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O Come, Redeemer!

Series: O Come!

**Rev. Andrew Hawkins, Ph.D.
The Village Church
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I. Introduction

- A. I think it's very difficult for us, in southwest Florida, to identify with the scene which introduces Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy to the magical land of Narnia in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*
 - 1. Narnia, you see, is under the reign of the evil White Witch
 - a. And under her spell, in Narnia there is "always winter but never Christmas"
 - 2. For us, of course, it's rarely winter even though it's not always Christmas
 - a. Fortunately, this past week we had about 24 hours of something that at least reminded us that there is such a thing as winter
 - b. That, plus the recent time change when darkness comes earlier, feeds our darker dispositions
 - c. In Shell Point we saw hooded sweatshirts and even some actual coats come out of storage, albeit briefly
 - 3. For Narnia, however, there hadn't been Christmas for 100 years
 - a. So the children long for the coming of the lion Aslan, the Christ-figure in the story
 - b. Who will help redeem Narnia from the evil influence where winter, with its frigid atmosphere and marks of death dominate this world
 - c. But where a longing for the joy of Christmas drives the story
- B. "Always winter, but never Christmas" is a picture of Advent
 - 1. **Isaiah 9:2** (ESV) —
 - a. 2 The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
 - b. those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.
 - 2. The period in the church year, the weeks preceding Christmas, which we know as Advent, have historically been marked by preparation for the coming of Christ, the incarnation of the Son of God
 - a. Preparation has traditionally been marked by fasting, repentance, contemplation
 - b. A longing for future light in the midst of darkness
 - 3. Now we, especially here in the USA, have done our best to entertain ourselves out the darkness
 - a. We party, we eat, we shop, we watch holiday specials and feel-good movies – we do nearly anything to distract us from the darkness of our times

- b. Where loss is the norm
 - c. Where we are reminded of the wickedness of humanity every day in the news cycle
 - d. Where broken relationships remind us of the fragility of our human condition
 - 4. And yet, in and through our longing, there is hope
 - a. The promise of the coming of Christ drives our story forward
- C. Perhaps aging Simeon and Anna provide us a picture of such longing
 - 1. “Righteous and devout” is how Luke describes Simeon (Luke 2.25-26)
 - a. Long in years, no doubt, but his hope is buoyed by the Spirit’s promise that he would not see death until he sees the Lord’s Christ
 - b. And when Mary and Joseph bring the child in the temple, he exclaims, “Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace...”
 - 2. And then Anna, who has spent decades after the early death of her husband, a fixture in the temple, fasting and praying as she longed for the redemption of Israel (Luke 2.36-37)
 - a. Once she meets the Christ-child, her penitent longing turns to thanksgiving
 - b. And an overflowing of evangelism, as she witnesses to anyone who passes by
 - 3. Advent is meant to capture that kind of longing
 - a. Where the world is not as it should be
 - b. Where darkness seems to prevail
 - c. But yet where the promises of God show the prospects of light
 - d. And our contemplations turn from despair to hope
- D. In Advent we sing Advent songs
 - 1. Now, that’s not all we sing
 - a. We do sing songs of Christmas, too
 - b. After all, there is the anticipation of glory, genuine hope
 - 2. But there are Advent hymns
 - a. They are not always in our top 10 lists
 - b. Not always our favorites
 - c. Penitent contemplations are not our strong suit
 - d. We’d rather sing the Hallelujahs with the angels
- E. But occasionally, there are Advent hymns that are beloved by the people of God
 - 1. And likely one of the most beloved is “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”
 - a. We just sang it a few moments ago
 - 2. It’s actually one of the oldest texts that we still sing in the church today
 - a. It’s original Latin dates back to the vespers services of the monks in the days leading up to Christmas
 - b. In the 8th and 9th Centuries, in the style of plainchant antiphons, where a kind of call and response singing characterized these services

