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Epiphany 1 – Baptism of our Lord – January 9, 2022

“Expectations”

Isaiah 42: 1 – 9, Luke 3: 15 – 17, 21 – 22

Read Isaiah 42: 1 – 9/ mem. Is. 42: 6

What do you think about when you hear the word, expecting? If you’re a parent or a grandparent, perhaps you think back to when you were waiting for a child to be born. We like certainty in our lives, births don’t give us that. I know, you can sometimes have the date you’re going to be induced but I have known ladies who have delivered before and some after days of labor.

It’s the same way with expectations. They don’t always work out as you expect. Much of the time expectations can be wonderful. Looking forward to the birth of a child or a child or spouse returning home after a trip can fill us with expectation. Even as we’re waiting, we get a foretaste of the coming joy.

On the other hand, expectations can get us into difficulty. That’s what happened to Jesus. Israel had been expecting a savior for a long time. Isaiah is talking about it in Isaiah 42. God is being very clear about what they should expect from that savior. The problem is what God said and what they heard was different because of their expectations.

Just as it happens in a family you may say something, which you think is perfectly clear, but they’re understanding something totally different because of their expectations. When expectations are not fulfilled there is often conflict or frustration. When John baptized Jesus he had some big expectations. He proclaimed Him the Lamb of God, but he had more thoughts.

He seems to be pretty certain about who Jesus is and what he is expects Him to do. It sounds like He’s going to be banging some heads together, separating out the wheat from the chaff and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire. Sounds pretty scary to me, how about you? So John’s expectation was of a fearsome messiah. Later, he would send some of his disciples to Jesus to ask if they were still waiting because Jesus didn’t live up to his expectations.

The people of Israel were expecting a savior, too. Their expectation was of a warrior king who would restore the glory and majesty of the time of King David. Finally, they would enter the glory days they had long waited for and get rid of the Romans.

So when Jesus was born in a stable; then came to John to be baptized, there was a clash of expectations. He appeared to be a simple man, not a warrior prince. To the leading authorities he was a country bumpkin, preaching some Gospel about the Kingdom of God and God's grace rather than proclaiming the defeat of the Romans. Their expectations were not met which made them unhappy.

They were even more upset when he challenged their authority. They feared that the people would begin to listen to Him, rather than them. To take care of that fear they began plotting how to get rid of Him, or at least diminish His popularity with the people, so that their power wouldn't be diminished.

It's intriguing because both Jesus and they agreed on one thing: the nation needed a savior. They were in captivity to the Romans. There was danger all around them just as it had been in Isaiah's time. What had precipitated much of that danger at both times was the disobedience of the people of God. Jesus was there to help them, but not in the way they expected.

Even before Isaiah, God had been warning them that unless they cleaned up their act they were going to pay some consequences. Now that they're paying the consequence; they're totally distraught. They believed that God has forgotten them, abandoned them and that somehow they were no longer His people.

Into that lack of hope comes Isaiah to restore the true message that God wanted them to hear. He had not forgotten or deserted them. He was right there with them and was planning to restore them. He was waiting on them, while they thought they were waiting for Him to act.

God wanted them to take His hand of love and care and remember that they were covenant people. He was keeping His part. He was still their God. They were not being His people. What they needed to do was trust Him. To follow Him where He was leading them. They expected Him to do something different. He explained that they had missed His message because they weren't listening. God

sent prophets to the people, but they ignored or killed them because they didn't meet their expectations.

The prophets brought a message of repentance. The people didn't want to hear that they needed to repent and turn back to God. They had misunderstood chosen for exclusive. When you think God can only deal with you exclusively, you make His mission much smaller than His plan. To help them see the truth, He sent Jesus.

Jesus came to help us know who God really is and what He is really like: love. Yes, He has commandments. They are not there to burden us which is exactly what the Pharisee's did with them, but to help us know who He really is. We cannot be saved by commandments. We are saved by the grace and love of God, which we learn through our relationship with Jesus.

God does have some expectations of us. He spoke of them in Micah 6: 8: "to act justly and to love mercy and walk humbly with your God." Why does He expect those things? Because those are the marks of discipleship, living the life of servanthood that God has called us to live.

As we look at Jesus' life He acted justly, loved mercy and walked humbly. He was the very Son of God, yet He humbled Himself and came to live with us. Jesus shows us what God expects and then gives us the Spirit to enable us to live up to those expectations. Then, Jesus tells us that even when we fail to live in that way, out of his love He will show us mercy and forgiveness.

So what are you expecting this year? I'm living with a number of expectations: sometime this summer, we will have completed helping to build a home for Christine and her son, Jayvon. So often, the things we do to help people are intangible. They have no time when they're done or they're far from us so we don't see the result. What excites me is that we'll get to see this completed as we dedicate it. We'll also be fulfilling the hope of this family for the future.

I expect that God will provide a pastor for us. I am trusting God because He promises to provide shepherds for His flock, but I have to be patient as He prepares that shepherd for us. I expect that God will give us the opportunity to serve people in many different ways and that the people of Good Shepherd will rise up to do that.

I expect that there will be times when we have to share mercy with people who don't do what we expect. We will need to be less judgmental and more loving of them because we don't know what's going on in their lives.

I expect that we'll have to turn to God for forgiveness, which I prayerfully hope will enable us to become better forgivers of others. I expect that by Jesus' invitation to dinner and by our participation we will be strengthened in faith and love towards Him and others.

I expect that there will be times when we need to wait for God's action because He knows it's not the right time for what we want. That will take patience, which is difficult for us. Yet, without that patience we may miss the very fulfillment that we hope for.

I expect that when we serve to the Glory of God, it will shine the light of His love into a world that desperately needs it. I expect that by shining that light, some may be drawn to Good Shepherd as their home, which is wonderful, but more importantly we want them to be drawn to Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

My ultimate hope is that by sharing Christ, people will come to know Jesus, so that their lives may be changed eternally. I believe and expect that when we are faithful to God's call, people will see Jesus in us and through us and their lives and ours will be changed!

Here's your question: How do you expect your life to change as you serve God in our community and beyond?