

Call Him Jesus

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[0 : 00] Good morning, well as my wife Sharon would say, good morning y'all. I'm Sam and this is Sharon and we're going to do a little reading for you this morning and finish off with a prayer.

This is the second Sunday of Advent. Each week of Advent we prepare to celebrate Jesus' birth by lighting a candle and focusing on different themes of Christ's coming.

Last week we lit the candle of hope. This week we light the candle of peace. Like each of us, Jesus was born into a world that knew of war, rebellion and discord.

Jesus came into this world proclaiming peace, blessing the peacemakers and exemplifying what it means to be a man of peace. Jesus also came to the world knowing that our greatest need was ultimately for peace with God.

Our sin made us his enemies and Jesus came to pay the price for our sins so we could live at peace both with God and with each other. Please join us in reading this passage from God's word found in Ephesians chapter 2 verses 13 to 17.

[1 : 25] The scripture is on the screens behind us. His purpose. But now in Christ Jesus, you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with his commands and regulations. His purpose. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.

He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. Let us pray.

Thank you God for sending Jesus, the one who purchased our peace with you. Thank you that he came proclaiming peace and that one day he will return to rule all nations with justice and peace.

[2 : 42] Please let us live our lives reflecting the peace which we have been given through Christ. And in Jesus name we pray. Amen. Amen. All right.

Before you guys sit down, could you turn to your neighbor and say hi and just greet one another? Okay. If you greeted at least one person, you can sit down. How are you guys doing?

How are you doing today? Awesome. Wow. Great. Good job, buddy. Hey, my name is Tobin and I'm one of the pastors here at Watermark Church. If you're here for the first time, we want to welcome you during this holiday season.

We realize we have a lot of visitors here and just realize that our church is kind of controlled chaos as kids are with us. And that's what we think life is about. So we want to model that for you and try to learn what that means for us to go on a journey together.

I love the holiday season. I love the songs that we just sang. I love the tree, even though this is not a real one. It looks great, the smell of the holiday seasons.

[3 : 49] Last weekend, I broke one of my cardinal rules, though, in the holiday season. And the cardinal rule is never go down to Causeway Bay on a Saturday during the holiday season.

And so I took Caitlin down and we were shopping and it was just chaos. So we tried to get from Ikea to Times Square and we just, it was just kind of like, and my, Caitlin's like this tall.

And I kept turning around to her and I said, Caitlin, remember, never come down to Times Square on a Saturday during the holidays. Because I had broken the cardinal rule, right? And so I felt like you were there with like 10 billion of your closest friends.

And it was out of control. And so finally, we're sitting in line and no one in line looks at each other. Do you notice that? You're purchasing stuff and people, they're not looking at each other whatsoever.

Their heads are down and they're just kind of sitting there. And so I finally said, well, I said, I tried to make eye contact with people just to talk and no one would make eye contact with me whatsoever. I think they just felt like I was a weird foreigner, right?

[4 : 51] But then all of a sudden, this other lady made eye contact with me. And I said, hey, Merry Christmas. And she said, Merry Christmas. And I just, I said, so how are you doing? And she looked at me and she said, lonely.

And I said, what? And she said, lonely. Isn't it amazing that we can be in such a crowd of people and be lonely?

And I've been thinking about that for two weeks now. And I went home and I thought about this idea of crowded loneliness. I don't know if anybody's ever coined that phrase, but I'll just say it here because I like to make up words anyway.

But I think that we had this sense of crowded loneliness. Do a Google search when you go home today on your internet and you will find at least 50 studies on loneliness within the last month throughout the world.

And it's amazing to see what people are saying. Chinese University put out one last month. And they said that 50% of the people they interviewed felt loneliness.

[6 : 00] To a point where it was causing them mental anguish and physical anguish. The statistics said that 70% of people in Hong Kong don't even walk next door to knock on their neighbor's door to get to know them.

And it was amazing as you read survey after survey this idea of loneliness and how it pervades our world, which is so connected in every other way. But people are walking around with a sense of crowded loneliness.

No one knows them. So when we come to the passage today in verse 23 and we read the words, Emmanuel, God with us.

This is the first time in 2,000 years anybody would have heard those words put together. Because before it was always God is for us.

God is for his children. God goes before us. God is there and he's going for us in battle. But in the advent of Christ's coming, God becoming human, coming down to be with us in the midst of our crowded loneliness.

[7 : 23] As we come to communion today, we celebrate God with us. I don't know what that means to you.

I wonder what it would have meant to that lady who I asked how she's doing if I said God is with you if you want him to be. But as we come to communion, the symbolism, the truth, Matthew 1, Emmanuel, God with us, Matthew 28, the end of that book, go out and do not fear because I am always with you.

I'm going to ask the communion stewards to come forward right now as we take communion.

Communion is not a watermark thing. It's a family of God thing. So if you're here today visiting us and you have made a profession of faith, you've invited Jesus Christ into your life for the forgiveness of your sins, we would invite you to come and take communion with us and be a part of our family because that's what families do.

