The Unexpected God

Isaiah 64:1-4
1 Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence,
2 As when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil, to make thy name known to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence!
3 When thou didst terrible things which we looked not for, thou camest down, the mountains flowed down at thy presence.
4 For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.

Isaiah 64:3-4 English Standard Version
3 When you did awesome things that we did not look for, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence.
4 From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides you, who acts for those who wait for him.

Introduction
The prophet Isaiah,
• in the course of his volume of prophecy,
  o paints a pretty grim picture
    • of the judgments that are coming
      • to those who have rejected God.
  o what will happen when God hides his face from his people.
• He describes the coming darkness and despair
  o with the intensity that one might describe a gathering storm.
    • Page after page,
      • sentence upon sentence,
        • prophecy upon prophecy,
    • the outlook is bleak,
      • the sun hides its face,
        • the storm begins to gather,
    • the sky is painted into the inky black
      • of the darkness of a night
        • that overwhelsms the brightness of the day.
  o It is a dark time.
    • It is an oppressing picture.
• Carefully and skillfully the prophet
  o paints the chaos and darkness
    • that will engulf their world
      • one brush stroke at a time.
• We are left with a sense of impending doom,
  o we are left with a sense of utter destruction,
    ▪ we are left with no where to turn,
      • no shelter to seek,
        o and no hiding place
        o from the cold brisk wind.
  o and survey the horizon of the future
    ▪ we can see a mammoth storm rising,
      • a thunderhead full of fury and raw power
        o that blots out all light
          ▪ and swallows the nation
          ▪ in thick darkness.

Intercession
However, the prophet isn’t done yet!
• After painting such a terrible picture
  o And after projecting such certain destruction
    ▪ the prophet Isaiah launches
      • into a beautiful intercessory prayer
        • on behalf of his people.
• The same voice that just described
  o the terrible judgment that was to come,
• The same voice that just painted
  o the sky inky black
  o with the brushstrokes of anointed prophecy
• That voice is now lifted in mercy and humiliation
  o As it cries out to the creator of the universe
    ▪ in the 64th chapter of Isaiah!
      • “Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens,
        o that thou wouldest come down...”
• It is an incredible cry
  o that breaks forth from this unwilling messenger
    ▪ of doom and destruction!
  o As he looks upon the looming dark storm
    ▪ that he has just forecast,
  o he lifts his voice to heaven and cries,
    ▪ Oh God!
      • Oh that you would rend the heavens.
      • Oh, that you would take
        • The dark storm that is descending upon us
          ▪ in your hands like sheet
            • and that you would tear it in two.
• Oh that you would tear the storm asunder,
  o oh that you would part the clouds with your radiant glory.
Oh, that you would come down!

Isaiah looks at the tragedy and the horror of judgment
  • that he has just prophesied,
    o he surveys the gathering storm
      ▪ and the approaching darkness
    o and still he believes
      ▪ that God will find a way
        • to show himself
        • through the darkness.
  • Even as he beholds the storm
    o he catches a prophetic glimpse
      ▪ of the unmitigated glory of God
        • as He, in all of his splendor,
          o tears the heavens open,
          o rending the storm in two,
        • and visits his people again
          o in all of his grandeur, and majesty and glory!

The Exodus
In a picturesque language that hearkens back to Egypt and the Exodus,
  • Isaiah remembers a time
    o when God showed himself to be mighty and strong
      ▪ on behalf of his people.
  • Looking back to the Exodus
    o when God brought Egypt to her knees,
  • looking back to Mount Sinai
    o when God impressed his people
      ▪ with the demonstration of his power
    o Isaiah lifts his head to heaven and prays,
      ▪ Lord, please, do it again!
        • Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens,
        • that thou wouldest come down,
        • That the mountains might flow down at thy presence,
        • As when the melting fire burneth,
        • the fire causeth the waters to boil,
        • To make thy name known to thine adversaries,
        • That the nations may tremble at thy presence!
  • He said, I remember the stories, God,
    o of how you proved yourself to Israel of old!
      ▪ I remember how you poured out
        • of your glory and your majesty.
  • I remember the stories of how the mountains did tremble,
    o how the fire of your presence
      ▪ did burn upon a granite mountain top,
how the water boiled  
• at the fervent heat of your presence  
• and how you declared the glory and majesty of your name  
• for all of your adversaries to behold.

I remember, Isaiah said, how the nations did tremble  
• at the spectacle of your unmitigated power and authority.

Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens again!  
• Oh that you would show yourself openly,  
  • both to your people  
    • and to their enemies.  
• That thou wouldest come down!  
  • Like you “came down” on Sinai  
    • in the sight of all the people.

David saw God in vision in Psalm 18:9  
• where he said that God did  
  • “bow the heavens and come down;  
    • and there was darkness under his feet”.  
• Isaiah said, this is what I desire now:  
  • a revelation of God in all his glory.  
  • I want to see God displayed  
    • in all of his might  
      • arrayed against “the nations,”  
    • and in all of his mercy  
      • towards his people.

When God descended on Sinai, “the whole mount quaked greatly” (Exod. 19:18).  
• When he appeared to David,  
  • “the earth shook and trembled;  
    • the foundations also of the hills  
    • moved and were shaken” (Ps. 18:7).  
• When he was seen of Elijah,  
  • “a great and strong wind rent the mountains,  
    • and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord…” (1 Kings 19:11).  
• Micah saw the Lord  
  • “coming forth out of his place,”  
    • and “the mountains were molten under him,  
      • and the valleys cleft” (Micah 1:3, 4).  
• The mountains represent that which is most firm  
  • and solid and strong  
    • upon the face of the earth.  
• The reason the Bible Writers always describe  
  • the very Mountains of the earth
• as quaking and melting
• in the presence of God
  o is to show the majesty of our God.
  o If even they “melt and flow and tremble” at the presence of God,
    ▪ How incredible must our God be?
• We serve a mighty God!
  o All of creation trembles at his presence!
  o All of heaven and earth is subject to his name!
• How great is our God?!?!?!

Unexpected Deliverance
I want to draw your attention, though, to the third verse of the text.
• This is where Isaiah describes the mighty working of God
  o in terms that really express
    ▪ the magnitude of what he is saying.
• He says, God, in that day and age,
  o in that uncertain time,
    ▪ when your people were held captive,
    ▪ when they were under the dark cloud
      • of bondage and oppression
    ▪ you did awesome things that we never expected!
• He said, when you showed up, it was incredible.
  o It was far beyond our wildest expectations.
    ▪ The whole earth answered to your voice.
      • The laws and forces of nature
        o surrendered to your authority.
• We didn’t expect it.
  o We never imagined it.
    ▪ No god before you
      • had ever done what you did.
• Of all the gods of Egypt, there was none that could stand beside you!
  o Of all the powers and principalities in this world,
    ▪ of all the forces that we expected to be at work,
      • You, Oh God, were the unexpected God!
• Your majesty was beyond our expectation.
  o Your glory was beyond anything we could have ever hoped for.
    ▪ Your power,
      • the demonstration of your magnificence
        o was far beyond anything
          ▪ we had ever dreamed of!
• No people, anywhere had ever experienced
  o such an incredible salvation
    ▪ as we experienced.
• No people anywhere had ever seen
  o such an unexpected deliverance
as what we received from you!
  • It was completely out of the blue.
    o We were utterly astonished.
    o We were absolutely taken aback.
      ▪ We never imagined it,
      ▪ We never even dared to hope it,
    o Our minds never conceived it,
      ▪ It never entered our hearts
      ▪ the things that you would do for your people!
    o It was completely unexpected!

In a profound display of glory and majesty,
  • God showed himself to be mighty for his people.
    o This nation that was hundreds of years removed
      ▪ from the promise that God made to Abraham,
    o This nation that had no real hope of divine interference
      ▪ found out that this great God that we serve
        • is a God that keeps his promises
          o to a thousand generations!
      ▪ And He had not forgotten what He promised to Abraham!
  • It was absolutely staggering,
    o It was absolutely mind-boggling,
      ▪ God, all by himself,
        • brought the full might of the Egyptian empire
          o to its knees.
      ▪ God, all by himself,
        • caused the mighty Pharaoh to bend to his will.
    o He crushed the opposition,
      ▪ He destroyed the mightiest nation on the earth,
        • He, in effect, rent the heavens
          o He tore the darkness in two
          o and burst forth
            ▪ in all of his radiant glory and majesty!
  • For since the beginning of the world,
    o Isaiah said in verse 4,
      ▪ men have not heard,
      ▪ nor perceived by the ear,
      ▪ Neither hath the eye seen,
        • A God like you!
      ▪ This world has never seen
        • what you are willing to do
          o for those that will wait on you!

