

What do you expect?

Luke 1:39-45

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May the words of my mouth and the ears of our hearts be open to the word of God this day. AMEN.

What were your expectations today? What did you expect at Church this morning? Did you think we would have this much snow? Did you think we would be meeting in the fellowship hall because of the cold sanctuary? Did you think that you would be sitting in cold metal chairs. Did you think we would be crowded? What are your expectations?

St. Luke in our Gospel reading gives us the expectations of two expectant mothers in the first century Palestine. They certainly had expectations and hopes. But these are no ordinary expectant mothers. They are Elizabeth and Mary. The childless getting old Elizabeth whose husband a priest, was struck mute after entering the holy of holies. And Mary the teenage, young unmarried virgin girl from a small town who suddenly becomes pregnant. And their children were no ordinary children. One was John the Baptist, God's voice crying in the wilderness and the other Jesus, the Son of God, the living Lord Almighty.

So what were these mother's expectations? That is where it gets real interesting. They were not like most parents I have ever seen, who have to wonder and hope about their children. Both Mary and Elizabeth didn't need to wonder what their children would be like or do in their life. Gabriel, An angel of the Lord, comes to Zechariah and tells him that he will have a son and name him John and he will be filled with the Spirit and turn many people back to God. Then sixth months later an angel of the Lord appears to Mary and tells her that she also will have a son and she should name him Jesus and he will be the Son of God, and he will reign forever over the house of all Israel. Then when in our reading today, when Mary first meets her cousin Elizabeth when they are both expecting, the child leaps in her womb and she is filled with the Holy Spirit and is informed instantly of the glory that will come upon this child of Mary's.

So if you were those women, a young innocent unmarried girl and an aging childless woman, what would those words of the angels and the coming the Holy Spirit give you as expectations of the coming of your child?

Would you feel **Joy**? That is one expectation that is given Mary's baby will be a source of Joy. Here were two women in the midst of oppression. One is elderly and until now childless. The other has been discovered to be with child outside of marriage. The penalty for adultery in that day was at best exile and banishment the norm however was death! As women they had no say in the running of their community. As Jews they were under the thumb of a ruthless Roman empire that merely tolerated their religion and way of life.

Yet both are overcome by joy. One can understand Elizabeth's joy. She is expecting a child. But that is not why she praises God. She praises God because she has been visited by the mother of the Messiah. And thus she also knows the messiah has come.

And Mary praises God for the same reason. The salvation that she and all Israel have awaited is upon them. She is quite literally pregnant with the expectation of the ages. God's mercy in its purest form is soon to be born into a cruel and merciless world. She is filled with the expectation that generations of people had waited for, the redemption of God's people. And now she could sing for joy because she knew the time was now!

Another expectation this young mother felt was **a knowledge** that Jesus, the child in her womb would bring about a revolution to turn the moral order on its head. Right after praising God Mary says: "He has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts." The proud are made low and the low are made high. This is not unheard of, but the world normally doesn't work this way. The proud are the ones who have or at least believe they have power, fame, talent, or possessions. But pride many times will lead right into sinfulness. All the way back to the original sin, the desire to be like God. It led Adam and Eve to commit the first sin, and it is that same pride that leads us all to declare ourselves to think we know more than God, acting in immoral or ungodly ways.

But Jesus came to turn all that around. He has come as a humble child in a manger. He came not as a king, marching in front of a mighty Holy army. He could have come in a chariot of fire with legions of angels. But he came in humility, in an animal stall, laid in the hay at birth for his first bed. And he lived in humility in a small unknown back woods town of Galilee. Then when he rose up to begin his ministry and people began to know who he was he would consistently order them to go and tell no one. Then he died a lowly criminal death on a cross in full humility. And through his humiliating death, death was defeated. And through his blood our sinful hearts were cleansed. Jesus fulfilled this expectation of scattering the proud and cleansing our hearts.

But that is not all, another expectation is that Mary's child in her womb will lead a **social revolution**. Moved by the Holy Spirit Mary says, "He has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly." We can see this in his birth itself. Jesus came not to the palaces and principalities of this earth. Instead he lifted up a humble but faithful young girl.

But this was only the beginning of things to come. Jesus would continue to go around, under, and over the governors and religious leaders of this world and go straight to the people. He would teach and preach to the masses. He would lift up the lowly by healing them, loving them, and caring for them. But again that is just a small bit of what will come. Jesus certainly lifted up the lowly during the years between his birth and his death, but Jesus will come again

and he will cast down the powerful. The evil powers and principalities of this world will be done away with the meek shall inherit the earth! Mary expected her son to call all people into God's kingdom, rising up the poor and lowly.

But still Mary had more expectations. Another one that Mary had for her baby was that he would lead an **economic revolution**. Mary said, "He has filled the hungry with good things and he has sent the rich empty away." In this world people amass wealth, possessions and status. Just look at the sales pitches that try to catch your attention this Christmas. The ads would have you think that you are incomplete, you are not happy, that you are not content unless you have this or that. The point is that we have to acquire more and more stuff to feel like we are some bodies. That includes food, houses, cars, clothes, gadgets, whatever.

Jesus came to turn that state of affairs on its head. In short, Jesus came to change the world and people's lives. He came to bring Joy out of sadness. He came to bring righteousness out of sin. He came to bring down the powerful and lift up the humble. He came to feed the those in need. These are the expectations of Mary. These are the expectations Elizabeth knew was coming when the Holy Spirit touched her. This is the same expectations that John later in life was predicting while he was out preaching about the Kingdom of God that is at hand.

So did Jesus live up to those expectations? Yes, in fact the revolution has begun and continues to go forth from that moment of his birth, when God broke into this world as a humble child and when the overthrow of death and sin began on the cross. The expectations were proven true and the world was changed.

But this only leaves me with one unanswered expectation. The expectation you have in your heart? What do you expect of Jesus? The angel and the spirit came upon Zechariah and he sang his praise and his expectations of God. The Holy Spirit came upon Elizabeth and she knew the expected Messiah was at hand. John preached with the Holy Spirit knowing that the Kingdom of God was at hand. Mary knowing the glory of God and filled with the Holy Spirit, proclaimed here her expectations. And that leaves us with how do we respond to these expectations? Has Jesus changed your life? Has he lead a revolution in your heart and soul. Are you open to seeing the expectations that Jesus has for you. Amen.

May the Peace and Grace of God be with you this day and throughout the week to come.