

#4 – GOD WITH US (Ian Nicholson)¹

- Where have you seen God at work in your life this week? (Share any brief examples and encouragements).
- Was there anything from Sunday's message which you found particularly inspiring or challenging?
- Was there anything else you particularly noticed?

Matthew 1:18-23

¹⁸ This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: his mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

²⁰ But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.'

²² All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet: ²³ 'The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel' (which means 'God with us').

This passage from Matthew tells the story of a man and a woman living to honour God as faithfully as they knew how, facing a seemingly impossible challenge...

- *What have been your greatest challenges this past year?*
- *Has anything truly felt impossible?*
- *What are you thankful for?*
- *What has been a disappointment?*
- *What do you never want to experience again?*
- *Where have you particularly experienced 'Immanuel' – God with you?*
- *Has anything made you wonder if he really was?*
- *It is one thing to know that God is with us, quite another to ask, "Am I with God?" What might that question mean to us today?*

In her book, *Wholehearted Faith*, Rachel Held Evans wrote, "I am a Christian not because of anything I've done but because a teenage girl living in occupied Palestine at one of the most dangerous moments in history said yes. Yes, to God. Yes, to a wholehearted call she could not possibly understand. Yes, to vulnerability in the face of societal judgment. Yes, to the considerable risk of pregnancy and childbirth. Yes, to a vision for herself and her little boy of a mission that would bring down rulers and lift up the humble, that would turn away the rich and fill the hungry with good things, that would scatter the proud and gather the lowly. Yes, to a life that came with no guarantee of her safety or her son's."

- *Where might God be waiting for your "Yes"?*
- *What are you hoping for?*

¹ Notes and questions are suggested by the text of Matthew 1, and only very loosely on Ian's message.