

Empire Church of the Brethren  
Sunday Service Sermons

07 December 2025

God For Us

Text: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor". *Luke 4:18-19*.

How wonderful is that proclamation?

Jubilee year, something that the Hebrews never did as God instructed them to do.

But Jesus is bringing in the Jubilee Year.

Are you aware that Christmas answers the question as to the nature of God?

Christmas shows us what God is really like.

But in a way we would never have thought of doing.

If we were God and wanted to come to earth to show people what he was like we would have come in power and authority.

Like an unexpected parent catching the child with their hand in the cookie jar.

But that would not have been good news.

Way too often God is portrayed as a resident policeman who snoops around to find sinful activities.

Or he is seen as a cosmic killjoy who is up in the sky sniffing out where anybody is doing anything fun and then snuffing it out.

Or he is seen as the big boss who controls everything and everyone as pawns.

In other words, he is seen as bad news when he comes on the scene.

Those ideas about God are projections on God what we saw in our parents when we were young.

We felt that their love and favor were conditional.

As long as we were good, we felt safe; but when we erred, punishment was sure to follow.

And thus we expect the coming of God to mean judgment and punishment because we have certainly erred.

We know that we all, like sheep, have gone astray, that each of us has turned to their own way.

We feel guilty through and through.

We feel guilty because we are guilty of so much.

We feel estranged from God.

We feel that he is against us, that all he wants to do is punish us.

We expect God to come as a proud ruling judge.

If that describes you then let me tell you that it does not have to be that way.

God became flesh.

But things are not as we would expect.

When God came to earth, he did not come as a proud and arrogant ruler.

He came in weakness and dependency as a tiny baby.

We would not have expected the incarnation, God becoming flesh.

Why God became flesh.

Nor would we have expected the favor of his coming.

We expect punishment.

We feel that we deserve no better, and we are right.

We deserve to perish in flames, but Jesus came not to condemn but to redeem, not to punish but to forgive, not to intimidate but to inspire, not to sacrifice but to be sacrificed, not to be feared but to be loved.

He came not as adversary but as advocate, not as foe but as friend, not as enemy but as brother, not as condemner but as savior.

In the fourth chapter of his gospel, Luke records Jesus' inaugural sermon, Jesus' own statement of purpose.

What kind of minister would he be?

What kind of Savior?

What is God like?

Why the incarnation?

Why Christmas?

The Lord had anointed Jesus, first, to preach good news to the poor.

The poor are the socially inferior.

Jesus proclaimed that the poor, those persons who view themselves as inferior and are treated as such, are to hear the good news of wholeness, equality, and authenticity.

What a relevant word to us twenty-first-century people who feel as though God has caught us with our hand in the cookie jar.

We feel of no significance, of no worth, guilty.

We expect God to treat us as inferiors, as indeed we are.

But no, he has come to preach Good News to us.

He has come to proclaim that we can know and relate to him from the position of children.

That is good news indeed!

Jesus was further anointed to proclaim the recovery of sight for the blind.

Here blindness is used in both a literal and figurative sense.

People are blind to God's words and deeds, and Jesus has come to open their eyes to see what God is really like.

The Son wanted to communicate to Pharisee types who felt that God was holy and moral and had to be bought off with good behavior, and to publican types who felt that God was so holy and moral that there was no possibility of a relationship with the "Holy One of Israel."

To these people Jesus proclaimed the good news that God is for us and that we do not have to earn his favor.

The anointed One also proclaimed, "the year of the Lord's favor", which was begun in the person and work of Jesus.

All that Jesus has proclaimed is based on the fact that it is the year of the Lord's favor.

Inferiors are given significance, prisoners are released, and blind sinners see what God is really like, because it is the year of the Lord's favor.

God is for us.

He is on our side.

That is good news indeed!

What the incarnation means today.

What does all of this ancient history have to do with us today?

The incarnation means, first, that human kind is guilty.

The presupposition of the movement of God to man is that there is a gulf between God and man because of our sin.

Therefore, God comes.

Sin is taken seriously.

The mighty gulf of estrangement, alienation, fear, resentment, and guilt that exists between God and humankind can be dealt with in only one way: the incarnation of the Word.

Our guilt made incarnation necessary, and incarnation makes out guilt obvious.

Incarnation means, second, that humankind needs God, that people cannot move to God or attain the majesty of God on their own.

The self-movement of God to humans is needed because people at their own initiative will never move toward God.

But God did not wait for people to seek him.

God moves to people first, he seeks rather than is sought.

Incarnation further means that humankind is loved by God.

God's love is constant, not conditional.

Witness his love for the rebellious children of Israel.

Remember *Romans 5:8*: “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us”.

Incarnation means that humankind is summoned to return.

The “coming” of God to humans always involves the summons of a person to return to God.

God did not become flesh for thrills or kicks, to masquerade or to play a game.

He came to redeem, and thus he demands a response.

So Christmas answers the question, “What is God like?”

Christmas did not happen how we would have expected, a baby; nor why we would have expected, to proclaim God’s favor.

With notes loud and clear, the manger proclaims that God is on our side!

Hallelujah!

What a Savior!