Now we have little kids here and little kids are going to come up and you know where your children are. You know where they're at in their spiritual journey. If they haven't invited Christ into their life, we would ask you not to let them take these elements but just to teach them.

So far I know in the history of this church we've had three little kids come to faith because their parents have used this time as a teaching moment instead of allowing to eat it like it was candy.

[8 : 53] You know where your children are. The Bible also says that this time is a time for us to examine our hearts and our lives and to ask that question, what does it mean today for me to have God with me?

What does it mean when I walk through the university and I'm about to take my finals this week, next week, and the following week even up to December 25th? What does it mean that God is with you? What does it mean when you walk into your work on Monday and you hear and you think God is with us?

The communion students are going to come up right now and we'll play a little background music and as you think about that when you're ready come up and get the elements take them back to your seat and we'll take them together as a family.

Everybody get a chance to receive the elements? Okay. Crowded loneliness in the middle of the darkness in a small backwoods town of about 130 people God came to break the darkness to shine light and to free us from our loneliness.

No longer God for us but God with us. My prayer and hope is that you would think about what that means as we walk through this day.

[10 : 20] On this last night on earth Christ had one last meal to teach his disciples this lesson. And in this meal in scripture we're told that he takes a loaf of bread and he blesses it and he breaks it and he gives it to his disciples and he said this is my body which is broken for you take and eat the body of Christ.

And a while later we're told in scripture that he takes a cup of wine and he does the same he said this wine represents my blood which is poured out for you it's a new covenant that I give you to bring you back to the family the blood of Christ.

Father we thank you for this day we thank you that we do not have to be lonely because of your son who's come into this world to bring us back to you that you are always with us your spirit is always with us as your children no matter where we go in the joy and in the happiness and in the trials and in the temptations and then for most of us just in the normal slow boring day of life the truth is that you are there and that you're talking to us and that you're with us and so we come before you as a family and we just worship you we praise you we thank you and we pray that we would not forget this truth as we walk amongst the crowds of this day and realize that most of them walk in loneliness and they need to hear the message that we have we love you we praise you in your son Jesus name amen okay so one of my favorite things about being a pastor is to do baby dedications and so we do baby dedications here we don't baptize children at Watermark we basically dedicate children we believe that baptism is for people who have made a personal confession and profession of their faith and so we get a chance to dedicate two babies today a boy and a girl and so I'm going to ask them to come up the parents

Aaron and Haley and Jason and Natalie so we're going to have a crazy day here so let them come on up so we have we have little Gracie and we have Jason Jr and I'm going to ask all the kids will the kids come down front for me please can you help me with this so all the kiddos come on down and you guys can sit down because I need your help okay okay good job guys how you guys doing how you guys doing good are you ready for Christmas yeah so what are you going to get me for Christmas nothing what's up with that okay message I need that hey guys we have a very special thing that we get to do today and maybe your mommy and daddy did it for you and maybe you'll be able to do it personally and so we're going to dedicate a baby to God and show the baby to this new church family and so who would

Aaron and Haley you want to come first come on up come on guys and so this is Aaron and Haley and they've been with us for almost two years now right so it's been great and little Gracie how are you doing yeah we have a bond going on here so this is I feed her diet coke she had her first sip of diet coke last week and we just kind of connected after that so when we bring a couple with their child up that we ask a couple two questions and then we'll ask you guys a question so I'll ask you those questions so in coming today do you confess your faith in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior okay and is it your desire to raise up little Gracie in a household that always points her to Christ and that you too will walk with her model her in the good times and in the hard times what it means and how the gospel has changed you okay can I can I take can you can you come to me wow whoa okay so I'm going to ask you guys a question as a church family look at that look at the babies over there see the babies okay as a watermark church family will you guys commit to come alongside little Gracie to pray for her to encourage her to help her when she gets in trouble which I know that will never happen will it no and to point her to Jesus for as long as you guys are here as a community will you guys commit to that say we will that's great okay hey can you give me a kiss okay that's what Christina did the first time

[15 : 21] I tried to kiss her too hey let me let me let me pray can I pray with you guys yeah Father we just thank you for this dear family we thank you for Gracie we thank you that what a miracle just life is and how you brought them together and brought them here to this church and we just pray your blessing upon them we pray for your protection for your encouragement as husband and wife we pray that it would always be a family that would love you that would do amazing things for your kingdom as they already have and just feel your goodness every day as they look at this little girl we pray for Gracie that she would come to know you at an early age and that she would do mighty

things for your kingdom we love you amen amen amen amen and so then why don't we can we can we clap for that is that good I just think that's yeah okay it's organic right okay so Natalie and Jason hey JR how are you guys doing he's feeling a little under the weather he's under the weather okay so guys can you help me is this what is this right here wow wow

I was just expecting the baby that's you know everything okay okay so Natalie and Jason I'm asking you the same question today in coming and bringing little junior here do you confess your faith in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and is it your desire to walk with him all the days of your life and raising up little junior and all the other juniors that come I heard you guys want like ten in a house six okay so six only six and raising him up in a house that always knows the Lord and loves him is that your commitment okay so should I try to hold him or not you can try okay hey come here buddy I got some Diet Coke for you okay we'll try oh hey hey guys as a church family it's your commitment to help Natalie and Jason to be alongside little JR to encourage him to point him to Christ to speak words of truth and affirmation to him to correct him as he's doing things maybe he shouldn't be doing and to be his aunts and uncles wherever you see him will you commit to that okay wow sweet boy

