

Luke 3:15-22
January 13, '19

“FILLED WITH EXPECTATION”

ONE SUNDAY MORNING IN CHURCH, A LITTLE BOY
THREW A TANTRUM AFTER HIS YOUNGER BROTHER'S
BAPTISM.

AS THE FAMILY WAS DRIVING HOME AFTER WORSHIP,
THE BOY STARTED CRYING.

HE CRIED HARDER AND HARDER AND HIS MOTHER KEPT
ASKING HIM WHAT WAS WRONG, BUT HE WOULDN'T SAY.

ONLY LATER DID HE BREAK DOWN AND CONFESS: *“MOM,
WHEN THE MINISTER BAPTIZED JIMMY, HE SAID HE WANTS US
TO GROW UP IN A GOOD CHRISTIAN HOME, BUT I DON'T WANT
THAT - I WANT TO STAY WITH YOU AND DAD!”*

THAT'S ONE OF THE MORE – SHALL WE SAY
“INTERESTING” - BAPTISM STORIES I'VE EVER HEARD.

BUT THE ONE WE'VE READ THIS MORNING FROM LUKE'S
GOSPEL IS THE MOST INTERESTING BAPTISM STORY OF ALL.

HERE WE ARE – JUST THREE WEEKS REMOVED FROM
CHRISTMAS – AND IN THE CHAPTER IMMEDIATELY AFTER
THE ONE THAT TELLS US OF THE BIRTH OF JESUS – AND NOW
HE'S ALREADY THIRTY YEARS OLD!

AND SOME OF YOU THOUGHT *YOUR* CHILDREN GREW UP
TOO FAST!

AS YOU LISTEN TO THESE VERSES, IT MAY SEEM AS THOUGH YOU'VE HEARD THEM RECENTLY.

YOU'RE RIGHT – THE FIRST FEW VERSES WERE THE LECTONARY GOSPEL LESSON THAT TREY USED WHEN HE PREACHED IN DECEMBER.

YOU MAY RECALL THAT HE TALKED ABOUT THE WAY JOHN THE BAPTIST HAD SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS FOR TAX COLLECTORS & SOLDIERS.

IT IS IMMEDIATELY AFTER THOSE INSTRUCTIONS THAT WE HEAR THE WORDS “*AS THE PEOPLE WERE FILLED WITH EXPECTATION...*”

“FILLED WITH EXPECTATION...”

THAT'S A GREAT PHRASE, ISN'T IT?

IT'S A STATEMENT THAT TELLS US SOMETHING EXCITING IS ABOUT TO HAPPEN.

YOU KNOW WHAT THAT'S LIKE, DON'T YOU?

YOU MAY HAVE FELT IT WITH THE ROAR OF THE CROWD WHEN YOUR FAVORITE BAND STEPPED ONSTAGE TO OPEN A CONCERT.

YOU'VE FELT IT AS YOU ROSE FROM YOUR SEAT WITH THE OPENING PITCH OR KICK-OFF OR CENTER COURT TIP OR PUCK DROP AT A SPORTING EVENT.

YOU MAY HAVE FELT IT AS THE CURTAIN WAS RISING AT THE BEGINNING OF A STAGE PRODUCTION YOU'D ALWAYS DREAMED OF SEEING.

IN EVERY ONE OF THOSE MOMENTS OF BEING “FILLED WITH EXPECTATION,” YOU KNEW YOU WERE ABOUT TO EXPERIENCE SOMETHING YOU’D REMEMBER FOR YEARS & YEARS TO COME.

YOU KNOW, THAT’S REALLY SOMETHING WE SHOULD FEEL EVERY WEEK.

EVERY TIME WE ENTER GOD’S HOUSE TO WORSHIP, WE SHOULD BE “FILLED WITH EXPECTATION,” BECAUSE IT IS HERE – HERE MORE THAN ANYWHERE ELSE – THAT WE ENCOUNTER THE LIVING GOD IN OUR MIDST!

IT IS HERE THAT WE ARE SURROUNDED BY A LOVING FAMILY OF FAITH WHO HAVE JOINED US IN THAT MOOD OF EXPECTATION.

TODAY, THAT MOOD OF EXPECTATION SHOULD BE EVEN GREATER THAN IT NORMALLY IS.

TODAY, WE SHOULD EXPECT THAT WE WILL EXPERIENCE SOMETHING THAT – LIKE THOSE OTHER EXPERIENCES MENTIONED – WE WILL REMEMBER YEARS FROM NOW.

FOR TODAY IS THE FIRST DAY THAT A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF NEWBURGH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH MEMBERS & EASTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH MEMBERS JOIN TOGETHER AS ONE FOR WORSHIP.

