellowship and relationships, the Holy Spirit is moving among us, and our 'Immanuel' God will live with us and take away death and suffering!

Jesus as "God-with-us" has shown himself to me and other Bible Camp teachers all the time—on planes, in remote churches, in tiny gatherings of children and adults for making crafts, singing songs, playing games, sharing Bible stories, or simply eating a meal or sipping tea together. Whatever territory or state in which we live or visit, Jesus is already there, alive and working among the people; we are called to come alongside people with Jesus.

There is so much to celebrate as we relive the story of Jesus' birth, and so much to place our hope in as we experience the signs of God's coming kingdom. As the Advent hymn "All Earth is Hopeful" has us sing: *We first saw Jesus a baby in a crib, / this same Lord Jesus today has come to live / in our world; He is present, in neighbours we see / Our Jesus is with us and ever sets us free.*

**Dearest Jesus, thank you for you being with us. We ask that you continue to be present in our suffering, and that you aid us in being present to others in their sorrows and joys. Keep us steady in placing our trust and hope in your redeeming love. Amen**

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