Sunday 6th May 2018 Message

The Rewards of Expectation and High Costs of Lacking Enthusiasm

**Introduction**

Today I believe the Lord wants to challenge us as to whether we have lost the passion we first had when we believed. Passion is essential if we as individuals are to change the world and manifest the kingdom of God to those around us. Philosophers, business leaders and entreprenuers are looking for passion these days, before they look at experience and qualifications. **Slides**

Jesus is looking for a church with passion, not one that is doing all the things it is supposed to do, and doing them well, but a church that is passionate about the power of the gospel being manifest and changing lives. Look at what the angel said to the church of Ephesus in Rev 2:1-7, he recounts all the good things they were doing as says:- **Slide**

***Rev 2:4-5 You have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place — unless you repent.***

As I pondered this subject this week two words beginning with E came into my mind, and have repeatedly crossed my path in conversations and circumstances. These are two things that people with passion exhibit and God wants us to check whether we still have them. They are of course these two words in todays message title. EXPECTATION and ENTHUSIASM.

A study of scripture reveals that God responds to both, and where there is a lack of either we are left wanting. Of course, there are times when God is deliberately waiting for our faith and expectation to rise to desperation. We are in such a season now. God wants us to be so enthusiastically expectant that we will settle for nothing less than the full purposes of God.

**400 years of nothing**

After the book of Malachi we know there was 400 years where God did not manifest Himself or speak to His people as a nation. In the book of Malachi we read how the nation of Israel had lapsed in their worship and relationship with God. There was a general lack of enthusiasm for the things of God, and there was a lack of expectation.

Over those 400 years there arose in the hearts of many Jews a desperate hope for a Messiah to come forth as foretold by the prophets of old. They had suffered long and were now under Roman occupation, they were at that point that many are at today, wondering when will it ever end, when will things get better,

John the Baptist arrives on the scene and people are becoming curious and questioning is this the long awaited answer to their dreams and hopes. They had seen many false prophets before this and had had their hopes dashed many times. Could this be the one. Let us pick up the account in Luke and see what had changed:- **Slide**

***Luke 3:15-16 Now as the people were in expectation, and all reasoned in their hearts about John, whether he was the Christ or not, John answered, saying to all, "I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. NKJV***

The people were in expectation, hope had arisen, they were searching, looking and asking questions. They were excited and expectant enough to go out in great numbers into the wilderness to see this strange preacher baptizing many for the repentance of sins.

**Slide** Expectant people like a crowd at the airport arrivals looking for their loved ones coming through the gate. Each of them smiling excitedly, holding up greeting banners, their mobile phones to take pictures, straining on tip toes, leaning forward, to look past the person in front, and to see if their loved one is behind the next one coming through the door, They are all ready to run, to embrace, kiss and cry over their loved one who has returned from even a two day trip abroad. Or perhaps a long haul flight. Or perhaps it is their first visit in a long time. Did you arrive this morning with that same sort of excited expectation of meeting with Jesus? Of straining forward to see what He is going to do next? Will He heal, deliver, bring salvation, touch, bring breakthrough to someone today? Are there a thousand questions running through your mind what it will look like when He walks into the room and comes through heavens arrival gate? Or have you already made up your mind that you will say hello, shake His hand and offer Him a biscuit and cup of tea before Paul does it?

The people have come out to see John the Baptist who has arrived on the scene after a long wait for a Messiah. JB was not the One, but the One was to appear on the scene very soon, John declared, would baptise them with the Holy Spirit and fire. What an awesome statement that was? I wonder what they thought it meant? I wonder whether the next few years of following Jesus was designed to make them more hungry to do the works that Jesus did to the point where they would want to be baptised with fire. The all-consuming, dominion of the power of God taking over every aspect of their lives in service for the King.

Their level of expectation is described as eager anticipation, being on the edge of their seats, being dressed appropriately and ready to run the race. This was not a casual sit back and wait in expectation in the arrival lounge. They were not tempted to nod off or send a text or facebook message while they waited. They hadn’t wandered off to Starbucks or the toilets. They were not going to miss the arrival of He who they were expecting for anything. They were straining on the tip toes to see what God would do. They were hungry for the manifest presence that generations before had experienced.

Did you come this morning expecting just to sing a few songs, give in the offering, hear a message, and drink tea and coffee afterwards. Like you have done week in week out, or did you arrive eagerly expecting a radical change to take place in your life. Did you come sitting on the edge of your seat expecting God to speak into deepest need? Did you come to sow in expectation, praise in expectation, pray in expectation. Do you live every minute of the day in eager expectation of the breakthrough, of your healing. Do you share the gospel in expectation of lives radically changed. Do you pray for the sick, the tormented in expectation? **Slide**

***Col 2:13-15 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.***

Did you see that, hear that, every just punishment and curse that would prevent us from our breakthroughs and healing, has been blotted out. There is nothing legally in the way of us receiving every benefit of the work of Christ on the cross. All that is in heaven and every blessing God has made available to those who call on Him we can have if we eagerly expect it to happen.

