



GOD IS HERE

SCRIPT

(In walks the character - Holy Joe)

Props: Bible

I feel a little confused, friends, and I hope you don't mind me getting these thoughts off my chest, so to speak. But I don't know whether I let Jesus down, or whether what I said was enough. Let me explain ...

There I was, sat at a very well-known coffee shop - but I won't mention the name as I'm not on commission. Anyway, there I was when two of my friends from the library came in carrying a stack of books they'd got for the Christmas holiday. One had a couple of crime novels, not really my thing; and the other had two romantic books, both set in a land with sunshine and seashells. Again, not really my thing! Anyway, they looked at me and asked what I was reading. I took up my Bible from the table and said, 'My Bible.' They both laughed! I actually was so taken aback I didn't know what to say at first. Then I asked, 'Why are you laughing?' and they simply said, 'Why would you read the Bible when there are so many other books to read?'

Well, I have to say it took me back and it made me think - why do I read the Bible? Yes, I do like reading fiction, and a good autobiography often gets me gripped - but why do I read the Bible? So I took a deep breath and simply said that the best story ever was in the Bible. They said, 'What's the best story ever?' and I said; 'The story of Jesus!'

They looked a bit surprised. Then I simply asked them if they plan on celebrating Christmas this year, and they both laughed and said 'Of course' in unison. Then I said, 'Well then, you're celebrating the story of Jesus which comes from the Bible'. They both shuffled their feet a bit, and one of them said, 'Latte or macchiato?' And with that they turned and went and sat at another table. Can you believe that? They didn't seem to want to talk about the story of Jesus, but they were still intent on celebrating Christmas. That seems a bit nonsensical to me!

To be honest with you, it sometimes feels like people know that God is part of the story, but they don't realise he really is here. No, we can't see him, but he lives and moves in our



presence and we in his. But how do I get people to understand that? I feel I might have let Jesus down a bit as I didn't continue the conversation. Still, I really hope that maybe, just maybe, they might think about it at some point.

(Joe lifts his phone to his ear) Apologies, friends, someone's calling me - I'll be right back.

Hello? (pause) Oh, no, don't worry. I wasn't offended. It was just that ... (pause) Of course. There's always more space here. And yes, there is enough turkey to go round! Carols? Yes, we'll be singing some carols! Prayers? Yes, we'll be saying a prayer. (Pause) You'd love to come? I'll be at the door waiting for you! See you soon. Bye! (Puts phone down)

Wow, that's amazing! One of my friends that I was telling you about has just got home and seen the invitation for today's meal and asked if they can come along. (Joe lifts his hands to heaven.) Thank you, Jesus!

(Joe exits)

SHORT THOUGHT

Scripture verse: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel (which means 'God with us') - **Matthew 1:23**

Christmas can be busy. There are presents to buy, meals to prepare, events to attend, messages to send, and endless items on our to-do lists. The season comes with excitement, but it can also leave us feeling tired, stretched, and wondering where the time has gone. In the middle of all the activity, the message of Christmas remains wonderfully simple: God is here.

When God came into the world in Jesus, he did not choose a perfect moment. The first Christmas was far from calm and comfortable. There was a long journey, uncertainty about the future, and no room at the inn. Yet it was there, in the middle of ordinary life and unexpected challenges, that God made his presence known.

The name 'Immanuel' means 'God with us'. It reminds us that God is not distant or unconcerned with our lives. He is present in the everyday moments, not just the extraordinary ones. He is with us in the crowded shops, the family gatherings, the quiet evenings, and even the moments when Christmas feels difficult. Many people spend their lives searching for meaning, belonging and connection. The message of Immanuel speaks directly into that longing. It tells us that we are seen, known and loved. It assures us that even when we feel forgotten or overlooked, God has not abandoned us.

The first Christmas took place during a difficult period in history. Those who heard the news of Jesus' birth lived with political uncertainty, social tensions and personal struggles. Yet into that world came a message of hope and peace. The light of God's presence shone in the darkness and offered a different future. That same message continues to resonate today. Christmas does not promise that every problem will disappear or that life will suddenly become easy. Instead, it offers something deeper - the assurance that God's presence can be found even in the midst of life's challenges. Hope is possible because God is here - Immanuel.

This Advent and Christmas, take a moment to reflect on where you have experienced kindness, comfort, love or unexpected strength. Perhaps these are glimpses of God's presence with us.

The invitation of Immanuel is not simply to look back at an event that happened long ago, but to recognise that God continues to draw near today.

Wherever you find yourself this Christmas, may you experience the peace of not being alone, the comfort of being understood, and the hope that comes from knowing that even in life's busiest and most challenging moments, love, light and grace are close at hand. **God is here. God is with us.**

PRAYER

O come, let us adore him: Heavenly Father,

We are so grateful to be here together today as we celebrate this special Christmas season, and we thank you that you are here with us.

At Christmas we are again reminded of the amazing truth that you came to be with us through Jesus, Immanuel - God with us, entering this world in human form to share in our lives and reveal your love.

Thank you for the truth that we never have to walk through life on our own, because you are always with us. You walk alongside us, sharing in our joys and sustaining us through our struggles. Your presence goes before us and remains with us, surrounding us with your peace and love.

Thank you for being with us, helping us each day, and living in our hearts.

Thank you, Jesus, our Immanuel - God with us.

Amen.