

Expectations. Of what this time of year will bring, hopes for 2022 even now. Sick and tired of anything related to covid and vain politics.

Expectations. We have them for the people around us. Others have them for you. How much it hurts to hear (or say) “I’m disappointed in you” that you didn’t live up to their expectations. Expectations for our family. I have expectations of you. Pretty high. No doubt you have expectations of me and him. This is good.

Then there’s expectations we lay on God, how often man-centered, self-serving. We expect Him to be there to fix things all our problems, to alleviate suffering; to right all wrongs, avenge all injustices, reward every good, punish every evil, bring rain when convenient, sunshine on demand, answer prayers the way we want and 180 gallons of free wine would be nice for the daughter’s wedding.

Expectations. We let people down, fail them more than we care to admit. On top of that, the expectations of God upon us, to live as His people, to bear His name, to heed His Word. Oh how we fail miserably. Jeremiah tells you: stop. Do you take your sin lightly? Do you not fear God?

Israelites had expectations. They’re God’s “chosen people.” His holy nation. Selected, protected, set apart from all the other nations. A people, a land, a covenant, a Law, a Promise. Yet, their man-centered expectations, that set them up for failure.

Israel grew corrupt, idolatrous; God disciplined His people; sent Assyrians to ransack the northern kingdom, Israel. Raised up Babylonians to capture Judah, the southern kingdom, to put the king, the “son of David” into chains, God’s temple destroyed, people off into exile.

Jeremiah prophesied, to the coming destruction and exile. Warned people of what was coming, repent. Like people now, they ignored him. In fact, they actively silenced him. He was depressing. Bad for morale. Unpatriotic. God would never let such a thing happen. Jeremiah was canceled, put under lock and key to shut him up. It was there, Jeremiah confined in the courtyard of the palace guard, that the Word of the Lord came to him.

He spoke of desolation, towns laid waste; and He spoke of restoration, healing, resurrection. Exile and return. Death and resurrection would be the way of Israel. That’s the build-up to today’s reading. **Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah.** God keeps His promises -even as He permits destruction, desolation, death, He keeps His promises. **A righteous Branch** from King David’s family tree. He will do justice, righteousness in the land. **In those days Judah will be saved, Jerusalem will dwell securely.** God’s people clung to that promise. Lived in exile along with the likes of Daniel and Esther; clung to those promises of God -a Son of David, a righteous Branch would sprout from David’s line and deliver His people. They believed that coming day. They longed for it. Lived in expectation of it.

Then came the return to Judah, rebuilding of Jerusalem under Ezra and Nehemiah, the temple rebuilt. Not as good as before, but still.... They were back, and yet it wasn't the same. When the old timers looked at the rebuilt temple they beat their breasts and wept, said, "It isn't as good as the old one." And it wasn't. No ark of the covenant. And no freedom, really. It's not their land anymore. Tenants under Persia and then Rome. But the faithful never forgot the words of Jeremiah and the prophets, the promise. They remembered, expectations, looked forward in hope even in darkest of days. That's what God's people do!

Watching, generations passing by, each generation expectations for the coming One. Then it happens. He happens. Jesus, riding into Jerusalem on top of a borrowed donkey, humble, lowly. Not exactly the King anyone would expect.

They expected a holy war; for justice from Romans; the coming a kingdom; the throne of David. A king to rule greater than David. Free and glory. And, that's exactly what happened. But not to their expectations.

Jesus rode into the city to do holy war against sin, death, the devil. To do justice to your sin, bring His kingdom ruled by forgiveness and grace, upon the throne not of this world, ruling and reigning to eternity. To be Israel reduced to One, the righteous Branch of David's line, to be chopped down and burned in the fire of God's wrath against our sin. Freed from sin, glory lifted on a tree.

Hosanna. Lord, save us. What Advent is all about. **See, your King comes to You, righteous and having salvation.** We could write the words over the door to the church: Beyond comprehension, the Lord comes here for you.

Why we sing with His people gathered in Jerusalem, the song of heaven, to greet our King -**Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!** Every Sunday as He comes to humbly join Himself to you in the Supper as the Church has greeted her King for 2000 years. Worldly expectations of man will not see or understand this. And you've come to expect His kingdom poured out for you as in no other way on this earth.

Advent, season of expectations: of the Christmas celebration; expectations under the tree, of family meals and gathering. Expectations set upon the things of man are sure to disappoint and you will be disappointed this Christmas.

Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace. That there would be a longing in your heart this time of year. **That you would know the things that make for peace.** Peace that only flows from manger, to cross, to you in His means of grace-Word, Sacraments. Peace. There is no other. Amidst this world that will never find peace. You know, He is yours.

Over the next 28 days, set your exceptions low. Lowly in repentance, reflection how you've lived; obedience to devotions. Set your expectations upon a King who comes; with still lowly means of grace here for you. **Hosanna, save us.** That's prayer of God's people, of Jeremiah, of His church. The promise of Advent –the Lord does not forget you. Expectations upon His promises -you will never be disappointed.