- c. The songs fueled the fasting and penitent contemplations of the church
 - 3. The English translation we use today by John Mason Neale, coupled with the familiar tune Veni Emmanuel, has dominated English hymnody
 - a. And is used in nearly every Christian denomination that recognizes Advent
 - 4. It's tune is normally sung in E minor, which is meant to capture the essence of the Advent spirit of reflection, repentance, and personal preparation for the coming of the incarnation
 - a. There is a contemplative spirit about the verses – a certain gravitas weighs on our souls
 - b. And yet, at the same time, in keeping with the hope of Advent, each verse concludes with “Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel; shall come to Thee of Israel!”
- F. Even more, like so many of the great hymns that have stood the test of time, O Come, O Come Emmanuel teaches
 - 1. A great deal of the theology of the Christ, His person and work, are explained in the hymn
 - a. And hymns have often been better teachers of theology than, well, us preachers!
 - 2. So I thought, for this Advent, we would explore the verses of this great Advent hymn
 - a. One verse for each week of Advent

II. O Come, Emmanuel

- A. Each verse of O Come highlight one of the titles the Bible attributes to Messiah Jesus
 - 1. In this first verse it's Emmanuel
 - a. “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”
 - 2. Other verses may not be as familiar as titles of Christ, but they are still very significant – and we have much to learn from each of them
 - a. Dayspring in verse 2
 - b. Wisdom in verse 3
 - c. And Desire of nations in verse 4
 - 3. Those are just the verses in our hymnal
 - a. There are other verses in other hymnals historically
 - b. But these will be the ones we will consider
- B. Of course, “Emmanuel” issues from a familiar Messianic prophecy
 - 1. **Isaiah 7:14** (ESV) —
 - a. 14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.
 - 2. In its original context, in which God is speaking to the weak, recalcitrant king of Judah, Ahaz, we don't really get the sense of its Messianic import

- a. God, through Isaiah, tries to encourage Ahaz by telling Ahaz to ask for a sign
 - b. But Ahaz refuses!
 - c. So God gives him a sign anyway – the virgin bearing a son, calling his name Immanuel
3. It's possible that Ahaz misses a moment of great redemptive significance by refusing to seek a sign
 - a. For the sign God gives him turns out to be of great Messianic significance – and he misses it!
 - b. Let us not miss this great sign!
4. Anyway, Matthew records this very sign as a testament to the angel's visitation of Joseph
5. **Matthew 1:20–21** (ESV) —
 - a. 20 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.
 - b. 21 She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”
6. Then Matthew applies this episode as a fulfillment of the prophetic text from Isaiah
7. **Matthew 1:22–23** (ESV) —
 - a. 22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:
 - b. 23 “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us).
- C. **“Emmanuel – God with us”**
 1. If ever there was a Messianic title which carries the people of God all through the Bible, this would be it!
 - a. For “God with us” is a strong thread through the whole tapestry of scripture
- D. The story starts all the way back with the story of Joseph
 1. You'll recall that Joseph had more than his share of dark moments
 - a. How because of his dreams, he was sold into slavery by his brothers
 - b. Taken by Ismaelites into Egypt and sold into the household of Pharaoh's officer Potiphar, where he rose to a position of great responsibility
 - c. But that when he refused the advances of Potiphar's wife, he was thrown into the slammer, confined to Pharaoh's prison
 - d. And yet, even in that dark moment, he grew into a position of great responsibility; he was put in charge of all the other prisoners
 2. Eventually, he interprets the dreams of two other prisoners, both of which come true
 - a. One prisoner is restored to his position; the other is executed

