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Looking for Jesus
Luke 2

At a recent pastor's lunch, we heard a story about a pastor asking kids whether they had their own nativity scenes at home. One little boy proudly announced in church, "yea, we put Jesus on a shelf way up in the hall closet all year long, and then we go **looking for him** at Christmas. That's when we take him out."

Actually that's pretty profound.
Only looking for Jesus at Christmas....
only letting him out into our lives for the holidays.

How often do keep Jesus at a safe distance?
Or forget about him,
as if he's stuffed away with the decorations in the closet?

Do we pull him into our hearts for special occasions,
Or can we really see him in our lives on an everyday basis?

Christmas is one of those times when we are **reminded to look** for Jesus.
As Christians, Jesus life, birth, and death are of constant importance.
But at one point a **particular** day was chosen to celebrate his birth.

Centuries ago Dec 25th was a pagan Roman holiday, established 9 months after March 25th--the date it was believed the earth was conceived.
And so they celebrated, and exchanged gifts, and took time off school and work.

Then the church Father Hippolytus around the year 220 decided that March 25th was the date of Jesus death, and his conception, so December 25th would commemorate Jesus' birth.

The good St. Nicholas and his tradition of giving gifts to needy children was also incorporated, and we have Christmas, and Santa, and in America.....
Well sometimes it's Christmas chaos.

At times it *doesn't feel* quite like the time to be looking for Jesus.
It feels like the time to try to find the perfect gift, or throw the perfect party,
or to wish the relatives would get along perfectly....

And now you are sitting here—on Christmas Eve,
Any sense of relief?

Let me invite you to take a deep breath, sit back in your chair,
And imagine something different at Christmas.
Imagine finding Jesus—*all around you*, and not just on Christmas.

The Bible is clear that *He lives on in us*---
especially in those who are in any kind of need. Remember Jesus' famous words—
“*I was hungry and you fed me, thirsty and you gave me something to drink....?*”

Imagine greeting the cooing *newborn* of a young couple,
struggling just to get by, trying to be faithful to God and one another....
There's Jesus.

Imagine cooking dinner for the *young woman* who has lost her job, has three
children to support, she's constantly pounding the pavement looking for work.
There's Jesus.

Imagine singing to the precious *older man* in the nursing home, who joins in the
caroling, but has no family to take him home for the holidays.
There's Jesus.

But it's not just those in obvious need.
It's the *friends and family* you see as well.
Aunts and uncles you haven't seen in months—that's right, Jesus.
Grandparents doting on grandchildren,
Siblings trying to reconnect—Jesus again.
Long lost friends, neighbors, cousins—Jesus, Jesus, Jesus.
He's really *everywhere*.

Jesus is certainly not stuck in the closet with the decorations,
Or held captive in the nativity scene.
We can't put him on a shelf or take him out
any more than we can tell God what to do or where to show up.

This is good news, because so often we want a '*tangible*' way to see and feel God,
And well—*you have it* right before you...

The messy-faced little one who runs to give you a hug and kiss?
You guessed it—Jesus in the flesh.
The wise old loved one who honors you with a handshake and an embrace?
That's right—Jesus.
Alone this Christmas?
Everyone who shook your hand at the passing of the peace was Jesus Christ.

That's just *how He works*.
It's in Jesus' name, Emmanuel, which means 'God with us'
You and I—we are never alone, never without God in this life.
God shows up, sometimes where we least expect it,
and always when we need it most.
We may feel God is at a distance,
but Jesus is always closer to us than we think.

That's the miracle of Christmas.
He came as Savior to the world, not just for some, but for all.
Not just on one day of the year, but every day....
And in his coming we learn that nothing is impossible with God.

For unto us a Son is born, unto us a Son is given,
Right before our very eyes, God in the flesh,
And his name is Jesus. Amen.