WE SHOULD ALL BE “*FILLED WITH EXPECTATION*” IN THE WAY THAT GOD IS PRESENT IN OUR MIDST AS WE JOIN

TOGETHER – “FILLED WITH EXPECTATION” AT WHAT GOD IS GOING TO DO *WITH* US, AND *FOR* US & *THROUGH* US IN THE FUTURE.

AS WE CONSIDER THIS PASSAGE FROM LUKE THAT TELLS US OF THE BAPTISM OF JESUS, I THINK THERE ARE TWO VERY IMPORTANT AND SEEMINGLY CONTRADICTORY MESSAGES WITHIN THESE VERSES – MESSAGES THAT SPEAK TO THE WAY IN WHICH WE ARE “FILLED WITH EXPECTATION” AS WE GATHER HERE THIS MORNING.

FIRST OF ALL, THIS PASSAGE TELLS US THAT JESUS IS VERY DIFFERENT FROM US.

I’M NOT TALKING ABOUT DIFFERENT IN TERMS OF *DEGREE*.

I’M TALKING ABOUT DIFFERENT IN TERMS OF *KIND*.

YOU SEE, JESUS WASN’T JUST DIFFERENT FROM US IN HIS LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING OR HIS KNOWLEDGE OF GOD OR HIS LEVEL OF COMMITMENT.

HE WAS COMPLETELY DIFFERENT FROM US IN THAT HE WAS THE SON OF GOD – THE ONE & ONLY SON OF GOD.

HE WAS, AS THE PROLOGUE IN JOHN’S GOSPEL TELLS US, GOD IN THE FLESH.

HE WAS IN THE BEGINNING WITH GOD.

NOW, SOME OF YOU ARE THINKING, “*OH, YEAH. WE KNOW THAT. YOU’RE NOT TELLING US ANYTHING NEW. WE’VE ALWAYS KNOWN THAT.*”

YOU'RE RIGHT.

I'M NOT TELLING YOU ANYTHING NEW.

THAT'S ALWAYS BEEN TRUE.

YOU *KNOW* THAT.

BUT DO YOU *BELIEVE* IT?

DO YOU REALLY BELIEVE IT?

DOES IT DETERMINE HOW YOU LIVE YOUR LIFE?

**DOES IT CONTROL YOUR EVERY ACTION & YOUR EVERY
THOUGHT?**

**BECAUSE, YOU SEE, THERE ARE MANY TODAY WHO
WOULD HAVE US BELIEVE OTHERWISE.**

**THERE ARE THOSE WHO WOULD HAVE US BELIEVE
THAT'S A NICE CONCEPT AND AN ADMIRABLE WAY OF
THINKING, BUT IN REALITY LITTLE MORE THAN THAT.**

**AND DON'T THINK IT'S JUST OUT THERE IN THE
SECULAR WORLD.**

**THERE ARE THOSE WITHIN CHRISTIANITY WHO WOULD
HAVE US BELIEVE THAT AS WELL.**

**THERE ARE THOSE WHO WOULD SUGGEST THAT JESUS
WAS REALLY JUST A MAN WHO HAD GREATER INSIGHT INTO
GOD'S WILL THAN ANY OF US HAS.**

**THERE IS AN APPEAL TO THAT WAY OF THINKING
BECAUSE WE CAN GRASP IT.**

IT'S SOMETHING WE CAN UNDERSTAND.

IT MAKES SENSE.

**WE CAN'T REALLY COMPREHEND THE CONCEPT OF GOD
IN HUMAN FORM.**

**WE TRY, BUT WE DON'T FULLY GET IT & SO THE
THOUGHT OF A JESUS WHO'S JUST A LITTLE BETTER THAN
US HAS A SPECIAL APPEAL.**

**THE PROBLEM IS - THAT'S NOT WHAT THE BIBLE
TEACHES.**

IT'S NOT WHAT JESUS SAID OF HIMSELF.

**IT'S NOT WHAT THE DISCIPLES OR THE EARLY CHURCH
BELIEVED.**

**AND THE PROBLEM IS THAT LIVES AREN'T
TRANSFORMED BY A NICE GUY.**

LIVES ARE TRANSFORMED BY A LORD AND A SAVIOR.

**AT HIS BAPTISM, THAT'S WHAT GOD PROCLAIMS WHEN
THE HEAVENS ARE OPENED AND THE HOLY SPIRIT
DESCENDS UPON JESUS.**

HE IS LORD AND HE IS SAVIOR.

THAT'S THE FIRST MESSAGE OF THIS PASSAGE.

JESUS IS VERY DIFFERENT FROM US.

THE SECOND ONE IS SEEMINGLY CONTRADICTIONARY.

