

Sermon - Great Expectations – Jesus

Pastor Ed Blonski | December 21, 2022

Expectation of a Name

This evening we conclude this message series called “Great Expectations.”

We have seen the expectations of people like Noah, Andrew, Hannah & Samuel, Cain & Abel, and Abram.

We have explored the expectations that come with the title Immanuel.

And now we’re going to explore the expectations of the name, “Jesus.”

What we are going to celebrate in less than four days is, when you get down to it, the birth of a baby.

One of the first things that is done when a mom & dad are expecting a baby is to think about what to name the child.

That is a great expectation – the name of the baby!



What to name a child?

a) My Family – the “Eds”

In my family, there wasn’t much to think about in naming the first boy.

My grandfather was named Ed.

My dad was named Ed.

My grand uncle on my mom’s side was named Ed.



Of course, I was named Ed.

And, you guessed it, our first son is named Ed.

In a way, five Eds are better than one!

b) My Sons – The Master’s Voice



But Nancy and I had to think about what to name subsequent sons in our own family. Early on I was able to convince her to name our other two sons after my best friends and brothers in the ministry.

Many of you have met these guys – we are The Master’s Voice and have been best friends, brothers really, since 1984.

So, Nancy and I named our second son Kurt Steven.

And our third son is named Mark Jeffrey.

These names are important to us. They come from a deep love of family – both blood relatives and spiritual.

I’m sure there is a similar story of baby’s names in your family as well.

Mary & Joseph

When it comes to Jesus, there is a story to His name.

Mary was the first to know she was going to be a mother – as is usually the case.

Joseph was most likely the second to know.

However, they did have different reactions upon hearing the news, but the same answer was given to both.



a) Both Told by Angels what Jesus' name would be

When Mary was told she was going to be a mother - the mother of the Messiah, no less - her reaction was one of astonishment.

“How can this be, since I'm a virgin?”

The Angel Gabriel told her that the Messiah she carries will be the Son of God!

But Gabriel didn't just tell her she was going to have a baby, he also tells her what to name the child.

This is an unexpected twist to the story! That's because it was the father's responsibility and privilege to name the child. But I guess, in a way, that's exactly what happened!

When Mary told this story to Joseph, he had a different reaction.

His reaction is one that we might more readily expect. Your more-than-fiancé but less-than-wife just tells you she's pregnant but you're not the father.

How would you react?

Exactly.

Yet, because of Joseph's piety and integrity - which compels him to end the relationship - it is somewhat overridden by his love for Mary. He resolves to divorce her quietly.

He would have been well within his rights - morally and in accordance with God's Law - to have Mary stoned to death for her supposed unfaithfulness and immorality. But Joseph opts for the less extreme option.

When he decides to sleep on it before carrying it out, an angel visits Joseph.

What Gabriel tells Mary, Joseph now hears.

The child is God's Child, is the Messiah long-promised.

And then Joseph is also told to name the child Jesus!

And in addition, Joseph is told why to name the baby Jesus.

b) But Jesus' name was chosen from the beginning (or earlier)

So, we see that Jesus' name was not given to him by either his mother or his father.

Actually, Jesus' name was given to him earlier, before Mary and Joseph found out about him. A lot earlier.

The first promise of the long-expected Jesus was in the Garden of Eden, recorded in Genesis 3:15.

"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

The context of this promise is that this "offspring" (a baby, a child, one born from a human woman) will overturn the sin brought into the world by Adam and Eve through the temptation of the devil.

This would happen through pain and sorrow – something I will touch on in the Christmas Day message.

In other words, this baby born would save everyone who sins from their sins.

Jesus Is Literally What His Name Says He Is



This child's name is "Jesus" because the name Jesus means "Yahweh Saves" or in modern English, "The Lord Saves."

It will turn out that Jesus will literally be what His name says He will be.

Jesus is actually Joshua

In the interest of being accurate, His name isn't really Jesus, it is Joshua. We get "Jesus" from the Greek translation of the Hebrew name "Yeshua" – Joshua.

