

Great Expectations

Acts 4:32-33

Intro

Great Expectations – Charles Dickens; Written mid-1800's

About the desire for wealth and social advancement that results in one dismal disappointment after another

The great expectations are never fulfilled

Provides a stark contrast between great expectations that are man-centered

And great expectations that are God-centered

Throughout history of God's work of redemption, his people have had great expectations

Abraham – due to God's promise of blessing and offspring

Israelites as God delivered them from Egypt; Joshua on verge of promised land

Crowning of Saul as first king, Reign of Solomon, Return from Babylonian captivity

Birth of Jesus, Resurrection of Jesus, New Covenant work of the HS at Pentecost

Every time the believers saw evidence of God changing lives, Miracles performed

Missionaries going out, New churches planted, Scriptures being completed

We could go on indefinitely regarding the works of God and the great expectations that preceded and followed them

When God's at work, you can't help but have great expectations

Just like there was great expectation with all of those events in redemptive history . . .

There's great expectation for our church as we launch into the summer, move to two services, and look forward to the years ahead

Acts gives us an amazing summary of what to expect as a church, when God is at work

They truly are great expectations

Read Acts 4:32-33

When God is at work, you can expect a (n) . . .

Increase in intimacy (v 32)

When you're of one heart and soul, you're unified

Phil 1:27-28 – *be of one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel*

That's unity – and unity always produces a closeness, a bond, intimacy

When God is at work, that intimacy . . .

Increases in its *extent* – more and more people; and

It increases in its *depth*

- Extent of intimacy

Not just among a few

The full number of those who believed . . .

There were no spectators; nobody was slipping in and slipping out

Nobody was on the sideline

The full number – all of them – were on board; All were involved

We're seeing that here, but let me give you a heads up

If you're here for 6 months and don't plug in to a SG and a service team, you won't stay

You'll start feeling disconnected, because you are

You'll feel out of it, because you are

You'll feel like you're missing out on something, because you are

You'll feel stagnant in your walk with Christ, because you are

You'll feel purposeless here, because you are

If you don't plug in, you won't stay and you'll miss out on the increase in intimacy among us

But if you do, you'll begin to see God at work, and come to *expect* an increase in the extent of intimacy among the believers

Not only that, but you'll experience an increase in the *depth* of intimacy among us

- Depth of intimacy

They were *of one heart and soul* – there's the unity piece

Unified/like-minded because they rallied around and advanced the same things – 5

Common Purpose – to glorify God in all they did by exalting Jesus as Lord

Common Hope – for Christ to return soon

Common Desire – to be with each other

Common Belief – the apostle's teaching based on the Scriptures and Christ's teaching

Common Direction – set aside personal preferences to proclaim Christ as Lord

They did the same things, hoped for the same things, strove for the same things

Everybody was on the same page

They didn't care about the personal cost, preferences, or inconvenience

They were consumed with the sole desire to advance the Kingdom of God

When that happens, the *depth* of intimacy always increases

You get tighter and tighter with one another

And that just fuels your unity and fervor that much more

When God is at work, we can have great expectations regarding the extent and depth of our intimacy

Surge in sacrifice (v 32)

- Attitude of sacrificial sharing and giving – v34-35

An attitude of sacrifice was the norm –

They cared for one another

They had personal possessions, but did not consider them private possessions, exclusively for their own use and enjoyment

Not only was there an attitude of sacrificial sharing and giving, but an . . .

- Attitude of sacrificial service

Wasn't limited to giving money and possessions, but included time and effort also

Acts 6:1 – *daily distribution* implies that much time and effort was involved on the part of those meeting daily needs

A surge in sacrifice is common when there are great expectations

Football team with tons of talent/expectations of a championship – surge in sacrifice

Same football team that makes the playoffs – renewed surge in sacrifice

Great expectations are almost always accompanied by a surge in sacrifice

When it comes to the things of God and our expectations of what he will do, it's no different – there's always a surge in sacrifice

Last week we saw some of that – 35 people stepped up to serve
To worship one, work one; To set up and tear down
Still need another 70 to complete this surge in sacrifice

But the sacrifice doesn't start and stop on Sunday mornings
It's all through the week
Give you an example this week of a surge in sacrifice to meet the needs of a family in our church
Email (Diane Brooks 5/05; see illustration under Acts 4.32-33)

That's the surge in sacrifice that you can expect when God is at work, on Sunday and every day of the week

When God is at work, you can expect an –

Outbreak of Outreach (v 33)

When God is at work, you can't help but reach out, and do so with power

- Reach out

The apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus

They were preaching the Good News

They couldn't stop talking about what they had seen and heard – Acts 4:18-20

It was accompanied by the work of the HS to prepare and change lives

When you see God at work changing lives, you *can't* be quiet about it
You're contagious!

