

Sunday 16 December 2007 Sermon - King's Centre Christian Church, Sheffield, UK

Advent 'Preparation' Series Week 3 - Expectation

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Introduction

Whole advent theme is 'Preparation' – felt fitting in many ways, not least because that follows our broader call from God at this time to prepare our hearts and lives – in cutting out the dross and distractions and going deeper in relationship with the Trinity, because He is promising to move in a greater way through his Holy Spirit.

So week 1 – Paul 'waiting'

Week 2 – Rich 'hunger'

This week 3 – 'Expectation'

Next week – 'excitement'

Christmas is a time of expectation traditionally. My daughter is expecting presents & grandparents. I'm expecting various things this Christmas: 'Only fools & horses' repeats, a rip-roaring Strictly Come Dancing Christmas special (followed by withdrawal symptoms from my family), at least one actual present would be nice....and rest & family time etc

Ideal Home magazine poll December 2007 edition

- We asked IH readers '*What do you look forward to most at Christmas?*'
 - 37% Getting the family together
 - 22% Decorating the House and Tree
 - 18% loads of pressies
 - 17% eating and drinking
 - 6% remembering the Christmas story

Advent as a season is a time when Christians around the world prepare themselves and make space to reflect on the reason for the season. There is an expectation in the air – we hear again the bible accounts of how God prepared His people for the news that a Messiah would one day come to bring salvation to humankind. Way back hundreds of years in advance – like Isaiah 9 (also Isaiah 42:1-9), Micah 5:2 (The Messiah would be born in Bethlehem)

The wise men (Matt 2) came from the east with great expectation that the King of the Jews was about to be born – the came with particular gifts, because they expected a particular life from the boy. **They are a good example to us** – because they didn't just hear the information about this great expectation... **they acted upon it.**

As a church many of us feel an expectation that God is going to move increasingly in us, through us, around us, a bit like being pregnant..... you talk of 'expectant mothers'. New life, new birth, new hope and new mess – all on the horizon

KC's mini-tag is 'more than you'd expect'. Partly to challenge our friends & neighbour's expectations of what 'church' is all about. Partly because Marjorie and I know from experience that the kingdom of God is upside-down, radical, challenging, unusually attractive, and on the move!

If this kingdom stuff is real – I want us to have the highest expectations of it

So I wonder at this time.....

Are you expectant? What are you expecting God to do in 2008?

What are you expecting the kingdom of God to be like in 2008?

- Static?
- Losing ground the forces of secularism, political correctness?
- Or **forcefully advancing** – where forceful men & women are willing to take hold of it? (Matt 11:12)
 - Did Jesus say.. “I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”? YES! (Matt 16:18)

Bible verses - Expectancy of messiah & his kingdom

Isaiah 40

- (v1) Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.
- (v3) A voice of one calling: "In the desert prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God."
- (v5) And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all mankind together will see it. For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

Isaiah 9

- (v2) The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.
- (v6) For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Then of course, the Messiah came and inaugurated the kingdom of God, which you are I are still seeing grow and expand until he comes again. **But the expectation didn't end there. For Jesus' followers, we're called into a lifestyle of expectancy.** Jesus makes it plain that we shouldn't expect to sit back and twiddle our thumbs until we die – instead we're called into the action, the cosmic battle, the struggle to free the hearts and minds of our friends and colleagues and neighbours. The wonder of advancing the kingdom of God on earth **IN THE NOW!**

- Jesus said – I'm going... “But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth.” (John 16:13)
- “I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.” (John 14:12)
- “SO.... Get going – everywhere – and replicate my DNA into many others who will follow me, and all of you do just the stuff I command you to do... and I'll always be with you on the journey ('cos its my kingdom).” (Matt 28)

Expectancy should be a way of life, a mindset, for us as we follow Jesus through life.

2 keys to living lives with Godly expectancy: Faith & Prayer

Faith

“Faith is not the absence of doubt, it’s the presence of belief” Bill Johnson¹

The key to expecting God to move, is getting the right perspective. The perspective is on heaven, on the kingdom, and the fact that the realm of God can break in mightily into everyday life on planet earth. All we have to do to help that happen is to believe it, and pray for it.

Either God is what the bible says he is – good, mighty, creator of the universe...Or He is not. There is no inbetween. There is no ‘mediocre God’, not too bad at some stuff, but a bit poor at other things. Its just not like that. We need to focus our faith upon the truth that we are in relationship with a loving, creative, redeeming, pursuing, holy and just God. And a God whose spirit is at work in you and me, to bring more of His nature into our lives, and our communities.

- Faith is about perspective (mindset)
 - Heavenly resources (available to all of us, as our inheritance right)
 - Covenant promise & protection & provision
 - Kingdom calling (do the stuff)
- Faith is about exercising our God-given authority
 - mindset again – realising its ours to wield about

Night vision goggles illustration again = eyes to see into the ‘unseen’ realm. The super-natural, beyond-natural. Faith is like having night vision.