Father we just thank you for this dear family we thank you for little JR just how you made him and grafted him we thank you for bringing Natalie and Jason into our midst and just how they've already impacted this church family after being here for such a short time Lord we pray that you'd watch over them protect them guard their house guard their homes and let them be a family that always knows you and points them pray for little JR that he would come to know you at an early age and that he would do mighty things for your kingdom Lord we love you and your goodness and we pray all these things in Jesus name Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Wow We gave him a little NyQuil beforehand or something like that okay guys hey guys will you pray with me let's pray Dear Jesus Dear Jesus Thank you for these little friends Thank you for these little friends Help us to be good brothers and sisters to them

Help us to be nice to them Help us to obey our teachers Help us to obey our parents Help us to love Jesus Amen Amen Okay Watermark kids you are dismissed Kids go to class Thank you so much Thank you guys Today's scripture is found in Matthew 1 18-25 Please follow along in your bulletin Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit And her husband Joseph being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame resolved to divorce her quietly But as he considered these things behold an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream saying Joseph son of David do not fear to take Mary as your wife for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit She will bear a son and you shall call his name Jesus for he will save his people from their sins All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet Behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and they shall call his name Emmanuel which means God with us When Joseph woke from sleep he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him He took his wife but knew her not until she had given birth to a son and he called his name Jesus This is God's word You shall call his name Jesus because he will save his people from their sins Every year around this time we have lots of celebrations lots of decorations going up trees with bright lights and candles and you know there's this strange genre of music that starts playing everywhere where there's about 20 songs that have been redone about 2,000 times each and anywhere you go you hear some random combination of these covers of these songs just playing and you're like

[21 : 04] I've heard this song everywhere for the past three weeks What's Going On? and people start singing these songs and people start using words you never hear any other time of year like festive and merry and I don't know other words like that and you know if you come to church you hear lots of messages about Mary and about the virgin birth and about Joseph and his response to it and the shepherds and it's this great time of celebration and so today we're starting our Christmas series here at Watermark Advent series and today we'll be looking specifically at the name of Jesus when the angel tells Joseph that you will call him Jesus because he will save his people from their sins we'll be talking about the importance of the name the significance of the name if you're wondering my name is Eric I'm the youth guy here at Watermark and my name actually means honorable ruler I looked that one up to find out since we're talking about name meetings today it comes from a Scandinavian background

I guess I was just born to be a king or something and interestingly I'm named after my grandmother her name is Penny Knudsen and I know what you're thinking I don't see that connection at all but

actually her maiden name is Erickson and so when my parents had me they wanted to keep that name in the family so they named me Eric after my grandmother and as you think about names names can tell you a lot about a person you know if someone walks through that back door right there and they come over and they start introducing themselves to us as Lucifer we probably think oh don't want to have my three-year-old hanging out with this guy if a three-year-old kid walks through that door and walks up to you and he's like hi my name is Li Ka-shing you know that his parents have some very high expectations for him in life and in the same way the name Jesus has a great significance it's actually it was a fairly common name back in Jesus' day it comes from the same root word as Joshua which is a fairly common name even today and it means Yahweh is salvation for any Israelite living back in the days of Jesus this term Yahweh is salvation was a loaded term it would bring back images in their minds that would point them back to their founding as a nation to the core central place where God had saved his people in the past and that is their slavery in Egypt now if you don't know the story the Israelites were they had moved to the land of Egypt because there was a famine there was food in Egypt so they went down there and they settled there they started to grow and then eventually a pharaoh a king rose up who didn't know the back story of how the Israelites had actually saved Egypt during that famine and he got scared said they might try and take us over and he made them slaves to stop them from having that potential of rising up and rebelling this slavery lasted 400 years generation after generation after generation was born lived and died knowing nothing but slavery for their lives and it didn't appear that the situation was getting any better anytime soon actually things looked to be getting much worse pharaoh in his fear because the Israelites kept growing kept getting more numerous decided that it was a good idea to have the the baby boys killed whenever they were born in Israel he had laws made that when a baby boy is born they throw him in the river and let the baby drown so that there cannot be a rebellion of the Israelites against the Egyptians it was a dark bleak situation with no sign of hope for the Israelites but in this dark bleak situation God appears to an Israelite who is living in exile from Egypt as a shepherd and tells him I want you to go to Egypt and tell Pharaoh the king to let my people go and so this this exile returns his name is Moses he comes to the pharaoh and he says God says to let his people go and pharaoh doesn't want any of that he says no way we got free labor I'm not giving this up you guys are staying actually because you're complaining about your work I'm going to make it even harder and because pharaoh does not listen to God because he stands up for what he wants instead of what God wants God sends a series of ten plagues that systematically destroy the nation of Egypt he turns their water to blood he sends frogs that just overrun the land he sends diseases he sends a huge hailstorm that destroys lots of stuff he sends darkness on the land and finally to top it all off he kills the firstborn son in every Egyptian household yet gives the Israelites a means of saving their sons by sacrificing a lamb in that son's place and finally after the firstborn son in every household in Egypt has died pharaoh says to Moses get out of here we don't want you your trouble leave and the Israelites after 400 years of slavery are free they leave the land of Egypt they're walking through the desert towards their promised land and they're excited and they're walking along they're coming up God has them go around around another country so that they don't have to fight there they go on a on a way that will be safer where they can avoid fighting but this way brings them along towards the sea and right as the Israelites are getting close to the sea the pharaoh changes his mind it says it was a bad idea to send those Israelites away we had a good thing going for us we had free labor for hundreds and hundreds of years and I have just given that up that's not okay we need to get them back so he takes his army and goes out there and chases down the Israelites and right as he catches up to the Israelites the Israelites are against the sea they are trapped the Israelites see the Egyptians coming and they are afraid but God comes down in a cloud and sets himself between the Israelites and the Egyptians and blocks the Egyptians from being able to come up and attack the Israelites God parts the sea and lets his people walk across on dry land and right as they are finishing getting across he moves the cloud forward a little bit so that the Egyptians can come in to the sea and follow the Israelites across and the Israelites are standing on the far shore watching the Egyptians come across the same dry strip of land that they have just walked across themselves only the Egyptians don't get to the other side [28 : 07] God closes the water back in on them and the dead bodies of the Egyptians that have been chasing the Israelites wash up on the shore in front of the Israelites and they know that they are free and saved once and for all that God has brought a salvation to his people that they could not achieve on their own this is the central act of salvation in the mind of any Israel then or now

