

Christmas Eve 2011

Good Evening and welcome to our Christmas Eve service

My name is Rob Willey – I'm the SP here at Harvest Bible Chapel . . .

And I'm glad you've chosen to worship with us on this special occasion

We have this service for 2 main reasons: (1) To re-live the anticipation of that *first* Christmas; and (2) To anticipate the *celebration* of it now

The celebration of Christ's birth

And I trust that as we do that together, your heart will swell with the goodness and greatness of God this Christmas Eve

So let's stand and sing – O Come, O Come Emmanuel
(Worship; **Video** – Advent)

- No wonder the angels sang; And the shepherds hurried; And Mary rejoiced; And John the Baptist leaped; And Joseph obeyed; And Simeon spoke; And Anna prayed
They had waited, and anticipated, so long; They had yearned, so long
They had hoped, so long; They had endured, so long; They had expected, so long

Any time proclamation leads to expectation, and expectation, anticipation – there's bound to be a celebration; It's a common progression in our lives; Especially so at Christmas

- Like when parents, trustworthy as they are – proclaim the truth that gifts will be given at Christmas; What happens? Kids embrace it; They believe it, b/c mom/dad said it
Which leads to confident expectation b/c they're sure it's going to happen
Mom and dad delivered before, they'll deliver again

But that confident *expectation*, soon leads to nervous *anticipation*

Wondering *what* they're going to get; And how it's going to happen

And where – is it going to be at grandma's house or our house?

And when – Christmas Eve, Christmas morning, sometime later?

Even though they know it's going to happen, they're nervous with anticipation

You're not too old to remember that, are you?

Confident *expectation* leads to nervous *anticipation*

And when that anticipation is finally fulfilled, it leads to joyful *celebration*, doesn't it?

Oh, it looks different in different kids, for sure

Some walking and leaping and praising God so to say

And others quietly pondering their gift in their heart

It looks different, but it's a celebration nonetheless; It's a common phenomenon

- When trustworthy *proclamation* is embraced, it leads to confident *expectation*
And when confident expectation is *prolonged*, it leads to nervous *anticipation*
And when nervous anticipation is *fulfilled*, it leads to joyful *celebration*
Like it did for the angels, and the shepherds, and Mary, and Anna, and Simeon

They had heard the truth proclaimed by trustworthy sources, for generations

Like Isaiah, who said (**Is 9:6**) – *To us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

It was truth that was proclaimed by a trustworthy source

Trustworthy, b/c so *much* of what he said had *already* come true

And then there's Jeremiah who wrote (**Jer 23:5**) – *Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch*

IOW God would fulfill his promise to David, that someone from his lineage would lead his people, forever

And he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. Another trustworthy proclamation of what was to come

And how about Micah (**Micah 5:2-5**), who spoke on behalf of God saying . . .

You, O Bethlehem Ephrathah [the district or region in which Bethlehem lies] . . . from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days . . . And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD . . . And they shall dwell secure . . . And he shall be their peace.

- Trustworthy proclamations, that when embraced, led to confident *expectation******
Expectation that indeed these things would take place; That indeed, a deliverer *would* come; A Savior; A redeemer; A Counselor; A Prince of Peace; Mighty God himself
They were sure of it b/c it was a trustworthy proclamation, that led to a confident *expectation*

What they didn't know, is that it would take so long – hundreds and hundreds of years in fact; So long, that many gave up hope; So long, that many abandoned the faith

But not everyone; Some continued to wait with nervous *anticipation*

And the longer they waited, the more they anticipated

Passing it down from generation to generation

Until it was finally fulfilled, leading to joyful *celebration*

And that joyful celebration continues to this day, with us

Leading to further *proclamation* on our part

Which is being embraced by more and more people in confident *expectation* . . .

As we wait yet again, with nervous *anticipation* – for Christ to come back

At which point, the *celebration*, will never end; That's good news of great joy

All b/c Jesus stepped out of the light and into the **darkness**, so we could step out of the darkness and into the light (light candle); Out of time and into eternity

Out of anticipation, and into celebration

Pray (WT on; LT come forward) – Lord, your light has come, and your glory has risen upon us; And we remember with a celebration of anticipation – on this Silent but Holy night (Light leader candles; Remain on stage; **Video** – He Came; **Is 60:1**; Music)

Isaiah said – *Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.* Let's stand and worship (*O Holy Night*; *Silent Night*)

Close (with Becky) – God bless you; Becky and I are so thankful for you

Sleep in heavenly peace; **Merry Christmas** (Blow out candles

(Pause briefly before bringing up lights and music)