3. Even that becomes a dark time, as the freed prisoner forgot about Joseph for an extended period of time
 - a. Until Pharaoh has a dream, and it reminds the restored cupbearer that there was this prisoner who could interpret dreams
4. So Pharaoh consults Joseph, who in great wisdom, not only interprets the dream, but provides a strategy for Egypt to prepare for a widespread famine
 - a. And thus make Egypt, and by implication, Pharaoh, rich beyond his imagination
5. But what ties that story together is that, in all of Joseph's predicaments, the Bible tells us that "the Lord was with him"
6. So the presence of God with Joseph took his times of darkness – which were manifold – and turned them into times of great blessing
 - a. Eventually putting him in position to be able to care for his family when they sought relief during the great famine
7. Joseph knew Emmanuel
 - a. He knew that God was with him
- E. Then there was Moses
 1. Moses was faced with these people – the Israelites, who had grown from a family in the time of Joseph into a great nation
 - a. These people whom God had rescued from oppression from Egypt
 - b. And they found themselves in the wilderness
 - c. On the way to land of Canaan – the Promised Land
 2. Moses has this encounter with God (Exodus 33)
 - a. God was fed up with these rebellious people by this point
 3. Exodus 33:2–3 (ESV) —
 - a. 2 I will send an angel before you, and I will drive out the Canaanites, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.
 - b. 3 Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; but I will not go up among you, lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people."
 4. That was devastating news
 - a. God was sending Israel – but He was finished with them
 - b. He wouldn't go with them
 5. Exodus 33:4 (ESV) —
 - a. 4 When the people heard this disastrous word, they mourned, and no one put on his ornaments.
 6. Well, that was devastating to Moses as well
 - a. So Moses tries to intercede and get God to change His mind
 7. Exodus 33:12–13 (ESV) —
 - a. 12 Moses said to the LORD, "See, you say to me, 'Bring up this people,' but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. Yet you have said, 'I know you by name, and you have also found favor in my sight.'

- b. 13 Now therefore, if I have found favor in your sight, please show me now your ways, that I may know you in order to find favor in your sight. Consider too that this nation is your people.”
 - 8. Moses: Look God – these are your people! I can’t deal with them by myself. You need to send someone with us!
 - 9. **Exodus 33:14** (ESV) —
 - a. 14 And he said, “My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.”
 - 10. And then, see what Moses says in response:
 - 11. **Exodus 33:15–16** (ESV) —
 - a. 15 And he said to him, “If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here.
 - b. 16 For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? Is it not in your going with us, so that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth?”
 - 12. Moses: I you don’t go with us, don’t send us!
 - a. That’s how important the presence of God is for His people
 - F. And of course, fast forward to Isaiah’s time
 - 1. And the prophecy about Immanuel
 - a. The great sign God would provide, not just to Ahaz, but to us!
 - b. As Matthew confirms centuries later!
 - G. And when Jesus does arrive, He is **Emmanuel, God with us!**
 - 1. And in coming, He takes upon Himself our humanity
 - a. So that in His life, death and resurrection, he provides for our redemption, our salvation
 - b. As no other being in the universe could!
 - H. Perhaps John captures it best in the Prologue of his gospel
 - 1. **John 1:1** (ESV) —
 - a. 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
 - 2. **John 1:14** (ESV) —
 - a. 14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.
 - 3. “Dwelt among us” – literally, “tabernacled among us” or “pitched his tent among us”
 - 4. Jesus literally was Emmanuel, God with us!
 - a. And without Him with us, we are lost!
 - 5. And that’s what will turn our winter into Christmas!
 - I. But that “God with us” business is not finished!
 - 1. Jesus promises to be with us, even now!
 - 2. **John 14:16–17** (ESV) —
 - a. 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever,

- b. 17 even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.
 - 3. This Spirit of truth, this Holy Spirit, is called by Paul, the Spirit of Christ
 - a. Paul puts it this way in Colossians
 - 4. **Colossians 1:27** (ESV) —
 - a. 27 To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.
 - 5. Indeed, the very promise of the fulfillment of the church's mission is vested with the promise of His presence
 - 6. **Matthew 28:18–20** (ESV) —
 - a. 18 And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.
 - b. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
 - c. 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. **And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”**
- J. Jesus Christ is, and ever will be, Emmanuel, God with us!

