

## **SERMON: Sunday – 18 December 2022 – Rev Alistair Cowper**

### **They shall name him Emmanuel ... and he named him Jesus**

Matthew 1:18-25

It's the prophet Isaiah that announces that the name of the child born to the young woman shall be Immanuel, which means God with us.

And it's the angel who assures Joseph that the baby Mary carries is from God, the Holy Spirit, and that his name is to be Jesus, from the Hebrew *Yeshua*, which means Yahweh saves.

Immanuel and Jesus, together, God with people, to save.

This is very simple good news.  
God is for the universe and not against it.  
God is for people and not against them.  
God is with people not far from them.  
God saves because God cares.

Unless we have that firmly planted in our thinking then we might fall in to the trap of thinking that God doesn't care, is far from people, and is against the universe or at least indifferent to it.

In order to thrive, our mind set must be one which is informed by the simple good news of Immanuel and Jesus.

Immanuel and Jesus, together, God with people to save, to discover that God is love and is benevolent towards all of creation.

God is love, the Source of all light and life. Even scientists are beginning to say such things, that there might just be a benevolent hand at the root of all things.

But sometimes it's hard to think our way into this. In fact, left to our own devices, we can't do it. We need help.

And that's why good news comes most easily to the poor and lowly.

When the angel visits Mary, it's not Mary's achievements or performance that is the reason she's chosen. It's her lowly state that is the entry point for God:

“My soul glorifies the Lord

and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,  
for he has been mindful  
of the humble state of his servant.

It's all a gift of grace, undeserved favour.  
Because the Source of all is the Love that holds all things.  
So don't be afraid.  
Hear the voice of the angel,  
God is with us.  
Immanuel.  
Jesus.  
Forever.