I Will Wait
When Isaiah lifted his voice it was a plea to the unexpected God,

- the God that showed up in majesty and in glory
  - in a way that they had never anticipated.
- Basically, Isaiah’s plea is for God to do again what he has done before.
  - Isaiah said, I realize that you are the unexpected God,
    - I realize that your ways are above my ways.
- I realize that you work in ways that are far beyond my understanding.
  - I realize that when you show up
    - its gonna be in an completely unexpected measure.
- So I’m not going to try to tell you how to work,
  - I’m not gonna try to tell you what you need to do,
    - I’m simply going to remind you
      - of what you’ve done before,
        - how you rent the heavens,
        - how you melted the mountains,
        - how you declared the glory of your mighty name
        - how you showed yourself mighty on behalf of your people.
- And then I’m going to expect you, the unexpected God,
  - to show up and do what you do best.
    - I’m just going to turn the whole thing over to you!
- Isaiah said, I know that you are a God that delights in mercy over judgment,
  - you are a God that gives good gifts
    - and showers your people with blessings
- And I dare to believe
  - that though mine eyes have seen
    - the coming of judgment
  - and though my mind has conceived
    - how horrible the situation is –
- I just dare to believe
  - that eyes have never seen
    - and ears have never heard
    - nor has it ever entered the heart of man
      - what you will do on behalf of those who wait upon you!
        - So I will wait!

**The Unexpected God**

I come to this pulpit tonight to declare to you the Unexpected God!

- The God who shows up right on time,
  - who moves in a way that you never imagined,
    - who demonstrates his glory and his power
      - in ways that have never been
        - conceived in the human mind
        - and have never entered the human heart.
- I don’t know what you might be facing in your life,
The Unexpected God

I don’t know what you might be up against
  - but I come to declare to you
    - that it is time to take the limits off of God!
      - He is the unexpected God.
  - Don’t limit him to moving in the realm of your expectations,
    - don’t presume to tell him what he needs to do,
      - but rather, like Isaiah, take a step back
        - and survey the wonders
          - of what he has already done for you
        - and recognize that eyes have not seen,
          - and ears have not heard
            - what he will do for those who wait upon him.
  - The wonderful delivering power of your God has not yet been exhausted!
    - He isn’t done, yet!
  - He is the God that rends the heavens!
    - He is the God that melts the mountains!
      - He is the God that always causes you to triumph!
        - He is the one that has never failed you.
        - He is the one that has never forsaken you.
        - He is the one that has always stood beside you.
    - He is the one that always goes before you
      - and continually follows up behind you!
  - You can’t escape his presence,
    - you can’t hide from his majesty,
      - you can’t be cut off from his love and compassion!
  - And you can’t even begin to imagine
    - how he will work on your behalf
      - if you will just trust in him,
        - if you will just wait to see
          - the mighty delivering hand
          - of your God!

Moses

Let me tell you about this unexpected God.
  - He shows up at the least predictable times
    - and in the most unexpected of places
  - And when he shows up
    - history takes an improbable turn
      - as he works out his will
        - in the lives of those that wait upon him:
  - A murderer, a fugitive from Egypt,
    - was keeping his father-in-law’s sheep
      - on the backside of the desert,
The Unexpected God

When this unexpected God appeared
- in a burning bush that was not consumed
  - and from the midst of that spectacular demonstration
  - He declared:
    - “I have observed the affliction of my people,
    - I have heard their cries on account of their taskmasters.
    - Indeed, I know their sufferings
    - and I have come to deliver...” (Exodus 3:7).

The stammering Moses went reluctantly to the Egyptian Pharaoh
- and demanded that the Hebrew slaves be set free.
  - The unexpected God worked
    - through an unlikely messenger named Moses
      - and delivered his people against impossible odds,
  - He led them through the Red Sea and across the wilderness
    - into an unexpected land flowing with milk and honey,
      - and forged them into new and improbable nation.

Jesus

If that’s not incredible enough:
- It was in the silence of a dark night,
  - in a remote corner of the world,
    - when this unexpected God showed up in a manger,
      - wrapped in the flesh of a vulnerable little baby,
        - born of a virgin named Mary.
  - What an unexpected,
    - time-altering,
    - history-defining
      - moment of transition
      - for the entire world.

This unexpected incarnation of God began to preach and teach.
- He called fishermen, laborers, tax collectors, and ordinary folks,
  - to form a new community
    - in which the unexpected presence and power
      - of an unexpected God would be manifest.
  - They expected him to restore the legacy of the throne of David,
  - They expected him to establish an earthly kingdom,
  - They expected him to cast off the roman empire.

But the God of the unpredictable
- did the most astounding and unexpected thing at Calvary.