III. **O Come, Redeemer**

- A. **“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”**
 - 1. Then what?
- B. **“And Ransom Captive Israel”**
 - 1. So what will this Emmanuel do?
 - 2. For Joseph, He got him out of unjust and difficult predicaments
 - a. For Moses, He led rebellious Israel through the wilderness for 40 years
 - 3. What does this mean, “ransom captive Israel”
- C. Well, so often we find the OT people of God used as an example, really as a type, of us in our even more dire predicaments
 - 1. The OT story of the Exodus is the story of the fledgling nation of Israel, oppressed by their slavery under Egypt, being rescued in miraculous ways by God
 - 2. And the Exodus story of Israel becomes a metaphor for an even more significant exodus of our own
 - a. Our own rescue by God from our slavery from the shackles of sin
- D. In the Matthew text we find this very issue in the angel's prophecy to Joseph
 - 1. **Matthew 1:20–21** (ESV) —
 - a. 20 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.
 - b. 21 She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, **for he will save his people from their sins.”**

2. And then, Matthew says:
3. **Matthew 1:22–23** (ESV) —
 - a. 22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:
 - b. 23 “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us).
- E. So Emmanuel comes to be with us – to save his people from their sins
- F. In the hymn it says, “and ransom captive Israel”
 1. “Israel” in this sense, is not national Israel, but the name for all people of God
 - a. We’ve seen that expressed in our series in Romans!
 - b. True Israel are those who by faith in Messiah Jesus belong to God
 - c. It includes believing Jews in the OT and in the time after Christ
 - d. And it also includes Gentiles who are grafted into the one olive tree
 2. And we, as we have learned from Paul, and elsewhere in the scriptures, both Jew and Gentile, are captives in sin until God rescues us through Jesus Christ
- G. The hymn speaks of a “ransom”
 1. That can be a bit misleading
 - a. As if a kidnapper has us sequestered until God pays a ransom to our captor, who is Satan
 2. But that English use of the word “ransom” in the hymn doesn’t mean that at all
 - a. The image is that of a slave market
 - b. In which the benevolent purchases, or redeems, the slave from his slavery
 3. Sin is the slavemaster
 - a. But Christ has paid the penalty for our sin
 - b. He has taken upon Himself the wrath of God that we justly deserved for our sin
 4. **Galatians 4:4–5** (ESV) —
 - a. 4 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law,
 - b. 5 **to redeem those who were under the law**, so that we might receive adoption as sons.
 5. **Galatians 3:13–14** (ESV) —
 - a. 13 Christ **redeemed us from the curse of the law** by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”—
 - b. 14 so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.
- H. So, that’s what this Emmanuel has done!
 1. He has come to be with us
 - a. God with us, the incarnate God

- b. The One who has taken our nature on Himself so that He alone could save us human beings
 - 2. And He has redeemed us from the slavery of our sin
 - a. “And ransom captive Israel”

IV. O Come, Into Our Exile

- A. O Come, O Come, Emmanuel
 - 1. And ransom captive Israel...
 - 2. That mourns in lonely exile here
- B. This captive Israel – the people of God
 - 1. Have been redeemed by the blood of Christ on the cross
- C. But how did this happen?
 - 1. Emmanuel came to where we were; to where we are!
 - a. Down here
 - b. Down in our dumps!
 - 2. We who mourn in lonely exile here
- D. Once again, the OT becomes for us a metaphor
 - 1. Israel was exiled
 - a. Several times!
 - 2. Exiled in Egypt, as we have seen
 - a. But exiled in both Assyria and in Babylon due to their rebellion and idolatry
 - 3. And our exile in this planet in our sin is likened to Israel’s geographical and cultural exile under another ruler, in another country
 - 4. But Emmanuel didn’t wait for us to return to our home country
 - a. He came to us!
 - b. He “tabernacled with us” as we saw in John’s gospel
- E. Indeed, we are lonely down here
 - 1. Without the presence of God, we are lost
 - a. We are like the prodigal in the pig pen
 - 2. Now, the story of the prodigal is a parable
 - a. It has its point, but it doesn’t, as a parable, pretend to picture the entirety of salvation
 - 3. But you see, our Emmanuel came into our pig pen
 - a. He didn’t wait for us to extricate ourselves from the mess we’ve made!
 - 4. We are in a mess
 - a. And we ought to have the good sense to mourn for it
 - b. To mourn for our mess, but to mourn more for sin, which is the cause of our mess
 - c. To mourn for our sin, which is our worst enemy
 - d. To mourn for the what sin has caused us in our lives
 - e. To mourn for the pain we have caused others through our sin
 - 5. But Emmanuel has come!
 - a. He has come to us, captive Israel, as we mourn in lonely exile here

