

Title: '*Our Expectations*'

Date: 18th January 2015

Scripture: *John 1:41-53*

Prayer for the message: 'Heavenly Father, with whom nothing is ever impossible, please, in the name of Jesus Christ protect Your Word sown today from the evil one. May he not be able to snatch it away but may it become so deeply rooted within our hearts that nothing, not trouble and not pleasure may choke or suffocate it. We pray and ask these things with thanksgiving because we believe we have received the answer to our petitions in the wonderful name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Message: 'Our Expectations'

When friends of ours living in Mandini and working at [Sappi](#) paper mill heard that Dave was being transferred to the mill and that we would also be living in Mandini, they went to the housing department of [Sappi](#) to find out which house we had been allocated.

They were very relieved to hear we had been allocated 22 Grieg Road, *because* most *newbie's* were given in house in Farrow Road.

For some reason OR other Farrow Road had this '*not so good*' reputation and no one wanted an address in Farrow Road.

I think even if Farrow Road had become the new address for the General Manger, the Process Manger, the Engineering Manager and the 2 company doctors instead of the very lovely Stratten Circle, Farrow Road would still have this '*not so good*' stigma attached to it.

I remember discussing this with several congregation members who did live in Farrow Road and we came to the conclusion that the only way Farrow Road would be able to throw off the '*not so good*' reputation it had was if the name of the road was changed.

The town of Nazareth, where Joseph had his carpentry business and our Lord Jesus grew up *also had 'a not so good'* reputation.

Nazareth was a rough town. The people were largely uneducated and ill-mannered - and although Nazareth is built on the slopes of the hills of Galilee it is not picturesque.

Dave and I have visited Nazareth and my personal impression of the town was that it was very busy, very noisy and not all that clean compared to Jerusalem and Tel a Viv. Nazareth is definitely not a town I would hurry to visit again.

In the days when Jesus walked the dusty roads of Israel those who lived in Judea looked down on those who lived in Galilee, *but even* those who lived in Galilee looked down on those who lived in Nazareth.

Thus we hear Nathanael say to his friend Philip when Philip sought him out and announced to Nathanael that he had found the Messiah, *'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?'*

I've also visited **Cana** where Nathanael was from.

Cana, you will remember is the town where Jesus performed His first miracle, at a wedding - when He turned water into wine.

The only reason we visited Cana was to see the supposed place where Jesus performed the miracle of water into wine.

Cana was even less memorable than Nazareth - so I really don't understand Nathanael's remark, except, like everyone else who lived in Galilee, he looked down on all those from Nazareth.

Have you ever noticed what the Lord says through the apostle Paul in **1Corinthians chapter 1:27?** *'For God selected, deliberately chose what in the world is foolish to put the wise to shame, and what the world calls weak to put the strong to shame.'* The fact that the Messiah came from Nazareth confirms that God delights in using the common, the weak, and the lowly things of this world - I am evidence of that!

It doesn't matter to God how flawed we are - it doesn't matter to Him what our address is, He uses the foolish and the weak to put to shame the wise and the strong, and the end result, God receives all the glory *because* it is what the Lord has done in **us**.

In Acts 4:13 Peter and John, fishermen, are called *unlearned and untrained, common men with no education* by the magistrates and elders and scribes and yet God used them to build His church and *turn the world upside down*.

How awesome to be accused of *turning the world upside down* for God!

Nathanael did not **expect** the Jewish Messiah to come out of Nazareth, *after all* he had read the prophecies of the Old Testament prophet Micah and the prophet said that the Messiah comes out of Bethlehem! *'And really Philip can anything good come out of Nazareth? Get real my friend.'*

Notice, Philip doesn't argue with his friend, he simply invites him to, *'Come and see!'*

What are our expectations of what God can do in our personal circumstances?

What are our expectations of what God can do in the community God has placed us?

What are our expectations of being used by God to build His kingdom in our community?

Since moving to this area I have heard various comments made by those living here that could easily be interpreted as, *'Can anything good come out of this place?'*

I shared the other evening with someone a pray that was on my heart, and they said to me, *'that will never happen!'* And my response was, *'Don't say that, my God is a very **big God**, and nothing is impossible with Him.'*

Is there a situation that you think, *'O, God could never change that?'* Do you not remember what the angel Gabriel said to Mary when she asked, *'How can this be - how can I become pregnant when I have not been intimate with a man'* Gabriel replied, *'For with God nothing is ever impossible and no word from God shall be without power or impossible of fulfilment.'* (Luke 1:37)

What are our **expectations** of what God can do?

