

## The Emmanuel Exchange

*Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. - Matthew 1:23*

Working in a hospital in my youth, I often found myself on duty most major holidays. Being a Nurse's Aide, I was part of the skeleton crew on for Christmas, New Years and the Fourth. The floors were often quiet, with few if any procedures or treatments scheduled. We would spend our time with patients who would much rather be at home, but stuck with us as a consolation prize. I remember the quiet of the hospital in those days. Chaos and commotion was outside, but inside you could almost hear a pin drop.

At Christmas time, our lives might have plenty of chaos and commotion. Do you have a million things to do between now and the 25<sup>th</sup>? Are you feeling like you are constantly chasing after something? But how do we know when we have caught the thing we are chasing?

God's story tells us that the good news of Christmas is best received in a hushed setting. One cannot rush the story of the Christ Child any more than one can rush through a time of worship and devotion. It's our quiet time with God that allows the quiet meaning of Christmas to penetrate our hard hearts.



Mary and Joseph each had a separate encounter with God to guide them in their understanding of the Christ child. How about us? What guides and informs us in our hectic journey through life? We need the commotion to stay outside, while the peace of Christ remains inside the rooms and hallways of our hearts.

The Word informs us that in Jesus, an exchange happening. Christ will exchange his heavenly garments for the tarnished garments of sin. Not that He sinned at all, but that He absorbed the punishment for sin on the cross. It's the Emmanuel exchange. In similar fashion, God exchanged his own Son, offered Him up for us all, in order that we might have the hope of everlasting life.

In the shadow of the manger, our problems and tribulations seem quite small. When I hear the story of the Christ child, my selfish desires appear so trivial. Should we march right into God's story thinking we are welcome? ...Wait a minute, welcome? We are the whole reason why He came. Amen.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! -- Pastor Chris