

# Expectant

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[ 0 : 00 ] Are we here? Are we here? Are we awake? Are we Christmasing? Are we excited about Christmas? Are we sure? Are you sure? I only see like four Christmas jumpers, so I don't believe you.

My last week of college, I've had a week of a preaching module, and there's two really important things I've learned this week. One was never tell personal stories, and the other was always have three points.

So I'm going to start today with a personal story, and I've only got one point to tell you. Is that all right? Sound good? However, it might take me a while to tell you this story and the one point.

When I was a kid, Christmas was awesome. I'd wait for Christmas Day from the start of Advent like I now wait for payday. The anticipation, the things I'm going to get.

The food, the things I'm going to get. The family gatherings, the things I'm going to get. As you can imagine, I fully understood what Christmas was really about.

[ 1 : 03 ] There was also the pinnacle, the climax of Christmas. That's right, the most precious bit that we must never forget about Christmas. The after-dinner present.

The present. Did anyone have this in your family? Did any of your parents ever talk to you like this? You'd open all your presents in the morning, and then you'd realize one is missing.

And you'd wait for the rest of the day. When is this present coming? My family did that to me all the time. There's no novelty socks. It wasn't the boxes or the link set that, you know, if you go to a charity shop in January, if you want to stock up on soaps for the rest of your year, that's where you'll find them.

It was the after-dinner gift, the big one. The one that made your year the year of the Lord's favor. You know? That present. One Christmas, I had a dream.

God slash Santa interchangeable when I was a kid was bringing me a Sega Mega Drive. Yeah? Anybody? Who knows what a Sega Mega Drive is? Yeah, the rest of you, I'm so sorry.

[ 2 : 09 ] Those people who put their hands up, they know. For the 90s, that was the thing to have. The dream. Anyway, the day was in full swing.

Christmas dinner was on the table. I'd had all those other presents, you know, loving gifts and stuff. Pre-recorded movies. Once I got given a tape recording of a Take That album.

It's like, yeah, thanks. Thanks, Uncle Derek. I won't be talking to you again. But, you know, the dinner was on the table. The main presents coming, right?

This is what always happens. Dessert came. It's like, nothing is sweeter than Sonic the Hedgehog. This is when it's going to happen. This is when it's going to happen. Dessert was finished.

I looked at my mum. My dreams were getting shattered. I said, Mother, where is the present? She looked at me all innocent, playing the game.

- [ 3 : 17 ] Mother, show me you love me. She, yeah. Yeah. I was a cheeky git at 29. I mean, seven. Seven. Seven. I didn't deserve it, but they brought out the gits. My parents gave me the Sega Mega Drive. Christmas was saved. Jesus was alive. You know, all that kind of stuff. No hell, no hell. You know, it was great. A ridiculous story, I know. But isn't it funny how hope is so important to life, right?
- I want us to think about the passage today, Isaiah 61. And that's my one point today, is hope, okay? I want us to think about hope. For Israel, when this passage was written, it was in a time where they needed a gift, and a significant one.
- They had every reason to be hopeless. They were a people in exile. Their glory faded. Their promised land conquered. Their God, their hope giver, seemed had left them due to their disobedience.
- [ 4 : 21 ] Yet the prophet Isaiah had good news for them. The year of the Lord's favor is coming. God hasn't forgotten his promises. The Messiah, the Savior, your Savior is coming.
- You can imagine stirring up that little bit of hope in an exiled people. Shame they had to wait 700 years. Do you ever notice that? We often skip a bit of the Bible.
- We read some of the prophecy, and then we forget that there's quite a big gap between some of these prophecies and when they're fully fulfilled. 700 years Israel had to wait for Jesus.
- Well, for us we know, because we're good Christmas people, 670 years later, a baby is born in a stable, and he's called Jesus. The Lord saves.
- The greatest gift Israel could ever hope for. But they would have to wait 30 more years, and they would continue to wait, as Jesus would truly embrace humanity, being like us, living, loving, being humanity at its best.
- [ 5 : 31 ] We forget that bit as well. But then imagine the scene. Israel gathers to hear another sermon titled, What did the Romans ever do for us?
- And this unknown rabbi, this manger baby, now a man, starts reading Isaiah 61, in the midst of this very oppressed, foreign-occupied, broken Israel.
- In Luke 16 we see this. Jesus uses the passage to declare, God is still with them. He's finally activated this rescue plan.
- The Messiah, as he declares, comes to bring good news, to bind up the brokenhearted, proclaim liberty and freedom. The year of the Lord's favour, it's actually come.
- The wait is over. Your hopes of God's salvation has come. Good news, right? Good news for them. Great news for us.
- [ 6 : 33 ] Israel, though they didn't deserve it, were given first refusal, on God's master plan of salvation. This oppressed, broken people, would receive comfort, the oil of gladness, instead of mourning.
- Beauty, where for 700 years, they have only known ashes and defeat. And this seed of Abraham, through the shoot of Jesse, would become oaks of righteousness, showing the world, God is here.
- But this salvation would come, in a way that they could never have predicted. Even though the very same prophet, declared that this Messiah, would be the suffering servant, they expected a warrior king.
- Redemption wouldn't come, in conquering the Romans, and establishing a little empire. No, it would come with God being human. Becoming human himself.
- Restoring humanity, from within it. And saving the whole world. Israel was right to put their place, Israel was right to put their hope, in this God.

[ 7 : 42 ]     God. Because this God, is a big God. Who not only, planned to redeem Israel, but always planned to redeem, humanity.

All of it. But to do that, he needed to deal with the cause, of their need for saving. So Jesus came, to be conquered, to be defeated, and experienced death.

The consequence of our sin, placed on him, on that cross. So that in his being broken, the broken could be healed.

In his losing freedom, we would find it. And in his death and resurrection, we would receive, the greatest gift. Salvation, and right relationship, with our creator.

What more could we hope for? Definitely better, than a Sega Mega Drive. This is the thing, about Christmas. We can so easily forget, when the Coca-Cola adverts, start kicking in.

[ 8 : 49 ]     And the shops, fill with Easter eggs, because we've had Christmas stuff, since Halloween. That little baby, Jesus, in our nativity scenes, and Christmas cards, is the Messiah.

God's rescue plan, who, whilst we get caught up, singing Michael, Michael Blue Bay songs, I can't even speak that name. Bublé. Bublé. I care if I say that one.

Has given the world, salvation. He's given the world, salvation. This little baby, in a stable, little baby in a manger, becomes a man.

He's lived humanity. He's redeeming humanity. And he's offering it to us. So this Christmas, in the midst of the madness, whilst all the presents, are being open, and the excitement levels are high, find time to remember, and give thanks, that baby Jesus, became man Jesus, through whom you and I, can have what he declared.

Freedom, from the power of fear, and oppression, from sin, and death. Healing, of our relationships, the ultimate one, between us and God, but also between each other.

[ 10 : 08 ]     And peace, to live in the now, knowing, that the present, and the future, is in God's hands. That he is with you, Emmanuel, in his spirit.

And when you hope, and when you put your hope, in him, that hope, will never be misplaced. So I challenge you this Christmas, don't stick to the baby.

Remember, the baby was always, to become the man. And it's through that man, that human, God, perfection, that we're alive, and will be alive, with God forever.

Amen?