when God took his people freed them from 400 years of slavery and brought them into ultimately into the promised land that would be their new home and for any Israelite in Jesus' day when they heard the name Jesus when they heard the name Yahweh is salvation this story is the one that would come to mind and throughout the Old Testament God had made many promises to his people that he would send someone who would be a savior he made amazing promises about how this savior would be a king about how this savior would rule justly how he would rule over the nations how he would he would take the line the royal line of David the greatest king of Israel and he would sit on that and reign on that throne forever after the line of David and any Israelite in Jesus' day would have known about these promises they would have been waiting for this savior to come so they had an understanding of the way that God had saved in the past they had an understanding of the promises that God had made about the savior that was to come but then there's a third ingredient that sort of blended together and gave the Israelites a very clear mental picture of what they thought would come when this messiah when this promised one came the third ingredient was their current political situation now for the Israelites in Jesus' day their situation actually very closely resembled what had been happening in Egypt the Israelites in Jesus' day had been political captives to foreign nations for hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years in the Old Testament the nation of Israel actually split into two nations the northern kingdom disobeyed God and got dragged off to captivity and never came back but the southern kingdom in about 587 BC was dragged off as captive by a country called Babylon

Babylon was the world's superpower at the time they came in they destroyed Jerusalem the capital they tore down the temple where the Israelites believed the presence of God dwelt the nation of Israel was destroyed the people were taken captive and brought away as slaves in a foreign land a few years after that a country called Persia came in and took over Babylon the Persians were still rulers over Israel although they were nicer than the Babylonians the Persian kings actually gave the Israelites money to go back and rebuild their temple and rebuild the city walls and the Israelites had a little bit more freedom under them but they were still not free they were still under a foreign power this lasted for a couple hundred years until a country called Greece came in and took over Persia and the Greeks came in and they wanted to unify all the world that they ruled so they one of the aspects of unifying the world was getting the whole world to follow the same religion and to do this they had to destroy the religious practices of all of the places that they conquered so the Greeks came into this newly rebuilt temple that the Israelites had and built an altar to Zeus in the temple of God and to make matters worse they took pigs into the temple and sacrificed them which for the Israelites was a big no-no it made the temple unclean and unusable for the worship of God the Israelites were so upset about this that a family called the Maccabees actually raised a rebellion against the Greeks and were successful in kicking them out for a few years and so the Israelites actually had a brief window where they had freedom but not long after that another world superpower arose and Rome came in and took over the nation of Israel and as Jesus was born Rome was ruling Israel which had been under captivity to foreign rulers for hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years with only a short break of their own independence and the presence of Rome was one that would have been felt daily by the people the Romans had people stationed around the world to enforce their rule on the people that they conquered they had tax collectors who would be in each city and these tax collectors would collect taxes from the people to send to the Roman government so that the Roman government could continue functioning but the tax collectors also charged a little extra so that they could put some in their pocket and keep it also and in addition to tax collectors there were soldiers stationed all around one of the things that the soldiers did is if you couldn't afford to pay your taxes the tax collectors would have the soldiers come in and beat you up a little bit to make you want to pay more next time the soldiers maintained peace which meant crushing any potential rebellions against Rome they were able to enlist people to help them with carrying their equipment in general the presence of Rome was not a good thing in the eyes of the Israelites for their lives and the people in the days of Jesus would have been ever presently aware of the need for salvation from this Roman rule and one night in a manger in a small town of Bethlehem there's a baby born this baby carries a name that means Yahweh is salvation and he is born into a nation that is waiting for salvation he is born into a nation that knows of the ways that God has saved in the past they know of the promises that he will do it again and they see a situation that they are very aware that they need to be saved from and as this baby grows up he starts doing miracles he starts healing the sick raising the dead making the blind

