

Sermon John 1 1 14 Christmas Day series cSermon: Christmas Day

Text: John 1:1-14 (v. 14)

Theme: Jesus pitches His tent among us

Goal: To be sure that Jesus came and is still “camped”, he still dwells among us.

Dear Friends in the Emmanuel = God with us!

Do you like camping? I know that some of you like it. What is your experience? - We used to camp with my father-in-law and his children and grandchildren when our children were small. It was always exciting! to prepare everything, to buy this and that, to pack... Everyone was allowed to take just a few pieces of clothes in his/her bag because the car was packed with the tents and cooking stuff. Having arrived at the camp site, everyone had something to do. There was no infrastructure where we used to camp. Even a toilet had to be “built”. We had a long walk to fetch water. And we had special rules and tasks for the days we were together camping. - The first day was the best one. We enjoyed the second and the third day. But we were ready to go home on the fourth day, missing our comfortable bed at home, the running water and a toilet where you could sit...

We camped several times in Kenya as well, when we went on safaris in the Maasai Mara. On the one hand, it was easier for us than when we were younger, because the Travel Company did everything for us. But on the other hand we didn't find it comfortable to sleep on a thin mattress on the ground anymore...But it was just for three days or a week and then we went back to our comfortable home again.

Why do I mention this at our Christmas Service? Because one possible translation to our text for this day is: God became one of us and pitched His tent among us! Can you imagine Jesus camping with us?

I – As a child

The people of Biblical time used to camp; not because they took delight in it or because they did it for fun. They camped for 40 long years after they were released from slavery in Egypt and before they reached the Promised Land. They camped in the wilderness and were short of water and short of food several times. God had to intervene and come to the aid of His people. God Himself camped with His people, as the Church, the Tabernacle, was a special tent prepared to meet God, to listen to His voice and to offer Him prayers and sacrifices.

When they settled in Israel, they used to celebrate the Feast of the Weeks, when they camped for seven days in the streets and on the terraces of their houses, to remember the days in the wilderness and to remind themselves and be conscious that we don't have a permanent home here in this world.

“When the time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive the full rights of sons” (of God) (Galatians 4:4).

Jesus left His comfort, His position He had beside the Father, and pitched His tent among His people. He was still God, but He came down from heaven and became a man like us – true God and true man! He did it out of love, to help people to get a permanent home, and not a temporary tent only. - The first place He camped at was the womb of Virgin Mary, like any other human being. The second place He camped at was a stable; He was laid down in a manger. Some recognized Him as the Son of God, the promised Emmanuel = God with us, and adored Him even in that humble and simple tent He had chosen to live for a while. - Some didn't like that He came to camp among them, and He had to flee to Egypt, because King Herod wanted to kill Him. His presence

among the camped people brought a discomfort to many. “He came to that which was His own, but His own did not receive Him.” – After some years, He pitched His tent in Nazareth. He dwelt there till He grew up and became a carpenter.

II – As an adult

He didn't have a permanent address for three years during His ministry. He camped here and there, from north to south of the country. Some people hosted Him sometimes, like Peter, Mary and Martha... He said once to a candidate a discipleship: “Foxes have holes and birds of the air nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay down His head” (Matt 8:20). He didn't own a property to build a permanent house.

The cute baby whom we celebrate at Christmas with such a big joy, was rejected as an adult by His people among whom He had chosen to camp. The help He was offering was accepted only in part: the healings, the miracles, the signs. But when He tried to call people back to God through repentance and faith, He was put to death on the cross. His body “camped” in a cold and dark tomb for three days. The tomb marks the end of Jesus' bodily camping among us. 33 years had passed since Jesus had pitched His tent among His people.

Is this the end of the story? Thanks be to God that the story goes on! The resurrection of Jesus on Easter Sunday marks a new stage of Jesus dwelling among us. He is not camped bodily among us anymore, but He is still with us = Emmanuel. And therefore we celebrate Christmas year after year, believing that Jesus is alive and is among us!

III – Nowadays

He promised before He went back to His palace in heaven with the Father and the Holy Spirit: “Surely I am with you always to the very end

of the age” (Matt 28:20). - Emmanuel = God with us in His Word. Every time we read the Bible and listen to it , Jesus is whispering to our ears and to our hearts words of warning, words of love, words of forgiveness and comfort. – Every time a child or an adult is brought to the Holy Baptism, Jesus is here to take that person in His arms and to say: You are Mine! I am with you always! Don’t be afraid. Your tent is temporal. You will suffer discomfort and maybe some people will not like you because you are Mine. But don’t give up. I’m preparing a permanent house for you (John 14:2). – Every time we come to the Holy Communion, we kneel together at the Lord’s Table and Jesus Himself comes to serve us with His bread and with His vine, His very body and blood, given and shed for us for the forgiveness of our sins. Once we will sit with Him in the heavenly table! – We are never alone any more. Jesus is with us: Emmanuel = God with us.

Conclusion: The letter to the Hebrews 13:14 says: “For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.” If our tent, or our mattress, or the condition of our body, or the people camping around us are not as good as we want or wish, take heart: Jesus camped in a much worse situation than we, He is with us to protect us in this refugee camp we are living in now, and He is preparing a permanent room for us in the house of His Father. He “made His dwelling among us” for a while that we may dwell with Him all eternity.

This is the message of hope that Christmas brings to us as we rejoice in the Christ Child in the manger. It is not just about a cute baby, it is not just a story and songs that touch our hearts, but it is about a much bigger story, that begins at the manger in Bethlehem, goes through our life, till we settle in the Promised Land with God. Merry Christmas with Jesus, who pitched His tent among us, Emmanuel = God with us. Amen.