

Advent 3(A)
St Peter's Box Hill
Matt 11:2-11
December 16, 2007

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

I was engaged in Christmas shopping at Eastland the other day. Whom should I meet but Father Christmas? He was the real McCoy – “ho, ho. Ho”, and all that sort of thing. “What are you expecting for Christmas this year?” It was my great opportunity to convert Santa Claus but I confess that I was too much of a coward.

And I mumbled “nothing much” he bellowed as he went his merry way “Great Expectations”

And I thought “thank you for that sermon topic Santa!

The scripture readings set for this Sunday in Advent are all about great expectations.

The reading from Isaiah promised the Old Testament people of God alienated by exile and oppressed a vision of a new world. Where both nature and humans would be renewed by the promise and action of God in delivering his people.

That same question underlies that question of John the Baptist through two of his followers who asked Jesus.

“Are you the one who is to come, or are we to await for another?” It was the question of John the Baptist whose faith by reason of what had happened to him had burned low. A great prophet --he had seen many of his followers turn towards Jesus; he himself was in prison .

Perhaps it was the question of the two men themselves. At any rate it was and still is an important question.

(2) FEEBLE EXPECTANCY.

A second fact about these men in the gospel is that their question is doubtfully asked.

Here were two people to whom life had not given all that they had asked. Life may have been hard –disappointing and not turned out the way they had planned.

(John The Baptist in prison.)

They found it hard to believe that Jesus could be the answer.

True - he had goodness in himself;

but could such a man who had refused to act like a real king

--challenge Caesar and the occupying Roman authorities,

-claim the kingdom

be the promised one. The Messiah.

So they asked the doubtful question.

" Are you the one who is to come?

Or are we to expect someone else?"

And that could be the question of anyone of us speaking today.

How can a person who lived nearly two thousand years ago in a backward province of the Roman Empire have anything to do with life today?

What relevance does he have to life in the complexities of the present age" Are you the one who is to come

Or are we to expect some other?"

After all the talk of Advent and Christmas are there any great expectations here?'

((3) JESUS' ANSWER

But Jesus answered this question himself.

Not YES or NO.

Quite often God does not answer us with a direct yes or no. Jesus said;" If you look around you, you will see evidence that I am the one who is to come."

NOT PROOF BUT EVIDENCE.

Whenever God is present you will see extraordinary events taking place.

" the blind recover their sight,

lame walk

lepers are made clean

the deaf hear.

the dead are raised to life and the poor have good news brought to them."

That last bit of evidence is puzzling at first.

The poor are hearing good news"

But that is much evidence of the presence of God as a lame man walking.

Usually poor people do not receive an announcement about God. They receive notices about –food, clothing, Centrelink forms and regulations.

But the gospel declares that those who are at the margins of society are high on God's agenda. and central to his purpose.

No --there is no proof that will relieve us of the burden of making a decision as to who Jesus is.

But there is everything to urge to make a decision.

The work of Jesus Christ today as then provokes us to scorn or ridicule or sheer disbelief.

OR

They propel us to acceptance, wonder and faith.

So Jesus ended his answer to the two disciples of John the Baptist.

" And happy are those who do not find me an obstacle to faith;"

My friends the gospel question of this Third Sunday in Advent

WHAT DO WE MAKE OF JESUS CHRIST?.

Some do not make anything of him because they are too busy.

Others do not make anything of him because they see him as a historical figure belonging to another age.

But for those with eyes to see and ears to hear

For those who believe that life is more than dollars and achievement.

For those who long for something more,

and for those who have lost their way in life.

THERE IS THE CHOICE.

To decide if Jesus Christ is not after all the one about whom all our deepest expectations should gather.

: Come thou long expected Jesus,

Born to set thy people free.

From our sins and fears release us,

Let us find our rest in Thee."

And if you have made this decision, or are making it.

The word of God for us today is.

" Expect great things from Christ,

-not necessarily what you plan, or ask for.
But what God wills; and his will is good and loving.
And then do not be surprised if great things happen.

I am preaching to myself as well as you.
For I know the power of rationalism and materialism to stifle
expectancy.

It is because we in the Church expect too little from Christ --that
we receive so little.

In the spiritual life the key conditioning word is EXPECTANCY.

As a Church -- as Christians --we must expect great things from
God.

This is the Advent message, hope, and courage.

God will do for us far more than we ask or think --if we expect him
too.

Someone may well be asking --well -how do we go about such a
decision.

You can make a start this morning during this Eucharist.

Reaching out our hands to receive the bread of life, that is Christ,
"Behold I stand at the door and knock if any will open the door I
will come in.

" Are you the one who is to come or should we expect someone
else?"

May our Advent expectation indeed be great expectations.

" Even so --Come Lord Jesus.

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