**JESUS IS VERY MUCH THE SAME AS US & THE
INCREDIBLY EXTRAORDINARY THOUGHT OF THAT SHOULD
ALSO LEAVE US "FILLED WITH EXPECTATION!"**

NOTE WHEN THE BAPTISM OF JESUS TAKES PLACE.

LUKE SAYS, “WHEN ALL THE PEOPLE WERE BEING BAPTIZED, JESUS WAS BAPTIZED TOO.”

JESUS WAS BAPTIZED ALONG WITH EVERYONE ELSE.

IT WASN'T A SPECIAL CEREMONY.

IT WASN'T A TIME SET ASIDE FOR A PRIVATE BAPTISM.

WHEN EVERYONE ELSE WAS BAPTIZED, SO WAS JESUS.

HOW CAN HIS BAPTISM BE INSTRUCTIVE FOR US? HOW CAN IT RELATE TO OUR OWN LIVES?

I FIND IT INTERESTING THAT GOD IS ALREADY “WELL PLEASED” WITH JESUS.

JESUS HASN'T DONE ANYTHING YET!

IN FACT, IT IS IN THE VERSE FOLLOWING GOD'S INDICATION OF PLEASURE IN JESUS, THAT WE ARE TOLD JESUS “BEGINS” HIS WORK.

HOW DOES THAT RELATE TO OUR OWN LIVES?

IS GOD “WELL PLEASED” WITH US BECAUSE WE DO THINGS THAT PLEASE GOD, OR IS IT THE OTHER WAY AROUND?

IS IT GOD'S POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARDS US BECAUSE OF WHO WE ARE, BEFORE WE HAVE DONE ANYTHING PLEASING, THAT THEN MOTIVATES US TO SEEK TO DO WHAT IS PLEASING TO GOD – TO LIVE UP TO WHAT GOD HAS ALREADY DECLARED US TO BE?

WITH THE WORDS OF THIS PASSAGE, GOD CONFIRMS A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS AND EXPRESSES CONFIDENCE IN HIM.

BUT WITH THAT RELATIONSHIP & WITH THAT CONFIDENCE GOES RESPONSIBILITY, FOR THE RELATIONSHIP IMPLIES OBEDIENCE AND THE GIFT OF THE SPIRIT IMPLIES A MISSION.

GOD’S EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE IN JESUS BINDS JESUS TO GOD’S CAUSE.

THE ONLY WAY TO RESPOND TO GOD’S TRUST IS BY DOING GOD’S WILL.

I DON’T THINK LUKE TELLS US ABOUT JESUS’ BAPTISM JUST TO INFORM US ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED TO JESUS.

I THINK HE RELATES THIS STORY TO INDICATE SOMETHING ABOUT OUR OWN BAPTISMS, SOMETHING ABOUT OUR OWN NEED TO BE IN PRAYER, SOMETHING ABOUT OUR OWN ANOINTING WITH THE SPIRIT, AND OUR OWN SUBSEQUENT BATTLES WITH EVIL AND OUR OWN MINISTRY IN THE WORLD.

WE, TOO, HAVE A “BELOVED” AND “WELL-PLEASING” RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD AND WITH THAT RELATIONSHIP COMES THE RESPONSIBILITY TO LIVE IT OUT IN SERVICE & MISSION – TO LIVE UP TO THE CONFIDENCE GOD HAS PLACED IN US.

THIS IS THE OTHER MESSAGE OF THIS PASSAGE – A MESSAGE THAT IS SEEMINGLY CONTRADICTORY TO THE FIRST.

WE ARE VERY MUCH LIKE JESUS.

WHEN WE READ OF HIS BAPTISM, WE ARE CALLED TO PLACE OURSELVES WITHIN THE STORY.

AN ARTIST WAS STANDING ALONG A BEAUTIFUL RIVER IN FRANCE WHERE HE WAS PAINTING A PICTURE OF THE LANDSCAPE.

A GROUP OF CHILDREN CAME BY AND WATCHED THE ARTIST AS HE CAUGHT THE BEAUTY OF THE CLOUDS, THE RIVER AND THE TREES WITH HIS BRUSHES.

FINALLY, ONE OF THE LITTLE GIRLS IN THE GROUP SIMPLY COULDN'T CONTAIN HER ENTUSIASM ANY LONGER AND ASKED, "*MISTER, CAN YOU GET US INTO THAT PICTURE?!*"

THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT WE *ARE* IN THIS PICTURE OF JESUS' BAPTISM.