see and people start following him and realizing there's something special about this guy he starts teaching about a kingdom that is not of this world a kingdom of heaven and people think this is it this is the savior king that we have been waiting for he's coming to bring a new kingdom crowds of people start following him to remote places even when he tries to get away from the crowds they follow him at one point the crowds even decide they want to make him their king but he slips away and escapes before they're able to do that and as long as his message sounds to the crowd's ears like what they want to hear they follow him but eventually they start to realize that the savior that they're expecting and the savior that they want is not necessarily what they're seeing in this man they realize that rather than affiliating himself with the politicians and the religious leaders he's hanging out with tax collectors and sinners and prostitutes the people that no one likes the people that no one wants to hang around with he's not raising up an army and starting rebellions he's he's traveling through from town to town just healing people and teaching and then he starts talking about how he's going to suffer and die these are things that are unthinkable for the Jewish mind for their Messiah to do for this promised one who was to come and as he starts saying these things and doing these things the people realize that he's not the man they thought he was going to be and they reject him as their savior and in one of the greatest ironies if not the greatest irony of history the people reject Jesus as their savior and kill him yet through that rejection he is able to accomplish the ultimate salvation that he came to bring for them because as God looked down on his people he saw that they had a very real need for salvation from the Roman rule but he saw that they had an even greater need for salvation from their sin the Bible teaches that sin is our rebellion against God that each of us on our own says in effect to God you don't know what's best for me you don't want what's best for me

I know better than you do I'm going to follow what I think is best instead of what you say is best I'm not going to trust you to rule I'm going to rule and be the God of my own life and we rebel and we disobey God and God saw this and God knows that he created us to find our ultimate joy our ultimate fulfillment our ultimate purpose in life through a relationship with him and that because of this sin because of this rebellion that relationship is broken and the worst part about it is that we are so blinded to this slavery that we have to sin that we don't even realize that we're slaves with the Israelites they were constantly aware of the oppression of the Roman rule in their lives they had daily reminders of the fact that they were not free that they were under someone else's rule there were soldiers marching down the streets there were tax collectors knocking on their doors they knew that they were captives to another nation and yet with sin far too often they and we are blind to the fact that we are captives yet God was not and so he sent a savior to save them from their greatest captor from their sin and to allow them to have a new relationship with him and because that did not fit their expectation of a savior they rejected him they killed him and he accomplished their salvation in that moment of rejection and as I think about this story of the Israelites and how they rejected the savior who came to fulfill their needs yet didn't fulfill necessarily what they wanted him to do it made me start thinking about us how in our world today in our lives are we like these Israelites obviously each of us has problems in our lives you know it's different for everyone but they're there for some people it may be that they're in broken relationships that they want healing they want

[39 : 53] God to be their savior who will bring healing in these broken relationships for some maybe work's not going too well and they want God to step in and be their savior by changing their situation at work for some maybe they're sick they have a disease and they want God to heal them and be their savior from this disease and in each of these situations we have a picture in our minds of the type of savior that we want God to be for us and we often pursue him as that savior rather than as the savior for our sins I was thinking through and I realized that this is something that I do often actually especially last year last Christmas time it was the first Christmas where I didn't get to go home now growing up Christmas was a huge fun important holiday in my family we would have you know mom's side of the family get together on Christmas Eve dad's side got together on Christmas Day we would have parties with huge amounts of food and we would have presents that we would exchange and we get to spend the day with family and it was a great time for making memories memories and last year I didn't get to go home and I looked back and I remembered all of these past

Christmases and all of the wonderful times that I had had during these past Christmases and rather than being thankful for all of the great opportunities that I've had to spend this awesome time with

my family it just made me sad because I was like I don't get to make those memories this year I have to miss out I don't know what I'm doing for Christmas all I know is that I won't be with my family and it was sad and it was tough and I looked to God to heal me from my sadness you know I'd read in the Bible and it talked about how in God's presence there's fullness of joy and I was like I am not feeling this right now I am sad I want God to make me happy and rather than pursuing God as a savior for my sin I pursued him as a savior from my sadness and here's the thing it's absolutely very 100% true that in

God's presence there is fullness of joy but that fullness of joy is found in a renewed relationship with God not necessarily in having the life circumstances that we prefer and because I was so blinded to this fact I just wanted him to change my circumstances to make me have life the way that I wanted life and so I wanted him to do that and when that didn't happen I thought God must be upset with me or I must be doing something wrong because I'm not feeling the way that I think I'm supposed to be feeling I'm not seeing God as the type of savior that I want him to be for me and I think that in some way each of us does this in our lives it may not be in that exact situation but each of us has ways that we look to God as a savior to save us on our terms from the things that we want salvation from rather than from our sin and really when we do this we are turning

