

Expecting God to Do the Unexpected

Message 3 of 4 in the series: "Eagerly Expecting"

Expectation = a strong belief that something will happen or be the case in the future

A. One day an angel appeared to a young virgin named Mary, and he told her some news she never expected to hear.

"...God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, 'Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.' **Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be.** But the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.' 'How will this be,' Mary asked the angel, 'since I am a virgin?' The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail.'" Luke 1: 26-37 (NIV)

Note: It matters that Mary was a virgin. "God made **him who had no sin** to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." 2 Corinthians 5:21 (NIV)

Note: God often has higher expectations of us than we do of ourselves. "...Moses pleaded with the Lord, 'O Lord, I'm not very good with words. I never have been, and I'm not now, even though you have spoken to me. I get tongue-tied, and my words get tangled.' Then the Lord asked Moses, **'Who makes a person's mouth? ...Is it not I, the Lord?'** Now go! I will be with you as you speak, and I will instruct you in what to say.' But Moses again pleaded, 'Lord, please! Send anyone else.'" Exodus 4:10-13 (NLT)

Life Application: God wants us to surrender our expectations of ourselves to Him.

"Mary responded, **'I am the Lord's servant.** May everything you have said about me come true.' And then the angel left her." Luke 1:38 (NLT)

"...God chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful. God chose things despised by the world, **things counted as nothing at all**, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important."
1 Corinthians 1:27-28 (NLT)

B. The birth of the Messiah didn't happen the way anybody expected.

"At that time the Roman emperor, Augustus, decreed that a census should be taken throughout the Roman Empire. (This was the first census taken when Quirinius was governor of Syria.) All returned to their own ancestral towns to register for this census. And because Joseph was a descendant of King David, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea, David's ancient home. He traveled there from the village of Nazareth in Galilee. He took with him Mary, to whom he was engaged, who was now expecting a child. And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. She gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and **laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them.**" Luke 2:1-7 (NLT)

Note: It matters that Jesus was born in Bethlehem. "But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, are only a small village among all the people of Judah. Yet **a ruler of Israel, whose origins are in the distant past, will come from you on my behalf.**" Micah 5:2 (NLT)

Note: It matters that Jesus was born in a barn as a human being. "Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, **he gave up his divine privileges**; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross." Philippians 2:6-8 (NLT)

Life Application: God wants us to surrender our expectations of how things ought to be.

"We can make our plans, but **the Lord determines our steps.**" Proverbs 16:9 (NLT)

"And we know that **God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God** and are called according to his purpose for them." Romans 8:28 (NLT)

C. Some shepherds who never expected to meet the Messiah were visited by the angelic armies of heaven and told where to find baby Jesus.

“That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord’s glory surrounded them. They were terrified, but the angel reassured them. ‘Don’t be afraid!’ he said. ‘I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger.’ Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased.’ When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, ‘Let’s go to Bethlehem! Let’s see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.’ They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. After seeing him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. All who heard the shepherds’ story were astonished, but Mary kept all these things in her heart and thought about them often. The shepherds went back to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. It was just as the angel had told them.” Luke 2:8-20 (NLT)

Life Application: No matter who we are or what we’ve done, we can expect to find love, forgiveness, and a place in God’s family if we come to Jesus.

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” John 3:16 (NKJV)

“God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure.” Ephesians 1:5 (NLT)

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Connect Group Questions

Read Luke 1:26-37 & 2:1-20 and then discuss the following questions:

1. How would you react if you heard about a baby being born in a Jiffy Lube late one night and his parents using a shop sink as a crib? What chances for success would you give such a child?
2. Share a time when you realized that God was expecting more out of you than you expected out of yourself. How did you respond?
3. Share a time when you realized that God was calling you to surrender your expectations of how things ought to be and trust Him. What is freeing about this? What is terrifying about this?
4. Discuss why the following details of Jesus’ birth are significant:
 - Mary was a virgin. (Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:18-23, Luke 1:27-34, Romans 5:12-19, 2 Corinthians 5:21)
 - Jesus was born in Bethlehem. (Micah 5:2, Matthew 2:4-6, Luke 2:11)
 - Joseph was a descendant of King David. (2 Samuel 7:12-16, Luke 2:4, Romans 1:3, Revelation 22:16)
5. Spend some time each praying for one friend, relative, acquaintance, or neighbor who needs to hear the Good News that Christ the Savior has come into the world and made it possible for us to have a personal relationship with God no matter who we are or what we’ve done.

Quotations to consider:

“Don’t leave Jesus in the manger; don’t remember Him only at Christmas. Instead, learn to walk with Him every day, as you pray and read His Word and ask Him to help you.” Billy Graham

"Who can add to Christmas? The perfect motive is that God so loved the world. The perfect gift is that He gave His only Son. The only requirement is to believe in Him. The reward of faith is that you shall have everlasting life." Corrie Ten Boom

"Once in our world, a stable had something in it that was bigger than our whole world." C.S. Lewis

“The Almighty appeared on earth as a helpless human baby needing to be fed and changed and taught to talk like any other child. The more you think about it, the more staggering it gets. Nothing in fiction is so fantastic as this truth of the Incarnation.” J.I. Packer