They crucified him,
- they laid him in a borrowed tomb
  - but what happened next was completely uncontainable,
    - and absolutely unexplainable.
The Unexpected God

On the third day,
  o in accordance with the forever-settled word of God,
    • Jesus Christ was raised from the dead.
  o You want to talk about the unexpected God?
    • Hell thought he was dead and buried!
      • Hell though the threat had been erased,
        o But Hell never understood the transaction that occurred at Calvary until it was too late.
          ▪ In an unexpected display
          ▪ Of an unanticipated measure
          ▪ Of strength out of weakness
          ▪ Of life out of death
        • He emerged from the grave
        • as the firstborn of a holy nation!

Then on the Day of Pentecost
  o as various peoples from across the world gathered,
    • this unpredictable unexpected God
      • showed up in tongues of fire and newness of life;
        o and the church was born
          ▪ in an unexpected display
            • of divine grace and power.

What Do You Expect?
I want to make you aware tonight of the unexpected God!
  • I want to make you aware
    o that even though you don’t see his hand at work,
    o even though you don’t know what he’s doing,
    o even though things aren’t going the way you planned,
      ▪ the unexpected God is getting ready to show up where you never imagined,
        • to do what you never predicted,
          o in a way that you never would have believed!
  • I don’t know what tomorrow holds for you.
    o I don’t know what the future is going to bring you
      ▪ but I do know that just as soon as you think
        • you’ve got it all figured out,
          ▪ just as soon as you think
            • you’ve got a handle on it all,
              o the unexpected God is going to blow your mind!
  • He makes all things work together for good.
    o He makes all things eventually bring him glory and honor.
      ▪ Don’t limit him to your expectations
        • or your understanding,
          o He is the unexpected God!
Listen to the words of Isaiah from another passage:

Isaiah 40:25-31
25 To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One.
26 Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth.
27 Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God?
28 Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, faileth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.
29 He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.
30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall:
31 But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

Eye has not seen
• and ear has not heard
  o what the unexpected God will do
    ▪ for those that wait upon him!
• Isaiah was fully convinced,
  o I may not know how,
    ▪ and I may not know where
      • and I may never see with my own eyes
        o how you are going to work this terrible judgment to your glory,
  o but that’s OK.
    ▪ I’m turning it over to you!
      • Rend the heavens Oh God!
        ▪ Come down, Oh Lord!
    ▪ Let the mountains quake at your presence.
      • Declare the majesty of your name.
    ▪ You are the unexpected God,
      • you are awesome beyond my wildest imagination.
  o Do your work, Oh God,
    ▪ in your incredible unexpected way!
• What Isaiah was saying, in the 64th chapter,
  o is I surrender the whole thing to you, God!

The Watchman
David said, in Psalm 130:5-6
5 I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope.
The Unexpected God

6 My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning.

David looks to the weary watchman to demonstrate the principle.

• That faithful guard whose cloak is wet and stiff
  • with cold and the dew of the night,
  • stands on the wall and watches,
  • faithfully, for the first glimpse of the coming daylight.
• He doesn’t control the rising sun,
  • he doesn’t have any power over it
  • but even though it lingers
  • and even though it seems to wait before appearing,
    ▪ he knows in his heart
      • that if I will just watch and wait for it,
      • sooner or later the eastern sky is going to begin to change.
    ▪ And the darkness is going to give way to the bright hues of morning
      • and the brisk cold that dampens my spirits
      • is going to yield to the warm light of the morning sun.
        ▪ If I can just wait!

David said that’s how you wait on God, with expectation!

• The answer hasn’t come yet,
  • as a matter of fact, I have no influence at all
  • over when the answer will come,
    ▪ but I wait!
• Because I know that I know, that I know,
  • that even when God waits,
    ▪ his grace is coming!
  • In time, I will have my answer.
    ▪ In time my help will come from the Lord.
    ▪ In time, the bright glory of God will set the eastern horizon on fire.
      ▪ If I will just wait on the Lord!

I’ve spent a lot of mornings hanging on the side of a dark, lonely, cold tree in the middle of God’s own wilderness.

• And I can tell you a few things about waiting for morning.
  • It seems like the more I want it to come, the slower it comes.
• It seems to be impervious to my anxious wishful voice
  • urging the warmth of the sun to finally rise.
  •
• But, even though it delays its coming.
  • I’ve learned from experience that delay is not the same as denial!
• Sooner or later that sun is going to rise.
  • The same is true with the blessings of God.
  • Don’t mistake a delay on God’s part with denial.
Sometimes God waits
but, in time, you will have your answer if you will wait.
In time His glory will shine through,
- if only you will learn to wait!

