

“Arrival: Learning What Matters Most to Jesus”

by
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- What** As Pastor Jim starts to rant at a youth parent who’s questioning his decision to cancel the Christmas party, he drops into the Garden of Gethsemane and encounters the Apostle John. A stone’s throw away from Jesus as he prays his famous prayer of unity, Pastor Jim learns an important lesson from a former hothead about what’s really most important to Christ.
- Themes: Christmas, Advent, Duets, Unity, Anger, Historical, Humorous, Love, Prayer, Prayer
- Who** Pastor Jim, a youth pastor in his mid-to-late 20s
John the disciple, his mid-20s or older
- When** Present and Bible Times
- Costumes and Props** Pastor Jim looks trendy. He may even wear skinny jeans. (For laughs, style him in the type of clothes the youth pastor at your church wears). He has a cell phone.
John wears a simple robe.
- Why** John 17: 20-23
- How** Keep the dialogue conversational and stay on top of your queues.
- Time** Approximately 4 minutes

Jim is onstage talking on his phone.

Jim: Yes, I hear you Mrs. Z, but I just think that Christmas is too commercial and too, well, let's just put it this way—too sentimental. *(Pause)*

John walks onto the stage. Pastor Jim doesn't notice him.

No this isn't a bah-humbag to the youth in the church. It's meant to show that there's more to Christmas than this out-of-control pageantry that in my view is on steroids. Hello? She hung up on me again.

John: I don't know that I'd blame her?

Jim: Who are you?

John: I'm John.

Jim: I'm closing up the student building now and we have a sign on the door that says no solicitors.

John: I'm with Jesus.

Jim: Are you from the Latter Day Saints?

John: *(loudly whispering)* I'm with Jesus. He's over there.

John points to a place offstage.

Jim: What?

John: And he's praying, so if you could be quieter...this is the important part.

Pastor Jim grabs his head as if in pain and sways from side to side, as if dizzy (to indicate that he's transported from his time into John's).

Jim: Where am I? How did all these trees get in here?

John: We're in the Garden.

Jim: Of Eden?

John: No, Gethsemane.

Jim: I'm confused.

John: Look, Jesus just prayed the most famous prayer.

Jim: The Lord's Prayer?

John: Well, technically all his prayers are the Lord’s prayers, but no. The one in the garden, before he goes to the cross. Blood forming on his forehead like so much sweat? Take this cup from me? You know...not my will but thine be done?

Jim: Oh wow – and you’re the John that wrote it all down in John 17? I know the passage well!

John: You were just talking about the meaning of Christmas... so I think that’s why you’re here.

Jim: Don’t you mean Easter?

John: No, I don’t.

Jim: Jesus prayed this prayer before the Cross.

John: Yes.

Jim: Which was hours after the Passover meal. I know my Jewish calendar—I’m a youth pastor.

John: You’re also trained to view things in a very linear way. In fact, you should add “chronological tyranny” to that well-rehearsed rant of yours.

Jim: Were you eavesdropping on my whole phone call?

John: Who were you yelling at anyway?

Jim: I wasn’t yelling...

John: Who were you loudly directing your anger towards?

Jim: A youth mom. I get it, okay? This is her fourth and final child to go through the church’s youth group. She wants her to have an amazing experience. They want me to ease off, stop shaking everything up.

John: What’s the plan?

Jim: No candles, definitely no commercialized Christmas Carols, no gift exchanges and definitely no sweets! She said, “the parents love your passion, but can’t you just leave Christmas alone.” Can you believe the nerve?

John: You are quite nervy—

Jim: I meant her!

John: Kid! Take a breath. Most people, especially Christian leaders who pop in at this part of my timeline, need to take a deep breath.

Jim: What is this, a first-century scolding?

John: Call it what you want. I'd like to think of it as some loving advice from someone who went before you. A former hot head himself.

Jim: John, the disciple Jesus loved, a hot head?

John: The centuries have made people forget how competitive and self-righteous my brother James and I really were. We thought we could coerce people to follow God's way through our moral superiority and wanted to call down fire from heaven when they didn't see it our way. *(Pointing to where Jesus prays)* Or his way.

Jim: I don't want to call down fire.

John: You just want to snuff out the joy people have to celebrate a beautiful tradition, however strange some of it has become.

Jim: Don't get me wrong, I love me a Turkey dinner and some eggnog, but I want the kids I lead to think deeper about Christmas.

John: And that's probably why you dropped in here, at this moment in the story.

Jim: I'm not seeing the Christmas link here.

John: When you go back, which will be any moment, read the prayer in John 17. It's all about eternal life and why God sent Jesus into the world in the first place. Of all the things Christ prayed before he left the world, this is what he prayed for me and the other hot-headed disciples. For everyone who would believe after us.

It's a prayer about *unity*. Without it, the world won't even believe God sent his son. Jesus says that, you know?

Jim: That's a sobering thought.

John: Your unity with the tribe of believers God placed you with is the thing that will convince the world that God sent his beloved Son. That's what will make Christmas real. Maybe that's where you should focus your passion.

Jim: Can I go say hi?

John: Not tonight. He has a big day ahead of him.

Jim: But...he's already gone to the cross. Because I'm a believer. *(Scratching his head)* And yet you're here talking to me about a scripture you haven't written down yet.

John: Yeah, *(patting Pastor Jim on the back)* don't try to figure out the Bible Time Loop. Just focus on the lesson God wanted to teach you through this mysterious and miraculous moment of revelation, okay?

Jim: Gotcha. Good talk.

Pastor Jim steps past John toward where Jesus prays offstage as he shares his next lines. John now stands behind him and slowly disappears (either the spotlight blacks out on John or he steps into the shadows and exits the stage).

Jim: I would so like to meet him in person. So, how do I get back. And before I do, can I ask you how you really feel about Peter?

He turns at the silence and realizes that John is gone. He looks around and realizes he's back at the Youth building.

Jim: Oh. So that's it, hey?

He exhales deeply. Then pulls out his phone and dials.

Jim: Hi, Mrs. Z? It's Pastor Jim. Hey listen. I just wanted to call you back and say sorry.

He starts to walk off the stage.

I've been a hothead and the kids can have a Christmas Party. But I may still deliver a short message...

He exits.

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