

Keep Calm...Christmas is Coming

God is Here

Matthew 1:18-23

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Text Introduction: Keep Calm and Carry On was a poster developed and distributed by the British government in 1939 before the Second World War broke out. The intention was to build morale in the wake of widely anticipated bombing air raids. The poster and theme was rather forgotten because of the decimation of the war, but about 2000, the poster was re-discovered and as you know has suddenly appeared everywhere.

This is the theme of our Singing Christmas Tree this year. In light of Jesus bursting into our world to bring hope, peace, joy, salvation, and a whole host of other things, as believers in Him, we of all people should keep calm and carry on. Today, I want you to think with me that we can keep calm because, in Christmas, we have the reminder that God is Here!

Text:¹⁸ The birth of Jesus Christ came about this way: After His mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, it was discovered before they came together that she was pregnant by the Holy Spirit.¹⁹ So her husband Joseph, being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her publicly, decided to divorce her secretly.

²⁰ But after he had considered these things, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because what has been conceived in her is by the Holy Spirit.²¹ She will give birth to a son, and you are to name Him Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins."

²² Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

²³ See, the virgin will become pregnant
and give birth to a son,
and they will name Him Immanuel,

which is translated "God is with us."

Introduction: The verse in Matthew 1:23 is an actual quotation from Isaiah 7:14. Isaiah speaks this prophecy to King Ahaz in a very difficult time for Judah. Let me take a moment to walk you through that background. After the reign of Solomon, that great king of Israel, Israel was divided into two separate kingdoms—Israel in the North and Judah in the South. Israel turned from God and was overtaken first. It is in the Southern kingdom that Isaiah speaks and where Ahaz is king. Ahaz had reinstated worship of a pagan god. Because of his disobedience and wickedness, surrounding kings were threatening to take over that territory. Instead of depending upon the one true living God, Ahaz turns to the help of the Assyrian king, Tiglath-Pileser. Ahaz had plundered the Temple and given the gold and silver to buy Tiglath-Pileser's allegiance. God sent Isaiah to Ahaz for a talk. Ahaz refused to listen. It is at this point that Isaiah prophesies about the virgin born child Immanuel. God's plan will not be thwarted. It has always been God's desire to not leave us or forsake us—to be with us.

Immanuel means God with us, which means...

God's Presence is Always with us.

From the beginning, God's plan was for His presence to be with us.

- Deuteronomy 31:6 ~ "...for the Lord your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you."
Context of verse: These are actually the words from Moses as he passes the mantle of leadership to Joshua. These are similar words that God gave to Moses.
- John 14:16,18 ~ "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever. I will not leave you as orphans."
Context: Jesus to disciples before His Death.
- *Matthew 28:20 ~ "...and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*
Context: Jesus to disciples before Ascension.

The knowledge of God's presence is both a promise and a warning. Warning because we must acknowledge that God sees what we do, hears what we say, and knows what we think.

I heard recently Dr. Waylon Bailey say, "Two things have been true in my life because I am a Christian. I always have hope. And second, I have never been alone—lonely sometimes, but never alone."

God's Power is Available for us.

- Acts 1:8 ~ "but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you..."
- 2 Peter 1:3 ~ "seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness..."
- Ephesians 1:18-19 ~ "I pray that ...you will know...what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe."

Amazing, isn't it, that the same power that raised Christ Jesus from the grave is made available to us?

God will be personally active in our lives.

- Romans 8:31~ "If God is for us, who can be against us?"

A little later in Isaiah (9:6-7), Isaiah goes deeper into his prophecy about this coming Messiah, when he says,

For a child will be born for us, a son will be given to us, and the government will be on His shoulders. He will be named
Wonderful Counselor
Mighty God
Eternal Father
Prince of Peace.

This is how He, the One who is Immanuel, the One who is here with us, will be personally active in our lives.

So What? Isaiah 7:1-16, especially v. 4 (Points taken from HCSB)

- Calm down
- Be Quiet—Like the idea of the Psalmist—Be still and know that I am God.
- Don't be afraid
- Don't be faint-hearted

Only knowing God as Immanuel makes this possible!

Keep Calm and Carry on! A little later on during the war, Winston Churchill distributed a leaflet that said, "If invasion comes..." Stand firm and carry on." Spiritually speaking, our world has been invaded, but remember, "Stand Firm and Carry On!" God is with us and He is for us.