We have a whole church full of contagious people

Why? Because we've seen God work thus far, and have great expectations for what God will *continue* to do

We have great expectations for more . . .

Changed lives; Answered prayer; Worship

Strength to endure more trials, difficulties, opposition; Joy; Hope

When that happens, you can't help but speak up, and *reach out*, and overflow with the greatness and goodness of God

You can't help but share your story about what God has done in your life and the life of our church

Not only that, but you will . . .

- Reach out with great power

Do you think God is just sitting around sipping tea and eating bon-bons while all this is going on? No way!

One of the things you can add to your great expectations is for God to give us great *power* in our outbreak of outreach, because he's jealous for the fame of his name . . .

He will stop at nothing to bring about the worship of his glory by fueling the faithful outreach of churches who exalt Jesus as Lord

Look at the result of such an outbreak in outreach – Acts 6:7

Word of God continued to increase – it was proclaimed more and more

Number of disciples multiplied greatly; Most unlikely people came to Christ
When God is at work, expect an outbreak of outreach, with great power to change lives

Flood of Favor (v 33)

Great grace was upon them all

A flood of favor, a powerful abundance, was on them all

A flood of God's blessing, joy, passion, and perseverance was given to the believers

A flood of favor from man was upon them

Is it any wonder that God gives great grace to us when there's . . .

An outbreak of outreach in the name of Jesus

A surge of sacrifice in the name of Jesus

An increase in intimacy in the name of Jesus

Is it any wonder that God wants to bless that in abundance?

He *wants* to flood us with his favor and great grace so that our outreach, sacrifice, and intimacy with him and each other is multiplied, and he is glorified

Who doesn't want that? Who doesn't want to be the recipient of God's flood of favor?

Who doesn't want to be fully under the provision and protection of God's umbrella of *great grace*?

We were reflecting last night on the flood of favor we have experienced in our family and church, because this weekend marks one-year anniversary of our first visit to the QC

We reflected on the flood of favor we experienced when . . .

We drove away sensing confirmation that this was it, this was home

Found a house at a low price

Arrived with U-hauls to houseful of people who barely knew us to help us move in
20 compelled, committed, and contagious people showed up at our first launch team meeting in September

The high school said yes to allow us to meet here, despite the warnings otherwise

Our launch team grew to 50 by Nov. with 3 amazing guys – John, Mark, and Nathan – who agreed to partner with us for *free* until we were able to pay them

We opened our doors on Nov 14th to a flood of people

Leaders stepped up in Feb to start SG's for over 180 people

50 women went to our first women's retreat

We baptized 19 people in January, and another 15 a few weeks ago

We reflected on the flood of favor we have experienced in your love for us, and the relationships and *home* we have found with you, faster/better than we ever imagined

I want more of that *great grace* – not only for our family, but for our whole church

We can expect it, because if you haven't noticed, God is work here at Harvest

Final thoughts

Next week . . .

Gearing up for 2 Services; New series; New Summer Adventure in CM

Invite someone – invitations in bulletin or business cards

Plug in and serve

Illustration

We have been at our farm since 2000, and in 2001 we began planting hay. During the first few years, we were filled with anxiety – when the weather men did not get the forecast right, when the hay got rained on, when it was baled too wet, when equipment broke as it often does, and when there was little help. We have often been frustrated by that, but God has been so good to work in us through all of this and we trust in Him for the timing. It is not all easy but our perspective has changed, and we trust God that whatever help he provides is sufficient for our needs.

Last Tuesday we were bailing the hay and all was going smoothly when an accident happened, severely injuring my husband's finger. The men went to the hospital, leaving me with the children and the tractor still running in the field. So after praying with them, I asked God who to call for help, and a man from church came to mind. I called, told him the situation, and he came right over to get the tractor and rack of hay in the barn while I went to the hospital to pick up my husband.

When we came home, there were three calls of support from people who attend Harvest. Not only that, but the next day 4 men from Harvest took the afternoon off from their work to help us get the remaining hay off the ground and into the barn. We have never known such help and support. Thank God. For where does my help come? It comes from the Lord!