I can’t help but wonder:
- Is it possible, tonight, that, in the midst of your circumstance,
  - you might have limited the hand of God
    - by your limited expectations?
- Is it possible that when you were so fixated on going one way
  - that he was trying to move you
    - in an unexpected direction?
- What would happen in this place tonight
  - if God met you in your impossible circumstance
    - in an unexpected way?
  - What if he gave you what you least expect?
    - What if he poured out on your life
      - an unexpected blessing?
    - What if he gave you
      - an unexpected increase?
    - What if he showered you
      - with unexpected love?
    - What if he met you
      - in the middle of your judgment
        - with unexpected mercy?
- What if he met your every need
  - but then continued to bless you
    - exceedingly above and beyond
      - your wildest expectation,
        - until your cup literally overflowed
        - with the goodness of God?

Prayer Answered
Isaiah never saw the results of his intercessory prayer.
- The people of God did not heed his warning.
  - His prophetic word was ignored
    - And the judgment of God was poured out.
- But, though his prophecy may have been ignored,
  - His prayers were not.
- And Years later, when the nation of Israel was in Babylonian captivity,
  - cut off from their homeland,
    - In the middle of the judgments of God that Isaiah saw coming.
- They lifted their voice again to God.
  - They turned their heart back to him.
And when the fullness of God’s time was come
  • the unexpected God began to move
    o in an unexpected measure
  • and an unlikely Persian king named Cyrus
    o decreed that the captives could go home
      ▪ and rebuild their temple.
  o Who would ever have thought it?
    ▪ Who ever have imagined it?
      • That the conqueror would of his own free will allow his captives to go?
  o I’ll tell you who imagined it.
    ▪ Isaiah didn’t know exactly how it would happen.
    ▪ But he imagined the unexpected God
      • showing up in an unexpected way
        o and delivering his people!
    ▪ That’s exactly what God did!

Sometimes we get fixated on what we want God to do,
  • And how we want him to do it.
    o We try to confine God to the realm of our expectations.
  • But I feel the gentle nudge of the Holy Ghost saying
    o take your eyes off of your expectations
      ▪ and lift them to the heavens,
        • your redeemer is at work,
          o the unexpected God
            ▪ is in the midst of making a way
            ▪ where there seems to be no way!
  • It may seem impossible,
    o it may seem unlikely
      ▪ but God is getting ready to rend the heavens,
        • he is getting ready to melt the mountains in your life.
  • I wonder If there is anybody under the sound of my voice tonight
    o that would dare to lift your heart in faith to the heavens
      ▪ and simply surrender your circumstance
        • to the unexpected God.
  • Someone who would say,
    o Lord I remove the limits,
      ▪ I’m taking away my expectations
        • and inviting you, Oh Lord,
          o the unexpected God
            ▪ who works in unexplainable ways
          • to simply show up and show out
            o with all of your glory and majesty!

CLOSE
It is the final verse of our text that the apostle Paul quotes 1 Corinthians 2:9.

- Joining his faith with that of Isaiah,
  - Paul declares that,
    - “Eye hath not seen,
      - nor ear heard,
      - neither have entered into the heart of man,
      - the things which God hath prepared
      - for them that love him.”

- Paul is firmly convinced that God works
  - on behalf of those that love him.
    - Eye hath not seen,
    - nor ear heard,
    - neither has it entered the heart of man
    - the things that God has prepared!

- I want you to know, tonight, that
  - God still works in strange and mysterious ways
    - on behalf of those that put their trust in him,
      - for those that simply say I will wait upon
        - the unexpected God
        - to do what only he can do.

Paul goes on to say, in the next verse, that,

- though eye has not seen
  - and ear has not heard,
  - what God will do,

- God hath revealed it to us by his Spirit:
  - for the Spirit searcheth all things,
  - yea, the deep things of God.

I'm preaching to somebody tonight that understands what Paul was writing about.

- There is something that has been stirred in your spirit tonight.
  - Something that connects with the deep things of God
    - in a completely unexpected way –

- Faith has been stirred within you.
  - Your heart has leapt at the prospect
    - of what the unexpected God might do
      - for those who will trust in him.
  - and, tonight, you are willing to step out by faith
    - and surrender your circumstances to the unexpected God.

- Somebody is getting ready for a miracle.
  - Somebody is getting ready to see some things change
    - on your job,
    - in your home,
    - for your family...
      - Somebody is getting ready
• Will you step out by faith and surrender your situation and your circumstance to him?

  - for an unexpected move of God
    - in your life!