- F. What would we do without this Jesus, this Emmanuel, this Redeemer
 - 1. Who buys us out of the slave market
 - 2. Who comes down into the slime and muck of our humanity
 - 3. To save us from our sin?

V. **O Come, Son of God**

- A. O Come, O Come Emmanuel
 - 1. And ransom captive Israel
 - 2. That mourns in lonely exile here
 - 3. **Until the Son of God appear**
- B. Yes, this Emmanuel, this Redeemer
 - 1. He is the Son of God
 - 2. For only the Son of God could qualify to be our Savior
- C. The blood of bulls and goats could never take away sins
 - 1. The OT sacrificial system was merely a type
 - a. Reminding us that our sin produced death
 - b. And only a death could atone for our sins
 - c. And only a human's death could atone for the sins of humans
 - 2. But no human on the planet could atone for anyone else's sin
 - a. For "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"
 - b. We could not atone for anyone else's sin because we ourselves are in need of our own atonement!
 - 3. Only the Son of God incarnate
 - a. Only the God-man, who was without sin
 - b. Only He could provide the sacrifice needed to cleanse us from our sin
 - 4. And if there was any doubt about His being the Son of God, His resurrection settled the issue once and for all
- D. That was the testimony of the demons that Jesus cast out and sent into a herd of pigs in **Matthew 8**
 - 1. That was the testimony of the disciples in the boat when Jesus came to them walking on water in **Matthew 14**
 - 2. That was the testimony of Peter when Jesus posed the question of His identity in Caesarea Philippi in **Matthew 16**
 - 3. That was the testimony of Jesus Himself when the high priest Caiaphas pressed him for a definitive answer in **Matthew 26**
 - 4. That was the testimony of the centurion standing guard at the cross when Golgotha was shaken by the earthquake as Jesus expired: "Truly this was the Son of God!" in **Matthew 27**
- E. And most importantly, that was God's testimony
 - 1. Who, at Jesus' baptism, said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (**Matthew 3.17**)
 - 2. And who, at the Transfiguration, said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." (**Matthew 17.5**)

3. And who, my Jewish friend, declared in **Psalm 2.7**: “You are my Son; today I have begotten you”
- F. The question is, is that also your testimony?
1. You might quibble with the testimony of demons
 - a. You might doubt the testimony of the disciples
 - b. But do you doubt the testimony of God?
 2. Do you have the guts to look God in the face and tell Him He’s wrong about this guy Jesus?
 3. Will you not agree with God that this Jesus is your only hope of light in this darkness?

VI. Conclusion

- A. That’s a lot to contemplate, isn’t it?
1. If we can escape the distractions we create for ourselves this Advent season and actually consider our state, our need, and our Redeemer
 2. Then we can sing:
- B. O Come, O Come Emmanuel
1. And ransom captive Israel
 2. That mourns in lonely exile here
 3. Until the Son of God appear.
- C. But there’s more, isn’t there?
1. There’s the anticipation of His coming!
 2. The certainty of His promise
 - a. The Son of God shall surely appear
 3. Winter will not last forever
 - a. Christmas will surely come!
 4. That’s why the verses all conclude with:
- D. Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel
1. Shall come to Thee of Israel