

# Expecting Immanuel: Joseph

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Date: 03 December 2017

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[ 0 : 00 ] Give us an increase of your grace this morning so that we could truly hear your word brought to bear in our life. Respond to you with faith and hope as we anticipate your return.

In Christ's name we pray. Amen. Please be seated. Amen. Well, welcome to St. John's this morning for our 8 o'clock service.

Sorry to those of you who might have come early not knowing of the time change. And thank you for those of you who did make it this morning. This morning we begin the Advent season and we have an Advent theme which is on the front of your order of service.

And also in the cards that we've supplied for you that outline these four weeks as we run up to the season of Christmas. I know that people think that this is the season of Christmas.

But for us in the church it's the season that we begin the Christian year and focus on the return of Christ. Not just his first coming but our Lord's second coming.

[ 1 : 14 ] So again the theme for this season is great expectations. I know you've heard of that. It's a Charles Dickens title. And what we're doing this Advent season is not just looking at what are realistic or raised expectations.

But I think what are great expectations. As we worship a great God. And so our God is coming or he has come and he will return again in the same way that he left.

We worship a great God. An awesome God. And this is good news. So we wait expectantly for his second coming knowing that he has already come and lived and died.

Ascended into heaven. So this morning as we look at this text in Matthew's gospel. The first chapter. You'll probably want to turn there with me to page 807.

But I just want to look at two things. The first thing is expectation. And the second thing is an exclamation. So the first thing is that of actually a crisis of expectation. I wonder have things ever turned out unexpectedly in your life.

[ 2 : 22 ] Maybe they started the way that you expected them to. And then all of a sudden it took a turn for the worse. And then something helped you see it in a new light. And whatever helped you then see these things differently though didn't make the unexpected go away.

But it helped you to accept and then move through that. Life is always like that I think to a matter of degrees. And such is the birth narrative of Jesus.

And the impact that our Lord's earthly father received that. That is Joseph. Matthew informs us in that 18th verse that the birth of Jesus took place in this way.

He didn't say not in a land far, far away and a time long, long ago. Now as a matter of fact, not fantasy. It was like most births in some ways and yet unlike any of ours.

The delivery was normal. But the conception was, well, not just unusual but unique. Shocking. Unsettling. And this is the crisis of expectation for the mother of our Lord as well as her husband Joseph.

[ 3 : 35 ] A crisis for Mary and Joseph who weren't making this up and neither was Matthew. And why wouldn't one make something like this up? And why is Matthew telling this story?

Before I get to that, Matthew tells us how it happened. Joseph and Mary were betrothed but celibate. The unexpected took place. And the author describes it in four ways.

First of all, Mary and Joseph didn't come together. That was expected. Then Mary was found with child. That was unexpected.

And then Mary with child from the Holy Spirit we learn. It's unconceivable yet divinely conceived.

And fourthly, Joseph was resolved or committed to divorce Mary quietly.

There was some grace and justice in that. Well, the Holy Spirit is the person behind the unexpected turn of events in this birth narrative.

[ 4 : 41 ] The Holy Spirit is the great change agent. He is the one who brings together Mary and Joseph. But he is also the one who conceives our Lord in Mary's womb.

And then he convicts Joseph but also compels him to show grace to Mary. This third person of the Trinity is bringing about some unexpected change for something unique.

That is, the coming of Jesus Christ. The fulfillment of God's promised Messiah. And while God's people expected the Lord to work, they didn't expect him to work in this way.

And Matthew's major theme is that Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of God's plan and promise and all of the prophecy of God that preceded this.

Jesus Christ is the Messiah erupting through a crisis of expectation. Which slowly then raises people's expectations.

[ 5 : 43 ] Sometimes right, sometimes wrong. But eventually then exceeding expectations. Though it all comes through God's exclamation. So let's turn to that now.

Expectation sets us up for God's great exclamation. That is, a salvation that is exclaimed. Joseph, we learn, was resolved and committed to action.

But he was one step short of executing it. That is, the D word. The word divorce. We read, and her husband resolved to divorce her quietly.

But as he considered these things, that is, Joseph considered or reflected or brooded over his plan. Yet to follow through on it, he couldn't deliver on divorce.

Are you ever like that? Do you ever find yourself in a situation when you think you know the right course of action? Or a permitted course of action. You're committed in your mind.

[ 6 : 49 ] But you're still kind of reflecting on it. You're ambivalent. Which isn't like procrastination or compromise. And then the Lord speaks into the matter.

And that's what happened to Joseph. The Lord spoke into his life. By an angel, the Lord gave him the good news.

