

Riverview Baptist Church
Sunday School Teaching Plan
December 28, 2014
“The Meaning of the Incarnation”

Memory Verse

“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God.” 2 Corinthians 5:21, NIV

The Big Idea:

Sermon Title: God’s Presence

Sunday School Scripture: Various Passages

Sunday School Title: “The Meaning of the Incarnation”

ESS: The incarnation demonstrates God’s unconditional and sacrificial love, reveals His intimate understanding of us, and grants His continual, abiding presence.

Last Sunday, we discussed the importance of noticing and appreciating the birth of Jesus. This week, we’ll take a closer look at what God communicates to us through Jesus’ coming.

1. Have you ever experienced a fracture in an important relationship? A time when you and a close friend or relative didn’t get along? What happened? Who took the first step in reconciliation?

Today, we’ll discuss how God, through the incarnation, took the first step in restoring our broken relationship with Him.

INTRO: What is Incarnation?

When we talk about the incarnation, we mean God's becoming human - the union of divinity and humanity in Jesus of Nazareth. The term incarnation comes from the Latin version of John 1:14, meaning “to take on flesh.” (Homan Bible Dictionary)

When God revealed himself to humanity through Jesus’ birth on Earth, He had a specific message in mind.

THROUGH THE INCARNATION, GOD SAYS:

1. I ACCEPT You Unconditionally

All human beings begin life in the same condition. From the moment we begin life, the Bible says man is:

Spiritually Dead

READ Eph 2:1-2

Sinners

READ Romans 3:23

Enemies of God & Disconnected from Him

READ Col 1:21

The good news is that God doesn’t want us to stay that way! By sending Jesus to Earth to live, die, and rise again, God declared that He loves us without condition. Before we could ever think of God, acknowledge Him, or even cry out to Him, He came to us. In the incarnation, we see God taking the initiative, stepping into His creation, and accepting us despite our sinful condition.

READ Romans 5:8

Before we understood our sin or recognized our need for a Savior, God sent Jesus. There was nothing humanity could do to deserve Jesus. God didn’t send a list of requirements and demands to be met prior to sending a Savior. God acted first and accepted us as sinners. Through the incarnation, God says “I accept you just as you are!”

Have you ever heard someone say “I just have to get some things right before I come to God”? How could you respond to this?

2. **I LOVE You Sacrificially**

As we just discussed, we all start out sinful and separated from God. God's mercy and love prompts Him to accept us despite our sin. However, God's justice and righteousness demand that our sins be dealt with. God's holiness cannot ignore our sin. So how can God accept us while also punishing our sin? The answer is Jesus. God Himself entered the stage of human history in the person of Jesus Christ to atone for our sin and save us from the curse of eternal death. The birth, life, and death of Jesus shows us that God loves us enough to make the ultimate sacrifice – giving up His son to die for our sins.

READ Romans 3:23-26

According to this Scripture, how did God demonstrate His justice?

READ 2 Corinthians 5:21

In transferring our sin to Jesus, what did we receive? What does it mean to “become the righteousness of God”?

That is what the incarnation says to you and to all of us: Despite your sin, God loved you enough to give up His only Son, and Jesus valued you enough to die for you.

3. **I UNDERSTAND You Intimately**

Have you ever felt misunderstood? Ever thought that no one else could truly understand or appreciate what you're going through? Through the incarnation, God tells us that He knows us intimately and understands us completely.

READ Hebrews 2:18 and 4:15

Jesus wants us to know that he understands everything we have ever endured – and more. Because He took on human form, we can know that Jesus truly understands our every weakness and strength, temptation and success, sorrow and joy, loss and victory. Think about it... there is nothing you have experienced that God in Christ does not understand firsthand! Like you, Jesus experienced:

- Rejection (by his own people)
- Abandonment (by his own disciples)
- Misunderstanding (by his own family and his followers)
- Ridicule (at his trial)
- Betrayal (by a close friend)
- Criticism (by the religious leaders of the day)

Jesus has experienced all the ups and downs of human existence. The incarnation is God's way of telling us, “I've been there, done that, just like you. I understand completely.”

Have you ever had a coach or boss that required you to do things that you knew he would never do himself? How does that affect your respect for him? On the other hand, have you ever had a coach or boss that worked alongside you and was himself able and available to do anything he asked of you? How does that affect your respect for him? How does this example apply to Jesus? What kind of coach/boss is He?

4. **I AM WITH YOU Continually**

READ John 16:5-7

At the end of Jesus' earthly ministry, his disciples didn't want Him to go. But in this passage, Jesus explained that His going to the Father was BETTER because He could then send the Holy Spirit to live with and in them. Think about it: when Jesus lived on Earth, he was physically with or absent from the disciples depending on where he was at the moment. But when He returned to Heaven and sent the Holy Spirit, His presence would always be there, unlimited by time or space.

READ John 14:16-17

God's presence dwelling within us 24/7 – this takes our relationship with God to a whole new level! God fulfills His promise to never leave or forsake us (Matt 28:20) by giving us the Holy Spirit! By becoming human, and by dying, rising again, and ascending into Heaven, God made all the affection, acceptance, and affirmation of Jesus available to us every moment of our lives through the constant, indwelling presence of the Comforter, His Holy Spirit.

Through the incarnation, God says, "I'm with you non-stop, no matter what!"

CLOSING:

Let's not leave Him at the manger. Jesus Christ is not some distant historical figure who lived two thousand years ago. He's not a mythic hero who died on a cross. And He's not here one minute and then gone another. He's as real as your heartbeat, as relevant as your closest friend, and as "right now" as your latest text message. God so deeply wanted to connect with you and me that he entered our world as a man and lived and died to show His love.

APPLY IT!

God sent Jesus to Earth so that we might understand His message of love and mercy. Now, God sends us to carry that message to others!

READ 2 Corinthians 5:18-20.

How can you carry the message of God's love to others this week? How can you be the flesh and blood of Jesus to someone else? How will you be Christ's ambassador?

NOTE: The outline from this lesson came from the book *Beyond Belief to Convictions* by Josh McDowell and Bob Hostetler.