A previous sermon series the Lord led me to do was entitled, *'If He did it them, He can do it for us, for He is the same yesterday, today and forever.'* And in the series we looked at 3 miracles Jesus performed:

- The healing of the woman with severe bleeding
- The feeding of the five thousand, and
- Water into wine at the wedding at Cana

All these miracles were a display of God's power in very practical human situations. And throughout the series I hammered the point that if God did it for them He can do it for us, *and why not?*

He is always the same, yesterday, today and forever **Hebrews 13:8**

All His promises find their yes answer in Him Christ **2Corinthians 1:20**

God does not break His covenant, nor, alter the thing that has gone out of His lip **Psalm 89:34**

God is not a man, that He should tell a lie, what He says He does, what He has spoken He will make good on **Numbers 23:19**

For He is the Lord and He does not change **Malachi 3:6**

So, what are our expectations of what God can do - of whom God can use?

Jesus says to us in **Mark 11:23-24** if we do not doubt in our hearts BUT believe, trust and be confident that what we ask for in prayer is granted to us *then* whatever we ask for in prayer, we will get it.

But only if we don't have anything against anyone - only if we are not harbouring any un-forgiveness - only if we have **let go, dropped it** and **forgive** the failings and shortcomings of others, as God has freely forgiven our failings and shortcomings.

How many of us are sitting in church this morning with un-forgiveness in our hearts - or we have an unresolved issue with someone - or we are not on speaking terms with another person?

What are our expectations of what God can do?

In spite of everything we see and hear to the contrary do we **expect** God to make good on His Word - do we expect God to fulfil His promises - do we expect that God can in fact bring good things out of our community?

What are our **expectations?**

Do we believe that God *is able to do super-abundantly, far over and above all that we dare ask or think, infinitely beyond our highest thoughts, hopes or dreams according to His power at work within us?* Do we believe that? Do we expect that?

You and I need to co-operate with God - what do I mean by that? I mean we need to be daring in our faith and daring in our prayers - we need to stretch our faith beyond *our highest thoughts*, and beyond our *hopes and dreams*.

The TV evangelist/preacher Joyce Meyers introduced me to this wonderful verse from **Isaiah 30:18**; in The Amplified Bible God says this, '*And therefore the Lord earnestly waits, expecting, looking, and longing to be gracious to you; and therefore He lifts Himself up, that He may have mercy on you and show loving-kindness to you. For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed are those who earnestly wait for Him, who expect and look and long for Him, for His victory, His favour, His love, His peace, His joy, and His matchless, unbroken companionship.*'

In this verse God says that He lifts Himself up - possibly to get a better view of someone to be *gracious to*.

God earnestly waits

God earnestly expects

God earnestly looks

God earnestly longs to be gracious to *each one of us*

But He cannot be gracious to anyone who has a negative attitude - who has the same attitude as Nathanael and asks, '**Can anything good come out of this place?**'

God is looking for someone who is **expecting** His favour - someone who is on the lookout all the time - on Wednesday afternoon at Activity Club we had 18 children - on Wednesday evening at 'Starfish' every visitor came into the church prayer - that is the first time I have witnessed that - we were concerned about church finances, but it is not as bad as first thought, God is looking for someone who is looking for and expecting Him - God is looking for someone who is eagerly anticipating His victory, His favour, His love, His peace, His joy and His companionship.

But are we looking and expecting Him? We will be blessed if we are!

God wants to be good to us *but* are we **expectant**?

Do we **expect** an outpouring of His favour though??

What are our expectations?

Nathanael, had very low expectations of anything good ever coming out of Nazareth, *but* God surprised Him - God used the rough, ill-mannered, uneducated town of Nazareth as the home of the Son of God, the King of Israel and a short conversation with Jesus changed Nathanael's mind - do we need to spend more time with God in His Word in order to understand exactly what He has promised and what He can do?

Please may we not limit God by our negativity and by the state of our hearts *but* may we pray *big* prayers in *big* faith and then expect our God *to do super-abundantly, far over and above all that we dare ask or think, infinitely beyond our highest thoughts, our highest hopes or dreams.*

Let us pray

Prayer: Heavenly Father, faithful, merciful and loving Lord, we approach Your throne of grace humbly knowing that against You only do we sin. We confess our lack of faith in You, in Your Word and in Your promises to us. *(PAUSE)* We confess our lack of expectancy so much so that You need to lift Yourself up to look for someone to be gracious to *(PAUSE)*. We confess that un-forgiveness, holding onto grudges, and not reconciling our differences prevents You from having *mercy on us and showing loving-kindness* to us *(PAUSE)*. Forgive us for small faith and small prayers.

Purify us with hyssop, and we shall be clean; wash us, and we shall be whiter than snow, and may Your Holy Spirit continue to convict us until we forgive, let drop, leave it, and let go anything we have against anyone. Create in all of us clean hearts and renew a right and steadfast spirit within us - make us to hear joy and gladness and be satisfied. Thank you for Your forgiveness and cleansing. Lord Jesus, wonderful Lord, it is in Your name we pray. **Amen.**