God is ready to do something today. There is a miracle available to those who expect it. There is a healing available to those who expect it. There is a word of direction and encouragement to those who expect it. There is an overwhelming joy because of the love being poured out from heaven for those who expect it. There is an abundance of provision for those who expect it. The breakthrough that is yours is ready in heaven will you receive it?

You can join the Psalmist and say

***Ps 119:126 It is time for You to act, O Lord, for they have regarded Your law as void.***

God can do nothing other than fulfil His promises, because it would be unrighteous for Him to do anything else.

***Romans 8:17*** says we are joint heirs with Christ. That means to me I have a double claim on all that Jesus had here on earth and all that He has in heaven. Its not just mine because I am a child of God, its mine because I am joined to the one who purchased everything for me, hallelujah.

**God responds to expectation**

When the lame man sat at the Temple gate in Acts 3:5 he looked at Peter and John “Expecting to receive something”. He was not believing he would receive something, He was not hoping he would receive something. He was EXPECTING and God manifest His gift of healing because he was expecting. He was expecting a gift but not the gifts he had been used too. He had prepared himself to receive, he reached out to receive, he looked at the prospective givers. He had not just plonked himself down and stuck a notice out asking for money.

When you arrived this morning were you expecting to leave full of power and boldness to preach the gospel? Were you expecting to leave behind every limitation that is in your life and experience at the moment? Or were you just expecting a normal Sunday service, the usual spiritual meal, an opportunity to relax and receive rather than give.

**The devil is afraid of your expectations and wants you focussed on experience**

The devil is not afraid of my past or my present experiences of God. They were victories he choses to forget. What the devil is actively doing is to keep you satisfied with past and present because he is scared stiff of you becoming who God has designed you to be. Your biggest miracles and breakthroughs are still to come and we must live in active expectation of them. The miracles of the past or those you are living in at the moment are pointers to what is yet to come. Count your blessings by all means but don’t count them as if they are all that you can expect. Expect bigger miracles, you are designed to be like Christ are you there yet? Of course not, get on the edge of your seat and eagerly expect more.

Turn to your neighbour and ask them if they are expectant? Ask them if they are pregnant again with the expectation of God doing something great? Do they know what they are carrying? Are they feeling the labour pains? Church is too normal, too natural, unto them that wait He will appear. **Slide**

***Heb 6:10 For God is not unrighteous to forget or overlook your labour and the love which you have shown for His name's sake in ministering to the needs of the saints (His own consecrated people), as you still do. AMP***

In ***Mark 10:46-52*** we have the account of blind Bartimaeus being healed by Jesus. In verse 50 it tells us Bartimaeus threw off his garment and came to Jesus. This little statement is often missed, or it is overstated. I have heard it said that the garment of a beggar was provided by the local authorities as verification that the beggar was genuine. Therefore, throwing off his garment meant that Bartimaeus expected never to need it again as he would never need to beg. I cannot find any historical evidence that that is true. However, the Bible often refers to the outer garment being representative of the “mantle” the status and authority of the wearer. As we read in Elijah throwing off his mantle for Elisha to pick up. So I do believe Bartimaeus probably was saying this garment which represents who I am as a blind beggar I will no longer need.

Bartimaeus did not want money from Jesus he wanted his sight, and he threw away everything that he had relied on in the past as a sign of his expectation of the healing he was about to receive. There are people here this morning that need to throw away some of the things they have relied on in the past to make room for what Jesus has for your future. Difficult losses will result in great gains.

**Holy Spirit and fire**

In Luke 3:16 we have JB pointing to the expectation of the day of Pentecost as the reason why Jesus the Messiah was coming.

The Holy Spirit did not come to make you comfortable

 He came to invade you

 He came to envelop you – sealed with the promise

 He came to Instruct you – John 14:26

 He came to indwell you – John 4:14

When Ananias laid hands on Paul to receive the Spirit and be healed, scales fell from Pauls eyes ***Acts 9:18.*** Today if there are scales of normality on your eyes, He wants them to fall off. If you think it is normal to be lacking in power, it is time for those scales to fall from your eyes. If you think it is normal to rely on medication to get through the day then those scales need to fall from your eyes.

At the end of the service we are inviting you to receive the laying on of hands for a refiling of the power of the Holy Spirit. The early church were not filled just once with the Spirit at Pentecost they received a refilling on a number of occasions we all need it because we all leak at the best, or become stagnant at the worst.

