

"Great Expectations in Jesus?"—Luke 2:8-20

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, "Great Expectations in Jesus?", is Luke 2:8-20 → *In the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, Who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased!" When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these*

*things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.*

This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

How do you expect God to work in your life? Some people expect God to work in an extraordinary way which defies the laws of nature, nothing short of a miracle. Others may recognize the “hand of God” at work in those unexpected little blessings one may encounter in a day. Some may expect God to be the “cosmic genie” Who exists to give them what they want, when they want it, in the way they want it. I wonder how many people would view God working in their lives in the very midst the everyday ho-hum, hum-drum, boredom tasks? As we read the account of the birth of Jesus in the Bible we can easily see how great expectations in Jesus were created through special revelation from God in the midst of the everyday business of life.

Our text tells us about some shepherds who were going about their nightly jobs when the Lord revealed His salvation to them in a very powerful way, putting a whole new perspective of “expectations” on their lives. Actually, expectations in relationship with Yahweh would not only have been a part of their everyday lives but an element of their very existence! Like any Jew of their day, no doubt they had been taught about the coming Messiah and

waited expectantly for His coming into their lives. Luke 2:25 describes Simeon as a man . . . *waiting for the consolation of Israel* which was promised in the coming of the Messiah. The people whom the prophetess, Anna, told about Jesus being the Christ are described as people *waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem* in the Messiah. (cf. Luke 2:38) One of the men who buried Jesus' body is described as *looking for the kingdom of God* in the Messiah. (Joseph of Arimathea in Luke 23:50 -51)

Such expectations would have been generated by various Old Testament prophecies, such as Isaiah 40:1 → *Comfort, comfort My people, says your God*. These words preceded the promise of sending John the Baptizer who prepared the way for the coming of the LORD's Messiah. However, in the midst of their "expectations," these shepherds didn't immediately seem to find a whole lot of *comfort*. *The glory the Lord* accompanying the angel and his message *filled* these shepherds *with great fear*. (Verses 8-9) I picture them with their faces to the ground, shaking in their sandals, wondering if it was the end of the world or, at the very least, wondering if they had died and went to heaven!

The angel's command to *fear not* probably would not have brought immediate "comfort" in the midst of such confusion either. Why is this happening to them? They were simply "minding their own business," going

about their regular tasks, and God decides to tell them some *good news* that's suppose *bring . . . great joy . . . for all people*? However, at the moment they heard the words recorded in verse 11 of our text—*unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, **Who is Christ the Lord***—the angel had their undivided attention! “The Christ” . . . Greek word for the Hebrew word “Messiah” . . . “is born in Bethlehem today?!” They're all ears in eager expectation!

Could it be that such resurrected expectations of God's deliverance is what moved these men to act on faith and seek out Jesus? Only faith, worked in the heart by the Holy Spirit upon the hearing of this Gospel, could have caused these shepherds to believe the *sign* by which the they were supposed to recognize God's Messiah—*a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger*. They would have probably expected the Messiah to come with great glory and power, not as some baby laying in a feeding trough for animals! Faith is described in Hebrews 11:1 as *the assurance of things **hoped for**, the conviction of things not seen*. In the midst of such an illogical way of fulfilling great expectations *they went with haste and actually did find Mary and Joseph, and the baby who was actually lying in a manger!* (Verse 16)

In one sense, these shepherds experienced what we experience many times as the LORD acts in our lives in ways, situations and places where we

would least expect Him to be! Our compartmentalized view of God with “religious” stereotypes and “systems” can hinder seeing His working many times. In fact, our very study of the Scriptures themselves may be motivated by a desire to control the information rather than submit to the incarnation, in which God took on human flesh to deal with your sin by bearing it to the cross. John 20:31 says the Bible was *written so that you may believe **that Jesus is the Christ**, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name*. While sinners may expect God to work in some sensational manner through a vision, voice or sign from heaven, God leaves heaven to come into our sinful, messed up everyday lives to do His work of saving us!

How do you respond or react when the LORD reveals the Christ to you in your daily life? Unbelief can react with rejection by intellectualism in a couple of common ways. The Pharisees reacted to Jesus self righteously in unbelief by clinging to their control of Biblical knowledge. As the experts in Old Testament Biblical interpretation Jesus told them in John 5:39-40 → *You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about Me, yet you refuse to come to Me that you may have life.*

Others react to Jesus self righteously in unbelief by clinging to their human analysis of His Person & Work. Such analysis breeds skepticism in the midst

of seeking logical explanations and rationalizations for God's working in our lives. 1 Corinthians 1:20-21 says: *Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.* Our preaching is focused on the crucified Christ.

As the LORD acts in your everyday life through a Savior, *Who is Christ the Lord*, you can respond to this news and receive it as *good news of great joy* by faith by the working of the Holy Spirit! You can respond with the shepherds by seeking out the Christ daily in the Person of Jesus and share with others that He is the Savior of the whole world from sin! Notice at the manger when the shepherds *made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child . . . all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them, while Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart.* (Verses 17-19) Notice also what they did after experiencing the presence of Jesus according to verse 20 of our text: *They returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them!*

Do you live with great expectations for Jesus to perform His work in your **daily** life? Do you open your Bible daily expecting to receive what He promises to give you: faith, forgiveness of sin, the Holy Spirit, the peace that

passes all understanding, and so forth? Do you come to worship in this place expecting to receive what He promises to give you with His presence in the Lord's Supper—the forgiveness of sins? Do you come here expecting to experience His presence in the gathered believers as together you praise *Christ the Lord*?

In verse 14 of our text the angels spoke of *peace among those with whom God is pleased*. God *is please* when people hear the *good news* of Jesus' life, death and resurrection for their forgiveness of sins and eternal life, believe in Him, repent of their sins and receive His free forgiveness! Then your great expectations amidst the everyday tasks of life in this sinful world also take on new meaning as you desire God to bring about His will in His time, **in His way!** Amen.

*Since we have been justified by faith,  
we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.  
Through Him we have also obtained access by faith  
into this grace in which we stand,  
and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

(Romans 5:1-2)