Recommend my sermon 5th Nov 2007 ([download here](#) and [notes here](#))

If you keep this perspective always in mind, you will not be tripped up so often by the apparent obstacles of this earth (money, sex, power, fear of man, physical realities etc). Instead, you can start commanding them to move out of the way – like a mountain. (Matt 17:20)

A faith perspective should give rise to great expectations. Those OT prophet examples = looking forward to the messiah, great faith that despite current circumstances, God will continue his divine eternal mission of salvation for planet earth and her people. Our vision to ‘call this city back to God’ requires faith – God CAN DO IT, and HE WANTS TO... the question is: do you and I believe it, and what are we going to do about it?

Prayer

“If you want anything from God, you will have to pray into heaven. That is where it all is. If you live in the earth realm and expect to receive from God, you will never get anything.” Smith Wigglesworth²

At the moment I have a feeling that our church is not praying enough to see our vision fulfilled. It’s a big vision – call our city back to God. Focus on mission and discipleship. Big visions need big-time prayer! No major move of God in the world ever started without fervent prayer in advance. It was great to see good number come to half-night prayer – shows it is a priority for us. Thankful to Nike for facilitating it corporately. We feel expectant – lets ‘call it into being’ God’s will for us through prayer.

¹ Bill Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, Treasure House: Shippensburg, PA, 2003, p.55

² Albert Hibbert on Smith Wigglesworth – *The Secret of His Power*, Harrison House: Tulsa, OK, 1982, p.47 quoted in Johnson (op. cit. p.57)

Of course, the good news is that prayer and faith is not a 1-way thing, and not just us trying to muster us some faith out of nowhere. They must come out of relationship.

First line of Lord's Prayer: (Matt 6:9-13) **our father in heaven hallowed be your name**
intimate personal relationship is the context, the foundation, then focus on praise & worship (not on ourselves)

'your kingdom come your will be done' - The primary focus for our prayers. Bringing the reality of His rulership (the kingdom) to earth. If it exists in heaven – it is to be loosed on earth. "It's the praying Christian who looses heaven's expression here" (59)

How do we pray?

- **Pray according to (in line with) the revealed will of God**
 - Ask God to show you His will for a situation
 - Seek God and always put His agenda ahead of your own
 - Waiting may be necessary before we understand His will
- Pray specifically and focussed (once you've understood what to pray for)
- Faith grabs hold of the *reality* in heaven, causes an invasion of heaven onto earth.
 - God, in response to our cries, brings His world into ours.

Simeon & Anne example (Matt 2 25-38)– God puts on their hearts the desire to pray for the coming messiah.

No-one knows how much of heavenly reality God has purposed to become manifest on earth – but we do know its lot! More than at present, more than we can even imagine. (See 1 Cor 2:9-10 & Eph 3:20-21). BUT WE CAN EXPECT. Praying to understand God's will, then praying out that understanding is going to raise our expectations. Just like Jesus did. Egs:

- the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. (John 5:19)
- "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. (John 4:34)

If I've learnt something over the years, it to be ready to expect the unexpected!

Alpha this summer good example. We weren't planning to run one in the summer, but wait until this Autumn. Marjorie felt God say to put it on for 'one person'. In the end, 8 men & women came out of nowhere, we had a fantastic group. God spoke to people, he met people in healing and by his spirit. The guys have carried on together and in the kingdom – and KC now! **Expect the unexpected when you pray 'your kingdom come'.**

Image = franchise (Starbucks, Subway) ruthless imposing their 'model' onto the local branch. Jesus wants franchise disciples = superimposing Kingdom ways/patterns/rules/benefits onto our world, until it looks like His!

Knowing & grasping our authority – our family DNA - will foster great expectations.

"Travailing in prayer is not always a sign of true intercession... I now pray until I come into a place of faith for that situation. When that happens, my perspective on the problem changes. I begin to see it from heaven's view. My role also changes. Instead of asking God to invade my circumstances, I begin to command the *mountains to be removed* in His name..."

Pray until there is a breakthrough. Then exercise the authority given to execute His will over the circumstances at hand."³

³ Johnson, op. cit., p.66

Conclusion

God calls his people to be expectant.

- Christmas, Easter – these remember the greatest events planet earth has ever seen – birth, life, death & resurrection of the divine son of God on earth as a human
- The gift of the Holy Spirit to all believers in Jesus – that's the *how*.
 - **If you are expectant about the *what*, then the Holy Spirit – life in the spirit – is the *how***

Question for us:

- Are you still expectant?
 - Has something has died within you, or needs reviving?
- If you are expectant, are you living in a manner which can best see the kingdom break out?
 - Faith
 - Prayer
 - Action

Response