**The High Cost of Lacking Enthusiasm Slide**

***Luke 19:37-44 Then, as He was now drawing near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works they had seen, saying: "'Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!' Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" And some of the Pharisees called to Him from the crowd, "Teacher, rebuke Your disciples." But He answered and said to them, "I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out."***

***Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, "If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation." NKJV***

The religious people of the day, the Pharisees, regarded the rejoicing and praise of the disciples when Jesus came into Jerusalem as obscene. They called on such praise and enthusiasm to be quenched, and Jesus said if the people did not do this then even the stones would cry out.

It is so sad to see the consequence and cost of the stayed religion of the Pharisees being the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, in essence the symbol of the presence of God.

Today, there are parts of the church that still do not like enthusiastic worship. Clapping, dancing, banner waving, shouting, cheering, whistling are just not the done thing, even though it is Biblical. When we have a time of visitation may we never be like Jerusalem who wants it all calm and nice.

In ***2 Kings 13:42*** Elisha tells Jereboam to strike the ground with his arrows and then rebukes him for his half hearted attempt, saying if you have done it more times you would have total victory over Syria not just in three battles.

Ever been prompted by God to do something and thought whats the point and do it a half-hearted manner, and then wondered why you did not see the results He promised. Perhaps there is a clue in this story. Perhaps it was a fast and you could not be bothered to complete it, or a prayer meeting and you decided you did not want to pray?

Esau was another person who was half hearted about receiving his rightful inheritance in ***Gen25:29ff*** in fact he decided to have a bowl of stew instead and caved into the deception of his brother Jacob. I doubt God approved of Jacobs deceptive ways but He was pleased with enthusiasm Jacob showed. God could deal with Jacobs bad points but could use his hunger for blessing. You need to be as hungry for Gods blessing as Jacob was and be willing to wrestle with God for it.

**Slide** Jesus hates lukewarm commitment and worship, he says in ***Rev 3:16*** that He will spew such people out of His mouth.

David was enthusiastic about bringing the ark of the covenant back to Jerusalem. So much so he sacrificed after just six paces. Had many musicians, shouters and trumpeters worshipping on the whole journey back. He even danced vigorously before the Lord half clothed much to the disdain of his wife Michal ***2 Samuel 6:20***. David made it very plain he was not dancing for anybody else’s pleasure but that of God. Michal never bore a child again following her disdain of David’s worship. It is worth asking are we barren in bearing the full power of the gospel because we are intolerant of what we might call over enthusiasm?

**Passion Slide**

Passionate people are expectant and they are enthusiastic. Sometimes, passionate people can be annoying or embarrassing, but generally I would sooner have a church full of passionate people who knew when it was the right time and place to express that passion. Never seek put out a fire of passion, just make sure its burning in the right place.

A flame ontop of a candle looks pretty and fine, but if I put in your hair you may have different thoughts about the flame. Use it to bring light and warmth its fine, use it to destroy or distract from what God is doing is another matter.

Paul caught his passion for Jesus in Damascus and God sent him to Ephesus, the church written too about their lack of passion in Revelation 2. His passion was not to burn too long in Damascus but was to start a Spirit fire in Ephesus the 4th largest city in the world at that time of 300,000 people. A strategic promotion of Paul by God to ensure the gospel spread throughout the Gentile world.

God took David's passion for looking after sheep killing bears, lions and wolves to make him king over His people. His passion in the fields was too big for the fields, God needed it for a nation. His passion and your passion need a place to operate, and if your passion is strong God will position you for the most effect as He did with Saul and David and many others in the Bible.

It is interesting the fasting growing churches are in countries that persecute Christians and try to supress them, or in the poorest of countries. Their passion, expectation and enthusiasm for the return of Christ and the manifestation of His kingdom here in earth keeps their flame burning strongly.

Passion is not a feeling, or a personality trait. Passion is how you walk when the rubber hits the road. Passion is a determined decision to carry on with what you believe in regardless of the set backs. Passion is doing what God has told you to do even under opposition and oppression.

Jesus revealed His passion in the Garden of Gethsemane. He revealed His passion whilst being scourged and crucified.

Today we have reduced passion to doing things that we feel comfortable doing.

Passion is not excitement or physical attraction, passion is loving when there is nothing in return.

Passion does thins even when you don’t feel like it. Passion cause you to do things despite opposition. Passion means you carry on whether you are up or down. Passion makes me preach when I know the word is not going to be received and I may be rejected. Passion is when you share the truth whether you are going to be loved or rejected. Passion for your work means you will do it whether you are paid or unpaid or underpaid. Passion means you will serve whether you are thanked or ignored.

Passion is not a feeling it is a decision that is why the church of Ephesus were told to repent (change their mind and behaviour) and DO what they had done before. Without passion all their good works were not enough.

**Expectancy and Enthusiasm Essential Ingredients**

I believe the Bible points clearly to the need for expectancy and enthusiasm about being a follower of Jesus, to see His manifest presence at work amongst us and in the community in which He has placed us.

I need, we need, an impartation from the Spirit of expectancy and enthusiasm that attracts the Father.