Good news. And better than he could have even dreamt. Though it actually came in a dream. The good news came as exclamation. Conceived by the Holy Spirit.

And the good news also came with a commission. Look with me down at verses 20 and 21. We see the commission that the Lord gave to Joseph.

Verse 20 reads this way. But as he considered these things. Behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. Saying, Son of Joseph. Sorry, Joseph. Son of David.

[ 7 : 50 ] Do not fear. Take Mary as your wife. That's the first commission. Take Mary. And then the second commission follows on in verse 21. She will bear a son.

And you shall call his name Jesus. That is the second commission. Call this son Jesus. And most importantly, the angel messenger.

Which I figure are just kind of divine and spiritual posties. He doesn't conceive. But he just delivers this message. And this is the message.

He will save his people from their sins. That's Jesus' primary. His ultimate purpose. He doesn't come to bring judgment. He'll come to bear judgment.

And he won't build barriers for his people. But he will actually remove barriers. Between us and God. A sick and saturated with sin.

[ 8 : 48 ] Jesus will save us from our spiritual depravity. That's the good news. And this is the good news. Though it won't make life easier for Joseph and Mary.

It will make it difficult and demanding. But clearer and redemptive. The exclamation. He will save his people from their sins. Will restore the lordship of God.

To not only the people of God. That is the Israelites. But to the whole world. And isn't this the way that good news works in our life? We have some crisis of expectation.

We think that things are going the wrong way. And we find ourselves in a bind. And then God exclaims by his messenger. That is the Holy Spirit. By the word of God.

And through the people of God. The good news. That is that God saves his people from their sins. The Holy Spirit reminds us what is ultimately significant.

[ 9 : 49 ] Not I'll heal you. I'll make things easier. I'll give you a better job. A bigger house. A loving spouse. An obedient child. I'll remove your pain.

Whatever the case. Fill in the blank. No. He says he will save you from your sins. Not that those things aren't important. They are. And God cares about them. But ultimately.

He will save us from our sins. That's not all though. The exclamation has a second part to it. Like the two tablets of the law. Or the two natures of the sun. Fully human and fully divine.

The Messiah has another name. Jesus was the first one that was revealed. But the second one is Emmanuel. And why is that?

Not only does he save us from our sins. But he is with us. Jesus means saves us from our sins. That is God is for us.

[10:47] Not against us. God is the judge. But Jesus is also judged for our sins. But Emmanuel means something else.

It doesn't just mean that God is for us. It means that God is with us. Verse 23 reads. Behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a son.

And they shall call his name Emmanuel. Parentheses. Which means. God with us. You see God's exclamation of salvation.

Isn't some kind of fling or visitation. Or apparition. The promise of God. Is at this time and in this place. The real presence of God.

God. He is really with us. And this is good news. Not just a good idea.

[11:49] Christian isn't kind of a brilliant philosophy. It's a bold truth. Christianity like no other religion. Because it's a reality. God with us in Jesus Christ.

Now and forever. This is the message of Christianity. God in Jesus Christ. Comes and is right here. With you and me.

He dwells with us. He draws us. He drives us on. And we are in him. And he is in us. And this makes all the difference.

In the way we live our life. Both now. And forever more. It means we don't have to deliver ourselves. We don't have to claim. Our own defense.

Though we are sinners. Through Jesus Christ. His life. His death. His resurrection. Our Lord will make. Not only the case for our innocence. Which we don't deserve.

[12:48] But he is with us. Always. Spiritually. Eternally. Perpetually. And this is the great exclamation. Which comes out of a crisis of expectation.

And so it changed the way we live. This expectation and exclamation. Grips our hearts with the grace of God. It moves us to exclaim then the good news of Jesus Christ.

God for us. God with us. And every time things don't turn out the way we think that they should. Not only in our lives. But in other people's lives.

We can ask. Why did I think that? Or another person. Why did you think that? And into that situation. We listen. To the spirit of God. And the word that he has to bring into our life.

And other people's lives. That Holy Spirit. Who brings the word of God. Who says to that person. Or to you in that situation. He's saying to us.

[13:49] I am God. I am with you. I am with you. Or as John says seven times in his gospel. I am. I am. I am.

I am. I am. That's God. It's the message of Advent and Christmas. And it's for discipleship and evangelism.

And it's for worship. And witness. And so this Advent and Christmas. Raises our expectations of the Holy Spirit. To use the unexpected.

So that we dwell. And are drawn. And sometimes driven. To others with the story of salvation. That Jesus Christ. Is both.

Savior. And Emmanuel. I speak to you in the name of the Father. The Son. And the Holy Spirit. Amen. Amen. Thank you.