And while it seems that Joshua was a more common name, in the Bible there are only three other Joshuas.

Three other Joshua's in the Bible

a) Joshua, son of Nun Leader of the Conquest of Canaan

The most famous Joshua is the son of Nun who was Moses' successor and led the conquest of Canaan, starting at the Battle of Jericho.

He lived up to his name, "the Lord Saves," because through Joshua the people were able to take the land promised to Abraham, Issac, and Jacob!

b) Joshua the High Priest, led the rebuilding of the Temple, 5th Century BC

When the Jews returned to Jerusalem after the Babylonian Exile in the late 6th Century BC, Ezra & Nehemiah led the rebuilding of the city walls and the Temple – and Joshua was the High Priest who organized the group tasked with rebuilding the Temple – which wasn't completed until King Herod the Great finished the job in Jesus' lifetime.

c) Elymus, Bar-Jesus

The third Joshua is from the Book of Acts, and his name is actually "Bar Jesus" but some translations call him Elymus, and he definitely did not live up to his name as he was an enemy of the Christians.

Jesus is God, the Son of God, the 2nd Person of the Holy Trinity

By far, Jesus is the most famous Joshua of all time. But his name is more than just a reference to God saving us.

Jesus is God who saves us.

Jesus is the Son of God, the 2nd Person of the Holy Trinity!

Still, not everyone believes that.

Arian Heresy

a) Unitarians, Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses.

Starting in about the late 3rd Century, some Christian leaders started to question whether Jesus actually was the Son of God on equal standing with God the Father.

This was a teaching championed by a man named Arius, and he gives his name to this – from our perspective as Jesus followers – heresy: The Arian Heresy.

My favorite story about Arius – and this relates closely to Christmas, by the way – is that at the Council of Nicea the church leaders debated whether Jesus was God or equal to God.

Arius said no, he wasn't!

Another member of the group – Nicholas of Myra – was so offended by this that he stood up and punched Arius in the face!

Nicholas of Myra would eventually be known as Saint Nicholas. In the Netherlands he is known as Sinter Klaas, and here in the United States as Santa Claus!



It could be said that St. Nicholas came to give presents to kids and to punch heretics and just ran out of presents!

The Arian heresy that Jesus is not God, or at the very least not equal to the Father (as we confess in the Athanasian Creed) today finds a home in three prominent religious groups: the Unitarians, the Mormons, and the Jehovah Witnesses.

Because Jesus Is His Name



But we are in a Lutheran church. And as Lutheran Christians, we believe, teach, and confess that Jesus is the Son of God, co-equal with the Father and the Holy Spirit, true God and true man.

And we believe that Jesus is His name!

Jesus came to save you from your sins.

“The Lord Saves.” That was first promised in the Garden of Eden.

“The Lord Saves.” That was further promised to Abram, Isaac, Jacob.

“The Lord Saves.” Promised to Moses, to David, through Isaiah and the Prophets.

Then on that holy night in Bethlehem 2026 years ago, it was announced by the Angel of the Lord to the shepherds, “for unto you is born this day in the city of David, a savior which is Christ the Lord.”

Jesus did save you from your sins.

And almost 2000 years ago, that baby Jesus grew up, lived perfectly to be your righteousness by faith, and died on the cross to forgive all your sins and all the sins of all the people of all time.

“The Lord Saves.”

Jesus was the expected one

From the very beginning

He was expected by Adam and Eve. He was expected by Noah. Abraham, Joseph, David, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

Jesus was the expected one from the very beginning.

In fact, from before the beginning, as John tells us in his introduction to his Gospel.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.

Jesus is who we should expect at the end

And for you and me, Jesus – the Lord Saves – is the one we should expect at the end of all things!

The same John wrote about that in Revelation. And John’s final, expectant, prayer is ours as well:

“Amen. Come Lord Jesus. Amen.”

