What are you expecting for Christmas? A lump of coal?

What are those expectations based on? Your behavior or God’s goodness? Expectant hope is based on…

1. Immanuel, God with us! Matthew 1:23

When we believe we have been faithful, living a holy life before God, expectations and hope generally rise! Because Immanuel, God is with us!

But what about when you’re living right before God and things seem to go south? Immanuel, God is with us! The sin that happens in this world can never change that fact!

Pastor Chuck Sanford at the Prescott Valley church shared this week on Facebook what has been happening in his family (regarding his sister-in-law Melissa)…

“The doctors told us she was brain dead. She was supposed to die within minutes of having the ventilator removed.

The doctors had removed all care, and we said our final goodbyes to her a couple of hours ago. The doctors gave no hope, and had removed all medical assistance.

Anyway, she just woke up and said to her husband "get over here so I can kiss you."

She's speaking and understanding English and Spanish. The only explanation is a miracle. Merry Christmas!

Not out of the woods yet or any time soon. Please keep praying for Melissa. Immanuel, God is with us! Keeps expectant hope alive, because we know that…

1. God is able

Ephesians 3:20-21

And He is able to do those amazing things thru little old you!

Philippians 4:13 The thing that prevents Him is our fears…

Over and over in the Scriptures God instructs people “do not fear”, don’t be afraid… why? Immanuel, God is with us! And He is able…

Joel 2:21 “Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice, for the Lord has done marvelous things!”

Our God (Father, Son & Holy Spirit) are able to do MARVELOUS THINGS because… He is the one true LIVING GOD! He has done many marvelous things in your life and mine this year… and He’s got great plans for your 2019!

Luke 2:10-12 - The angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. 11 Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. 12 This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

God provided the Messiah in the most miraculous of ways… and wants us to lean our “expectant hope” against His same ability and same miraculous ways that brought the Messiah… Immanuel, God is with us!

He knows what, when & how is best. Matthew 7:7-8

Does any of this matter? It does when you or a loved one is laying in the hospital and the doctors give no hope of recovery.

It does when you’re family is pacing the floor of the ER…

How could Israel, Melissa and her family, or any of us possess “Expectant Hope”? Immanuel, God is with us! And with Him comes the promise of

1. God’s Faithfulness.

He has a PERFECT track record… Joshua 21:45

Grandparents do their best not to let their grandkids down… especially at Christmas… So we ask them to tell us what they want.

And because we have faithfully been there for them in the past, they have no fear in talking to us… even though (on occasion) we have had to tell them no… (you’ll shoot your eye out) or maybe, but most often it’s yes.

We believe that because “God is with us”, that we now represent Him, and His Holy Spirit leads us to grow in faithfulness to God & the people around us at home, work, school, etc… so that God can bring hope into the lives of others…

Israel had been living in fear for century’s…

Asking God for help had likely become a ritual discipline… during their 9, 12, & 3 O’clock times of prayer.

* Living under King Herod who had the power to execute people anytime he became afraid or insecure.
* They were also living in occupied territory. The Romans had taken control of their country.
* They were no longer free to live as they chose to in the Land that God had promised them.

And even though Jesus was now born, Israel would still have to wait another 30+ years before He would grow up and begin His ministry, dying on the cross to save people from their sin, and be resurrected to new life on the third day! Talk about patience required!

The point is that there is an increasing supply of things for us to fear in our un-stable, sinful world. It seems like every time we turn around there is another horrific tragedy happening somewhere.

If that’s not enough to put us on edge, we face personal fears:

* What if I lose my health? Or my job?
* Will I have enough money to retire?
* Will Social Security be available?
* What if I my spouse passes away?
* What if this happens? What if that happens?

A lot of scary things can and do run through our minds.

Sometimes in life we get to the point where we feel like we just can’t handle another day… But God is still with us…

* When things are happening that you never expected would…
* When you’re facing your worst nightmare…

 Our choices boil down to this:

* Living in Faith or Fear?
* Trusting in God’s purpose/plan or responding to life like the rest o the world?
* Believing in the God who knows and cares or a god who isn’t there?

We all choose…

Luke 7:18-23

JTB had high hopes for the Messiah to restore Israel and right all the wrongs… but if that were true why Jesus’ forerunner sitting in Prison?

John did everything right…

* He lived faithfully, even led many to turn away from their sin and turn to God thru baptism.
* He even taught them that true repentance leads to producing “Kingdom fruit”.
* He taught by example that if someone is need and you have two of something, you give them one. And now he’s in PRISON!!

I believe that John (like many) expected that Jesus would crush Caesar & Herod and make people live right and obey God…

Instead Jesus was going around healing sick people and bringing the dead back to life…

Letting people walk on water, calming storms… water to wine…

Jesus wasn’t meeting John’s expectations, so his hope was fading…

He began to question Immanuel “God is with us”…

Here is the message of Christmas: If you have received Jesus as your Lord and Savior, DO NOT FEAR… God is with you…

Jesus came so that we can choose to believe that God is ALWAYS up to something good, especially when all we seem to see and hear is not so good.

Replace your fears with “expectant hope”, because God is “All Powerful”, Forever faithful, and His Christmas present to you was adopting you and making you His Son’s & daughter’s to serve Him above ALL others.

Jesus came so that we could live as He did, devoted to faithfully serving and meeting the Father’s expectations… leading others (at home, work, school, etc…) to faith in Jesus and making disciples who make disciples…

That is where “expectant hope” is found.