God into an idol we may think that we are following him that we are obeying him that we are serving him but in reality we're following ourselves obeying what we want serving ourselves and trying to transform God into a puppet that we can control by doing the right things that he gives us what we want we view him as a vending machine if I put in this much prayer this much Bible reading this much church attendance this much service in church activities then you better send something out when I click the button and we turn God into an idol even though we think that we are obeying him we think that God that we are doing the right thing we are not and so I thought through what are some symptoms in our lives that we are doing this that we are seeking in God the savior that we define that we want rather than the savior that he has promised to be and the first sign that

I came up with that we're doing this is that we are willing to follow and obey him only as long as the ways in which we are following and obeying contribute to the end that we desire we're willing that leads in a direction we don't want to go we say forget about it this is exactly what happened with the Israelites in Jesus day he comes along he starts talking about a kingdom he starts doing miracles the people start following him and then he starts talking about how if you want to follow him you have to take up a cross and follow him you have to take the instrument that was used for the death sentence for executions and follow him why would you want to do that so they rejected him they stopped following him and in a lot of ways we can do that too we look at God and we say oh you know in God there is fullness of joy in God there is healing and so I'm going to follow him because [45 : 28] I'm sad or I'm sick or I have this broken relationship or I have kids who won't obey and I want him to fix these problems for me so I'm going to do what he says I'm going to read my Bible I'm going to church I'm going to pray all of those are good things but ultimately if we're doing them for our results rather than for his we're using him as an idol we're pursuing him and when he says to obey in a way that doesn't go in the direction that we want we stop and we say I'm going to go back because you're not giving me the results that I want the second sign that we're following God as the savior that we want rather than as the one that he has promised to be is that we view something other than sin as our primary problem in life now don't get me wrong like there are a number of other legitimate real big problems in each of our lives it was the same back in Jesus day the people had they were poor they were hungry they were under the oppressive rule of the

Romans they had these real needs and they saw these real needs but they saw these real needs at the expense of recognizing the problem of their sin and so rather than seeing Jesus as the savior for their sin they wanted him to be the savior from all this other stuff because they saw something other than sin as their primary problem they turned they tried to turn Jesus into a savior that was different than the type of savior that he had come to be and this can happen very easily in our lives as that I came up with that we're trying to transform God into the savior that we want rather than the one that he has promised is that we place conditions on whether we believe that God truly loves us in the Bible in Romans chapter 8 it says that that Jesus is the ultimate proof that

God loves us that there is a tangible event that happened in history where the son of God came down became a man lived a perfect life died the death that we deserve for our sin and rose again that this is something we can historically look back on and see as proof that God loves us because he has saved us and that ultimately it's nice when we have convenient life circumstances but when

circumstances don't go the way we want that's not grounds for questioning whether God loves us because God proved his love for us in sending Jesus because even if I don't get to go home for Christmas even if we're sick and God doesn't heal us even if we have a job and we don't have a job and we can't find one even if we have this messed up relationship and things just are not getting better

God's love for us is not dependent on changing those God's love for us is dependent on the finished work of Christ on the cross and so we don't need to question whether God loves us we have the evidence of that in the cross and yet when we try and transform Jesus into the Savior that we want we begin to question these things that God has already proven and demonstrated to us and as we begin to understand this as we begin to see the type of Savior that Jesus truly is we'll begin to see that in being this type of Savior he doesn't ignore our other problems in life he actually works in those situations as well but often he does it in ways that we never ever would have expected so going back to

Jesus day the people wanted freedom from Rome they wanted Jesus to come in to raise up an army to march in to kick out the Roman soldiers to sit down on the king's throne and to rule them and Jesus did not do that but he did give his people who did follow him a freedom from Rome but in a way totally different than they would have expected as he came in he started teaching about this alternate kingdom he called it the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven he started teaching about what life in this kingdom looks like how people who live in this kingdom act how they conduct relationships how they deal with their money and their time and every aspect of life and he called his followers to live life in this alternate kingdom following him life in this kingdom did not mean that you stopped being ruled by

[50 : 44] Rome but it meant that at your deepest most foundational level of identity you were defined by this kingdom of heaven rather than by the Roman empire and so the followers of Jesus they did not automatically get set free from having the Roman guards marching down their streets and the tax collectors knocking on their doors but they had a knowledge and an understanding that their submission to Rome did not define them their submission to Christ did and this is a theme that is repeated throughout the New Testament that there is this alternate kingdom that Christ followers are in this kingdom free from the other kingdoms of the world that try to define us Paul talks about this in Philippians chapter 3 he says our citizenship is in heaven and from it we await a savior the Lord Jesus Christ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself now this isn't written to a tough at times living in this world it may be tough having these other people rule you but our citizenship the way that we are defined is not by these earthly rulers it is by

God and his kingdom and even if we suffer in this life even if things go miserably in this life we still have the hope that we can cling to throughout this difficulty that he's going to step in that external situation as well but he doesn't promise that he will he doesn't guarantee that he will but he promises that he will be with us like Tobin was saying earlier he will be with us through any situation I was brainstorming what it could look like for this type of a situation today where someone has a problem they step in they trust in