NOT ONLY ARE WE IN THE PICTURE, BUT WE'RE PART OF THE STORY – AND TODAY – THE FIRST DAY THAT MEMBERS OF TWO CHURCHES UNITE TOGETHER FOR WORSHIP – SHOULD "FILL US WITH EXPECTATION" OF THE WAY IN WHICH GOD IS PREPARED TO LEAD US INTO THE FUTURE AS ONE.

THAT'S WHERE THIS SECOND MESSAGE OF THE PASSAGE COMES ALIVE FOR US.

**IN OUR BAPTISM, GOD TELLS US THAT WE ARE HIS
BELOVED & HE IS WELL-PLEASSED WITH US.**

**MARTIN LUTHER WAS FOND OF SAYING THAT WE MUST
BE “LITTLE CHRISTS” TO EACH OTHER.**

**WHAT HE MEANT WAS THAT THERE IS SOMETHING OF
JESUS INSIDE OF US AS WE BELIEVE IN HIM AND AS WE
TRUST HIM AS OUR LORD AND SAVIOR.**

**THERE IS A POWER WITHIN US THAT ENABLES US TO DO
FAR MORE THAN WE EVER THOUGHT WE WERE CAPABLE OF
DOING.**

**WE ARE ALL CALLED TO BE ‘LITTLE CHRISTS’ TO EACH
OTHER.**

WE ARE CALLED BY GOD AS JESUS WAS CALLED.

WE ARE CLAIMED AS HE WAS CLAIMED.

WE ARE AFFIRMED AS HE WAS AFFIRMED.

LET THAT BE YOUR STARTING POINT.

YOU ARE GOD’S BELOVED.

IN YOU, GOD IS WELL-PLEASSED.

**IN YOUR OWN BAPTISM, GOD MAKES THAT
DECLARATION & SETS YOU OFF ON A PATH OF SERVICE &
MINISTRY & LOVE.**

HE KNOWS WHAT YOU’RE CAPABLE OF DOING.

**HE KNOWS WHAT CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED THROUGH
YOU.**

SO WE HAVE THESE TWO MESSAGES FROM THE BAPTISM OF JESUS – TWO MESSAGES THAT SEEM SO CONTRADICTORY AND YET ARE, IN ACTUALITY, COMPLEMENTARY.

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS CELEBRATES BOTH THE UNIQUENESS OF JESUS AS WELL AS HIS ROLE AS A MODEL FOR EACH ONE OF US WHO HAS BEEN BAPTIZED INTO THE FAITH.

WE ARE CALLED TO EMBRACE BOTH OF THESE MESSAGES.

EMBRACE THE UNIQUENESS OF JESUS AS LORD AND SAVIOR.

EMBRACE YOUR OWN CALLING AS GOD’S BELOVED & AS ONE IN WHOM GOD IS WELL-PLEASED.

MAY WE ALL BE “FILLED WITH EXPECTATION” AT THE GLORIOUS FUTURE GOD HAS IN STORE FOR US AS JOIN IN MINISTRY TOGETHER. AMEN.

IT IS NOT ONLY IN THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM THAT WE SHOULD BE ‘FILLED WITH EXPECTATION,’ BUT IN HOLY COMMUNION AS WELL.

ON THIS PARTICULAR SUNDAY, AS TWO CHURCHES WORSHIP TOGETHER FOR THE FIRST TIME, WE FEEL THAT BOND OF BAPTISM IN JESUS CHRIST THAT UNITES US & WE

**ALSO CELEBRATE THAT BOND BY SHARING THE SACRAMENT
OF HOLY COMMUNION TOGETHER.**

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**“LORD, WE JOIN AS ONE TODAY”
(Sung to “For the Beauty of the Earth” Tune – Dix)**

1. From the north and from the south,
From the east and from the west,
Songs of praise from every mouth,
From these churches you have blessed.
Lord, we join as one today,
Lead us in Thy holy way.
2. In the midst of all our fear,
In the throes of deepest strife,
Through it all you’ve brought us here,
Through it all, you give new life.
Lord, we join as one today,
Lead us in Thy holy way.
3. For the saints of years gone by,
For the legacy they leave,
Memories that never die,
A rich tapestry they weave.
Lord, we join as one today,
Lead us in Thy holy way.
4. For new friends this day we meet,
For the love and trust we share,
For our family now complete,
One another’s burdens bear.
Lord, we join as one today,
Lead us in Thy holy way.
5. Newburgh Church atop the hill,
For its years of service past,
And Eastminster, Evansville,
We’re united now at last.
Lord, we join as one today,
Lead us in Thy holy way.

(Verses 1-4 written in 1999 for the merger of the Washington Avenue and Eastminster Presbyterian Churches in Evansville, Indiana. Verse 5 written in 2019 for the first service of worship at Eastminster Presbyterian Church uniting with members of the former Newburgh Presbyterian Church)