Jesus and then they see an alternate solution from what they would have expected I thought of our university students they have exams coming up soon and so I want you to picture a university student been having rough grades this semester he's got the exams coming up and he knows he needs to do really well on these exams last night I was walking by a restaurant and there was some university students having a super pass party because they don't want to just pass their exams they want to super pass their exams and so he is attending the super pass party he is getting excited because he really needs to super pass his exams in order to make it through this semester and he feels that if he does not do this then he has no worth or value as a student and he has no worth or value as a human being and he has exams coming up soon but in the process of studying for the exams someone comes along and tells him about

Jesus and he recognizes his need to have his sin forgiven he trusts in Jesus studies as hard as he can goes in and totally bombs the exam like he fails miserably not even close to super passing not even close to passing forget that he gets his results back as he looks at his results he realizes that he still has worth that he still has hope that his life is not defined by the grades that he has gotten but by the fact that Christ loves him regardless of his grades that his forgiveness in Christ that his identity in Christ is not found in being a straight A student but it's found in the fact that Christ loved

him and died for him as we see that Jesus is the savior for our sins we see that God works in the other situations in our lives too and sometimes he does change our tangible circumstances sometimes people pray for people and people are physically healed diseases go away relationships are restored

God works and gives us jobs but ultimately the definition of his love for us is not found in these circumstances it's found in this baby who came who lived this perfect life as Yahweh is salvation who died the death that we deserve to purchase us freedom from our sin and to give us this true hope that will not change based on our life circumstances but that is a tangible guarantee of God's love for us and the fact that God is with us as long as we live let's pray father we thank you for your love for us we thank you for this time of year when we can celebrate the birth of this baby Jesus when we can celebrate the fact that you are salvation that you have come to your people to save us from our sins and that just as

[56 : 34] Jesus came to save his people then that he comes and offers us salvation now we pray that each of us would see you as the savior for our sins that we would recognize the problem that our sin is and that we would trust in you and that through that trust we would see the hope that you give in all other areas of our lives as well pray all these things in Jesus name Amen thanks Eric hey we I just want to share something things really quickly so I just need your attention for like three minutes three minutes and then I'm going to pray for us and we have Starbucks is open in the back so just grab back there it's going to be open all December so if you want to come early it's open at 930 get a cup coffee and hang out then that'd be great a couple things one is as we think about going forward what we've said as a church is we're here to give everyone an opportunity to hear about

Jesus to break out of the loneliness that they're walking into to give them hope and what that means in our life in next Saturday there are a couple huge events I just want you focus with me really quickly from 2 to 5 at the community center we have Michael Ramson coming and Michael is one of the best communicators in the world in apologetics he's been spoken to UN spoken to many countries and heads of states and he's going to be at the community center from 2 to 5 next Saturday and we're going to do a seminar on how to engage and reach your neighbor with the message of the gospel so to get into limited seat engagement because we don't want to pack it out but we want people to be able to engage ask questions and all that so these tickets right there are out there at the table so Sylvie has these so get one of these because you're going to want to go to that you're welcome to invite friends to that people who are wherever they're at in their journey with Christ you're welcome community center into a home we're going to bring in four or five turkeys and have Christmas meal Christmas music Christmas gathering there and so it's going to be a great time to take a break if you're in university come eat or anybody grab some friends but then at six to nine and then about 7 15 or so Michael is going to share a message about 20 minutes about the meaning of friends who are not believers yet we actually don't want you to come unless you bring some friends you've been praying with and engaging with and so we want you to think of people pray with people people you've been talking about and invite them to this great meal great time of fellowship hangout time there'll be games there'll be presents there'll be all these things there at 7 10 or so

Michael is going to give a talk on the true meaning of Christmas and why it's there and afterwards he's going to open up for about 40 minutes of Q&A; so if any of your friends have questions about why should they believe or what is the meaning of Christmas or is it valid or was Jesus really born all of these things he's going to be able to engage in those things and so to sign up for that you need to go online on the front web page watermarkchurch.hk and you'll click on the little flash that shows up and you'll get one of these and so you'll need to sign up online for this because again we have a limited number of seats available we want to make it an intimate gathering but where everybody can engage everybody in that does that make sense so that's six to nine and we want you to come and bring friends in your workplace or at school or people you've been talking to and just trying to figure out what is another thing I can engage them with in their world so they can hear about Christ and what it means to me and what it can mean to them so go online click on the front webpage and get that so that's on next

Saturday okay so then on next Sunday when you come in here at 915 we've been having this foundations class at 915 and 1215 we guys Chris has been leading it with Alfie and so today was the second session of that and it will be a session at 1215 immediately following this we want

everyone in the church to go through this foundations class what 915 next Sunday we have one of the top communicators and speakers from Oxford coming in with Michael and he's going to do a session and a seminar on engaging your neighbors and people specifically in the issue of pain and suffering his name is Vince Vitale I've heard him he's amazing he's like 28 he has two PhDs he's an excellent communicator that's at 915 Sunday morning we're going to be meeting in the theater so you'll come in there again this is a great opportunity for you to hear from some of the best in the world to be able to understand how you can engage people one of our we think our responsibilities as a staff is to help you be successful as you talk to your neighbor about

[61 : 55] Jesus and so these are just great opportunities for that to happen immediately following church out you gotta go out this door because we're gonna have a city church wide meal so we're bringing in food gathering we do it about every five weeks it's about I usually say a picnic they always give me a hard time it's not a picnic it's just we're shipping food in here we usually have about 300 people and we're gonna be hanging out there just kind of fellowshiping eating and spending time with each other so immediately after church you can't get out that door we electrified it you can't get out that door you gotta go out this door and so we want you to come invite a friend who's never been to church don't invite people at other churches they need to be at their church and serve in their church we don't want people from other churches we are reaching people who've never been in church and that's the heart of water mark that's why

God allowed us to be here every Sunday and we want to be faithful to that so invite a friend who's not in church already and then don't go out that door go out that door and there'll be a meal and food and Vince will be here later on for the meal and people don't bring any more clothing because we were packed out it's amazing it was humbling to see how much clothes came in the guy said we don't need more clothes we need food so next

Sunday is going to be the last Sunday we're going to collect food so if you bring just a can a can of beans whatever noodles there's noodles there's rice there's fried noodles there's spaghetti noodles there's beans there's pork there's hot dogs all of this bring that and just put one can there and that will go to feeding people homeless people and refugees in our area as a church that don't have food to eat so that ends next Sunday so please bring that at the book table there's some great books they're all sold at probably like a 20% loss but for us it's more important to get them into your hands for the some of you thinking they're like accountants you're like okay don't do that they're giving away as gifts but there's some great devotionals this is blackabees experiencing god day to day devotional actually christina reads that every day and we mentioned this jesus calling devotion if i had the money i'd buy this and give everybody in the church one of these as a gift it's brand new it's a great tool for devotion i just got a hundred of them in my house yesterday this book called sticky faith is actually i think the best book i've ever read or heard about that talks about how you engage youth and help them children walk a lifetime with god and so the youth department uses it in our church the pastors use it the parents were training on parenting use it i bought a whole bunch extra ones there and there's a great book on just teaching your children and how to let them walk with the lord for a lifetime not kick out their faith once they go off to university and this is one of the best books there's a survey of about 30,000 people and several hundred churches so please pick that up this book is one of the best books i've ever read about engaging people who have a lot of questions in their faith and so if you're working with people in the workplace or business place and they have questions about pain and suffering questions about is

Christianity relevant what about science is there questions about all these things this is Keller's book the reason for god and we have a whole bunch of these for sale again this is a great tool to engage people in your workplace and finally these are for free and these I think cost like 50 Hong Kong and this is just manga messiah it's just it's just the story of the bible written in comic book form and kids love this and so I just pick up don't pick up like 70 like Angeline did last time because we need to have enough for everybody but if you're going to give out 70 that's great I'm giving you a hard time but you can pick 70 up but I just give these away in my neighborhood we have Christmas programs and food parties and we give these away to kids kids love these things and both of these there's a series of like six of them they're a great way to engage children in your neighborhood or your children with the message of the gospel and so again these are just tools that are available so that you can be successful as you walk with the Lord and present the hope that we have as a church is that clear kind of okay good is that clear enough yeah okay so this one is for the two to five the teaching time you can invite anybody this one online turkey dinner tickering meal click on

that and sign up for that and with that let me just pray for us father we just thank you for this day we come to you and we just realize that we come to you and we offer nothing everything that we need you've already given your son and so we come to you as beggars that your throne room and you've given us the most precious gift the cure for our disease which is going to kill us and not only kill us but separate us from you for eternity you've given us the cure to sin and lord we just come before you and we just worship you and we thank you we realize in our world that the people that we engage in they walk in darkness they walk in loneliness they will try to be consumers and worship things all around them this season it's amazing how much people will fight over a 20% sale but when they hear of true life true hope truth that takes away loneliness often they just walk in darkness so lord

I pray as a church that we would be a church that would share this with our neighbors the 70% that we never go next door and knock on their door pray that we would pray for one to two people to invite to these outreaches this next week into the church launch on Sunday lord help us even as we are imperfect we don't have all the answers and I know that you don't expect us to but your son does help us to present Jesus to them help us to allow them to deal with him in a way that opens their eyes to the truth of your love your mercy and your grace we thank you for this venue that you've given us we pray for the offering that we're about to whatever we receive we know that whatever comes in here that you would multiply it and it will be used towards all of these outreaches that are about to happen and all that will continue to happen through Christmas more importantly lord we just worship you and we look forward to when we get to heaven and we see just a glimpse of what's happened here and how we've been faithful and how you've used that faithfulness and sometimes even our unfaithfulness to grow the kingdom of

[70 : 02] God so lord we love you we need you and we pray all these things for your son Jesus holy name amen god bless you we'll see you saturday at the community center saturday night for turkey and we'll see you here sunday oh we have one more thing look at your bulletin on the way out