

## What does it mean to live in expectation

c-c-Baptism of the Lord 2021

Most of you know I like science fiction movies.

So today I want you to get into a time machine and go back to Nov 1<sup>st</sup>.

Children were still pumped up with sugar from Halloween,

Remembrance Day is just around the corner,

and stores are just beginning to put up their Christmas decorations.

Commercially they are gearing up for their busiest season.

But at the same time, all of us are gearing up to celebrate Christmas:

Baking, writing cards, buying gifts, sending invitations for dinner,

making travel plans, not to mention decorating and celebrating special family traditions.

For three weeks in November and then four weeks in Advent

we lived in joyful expectation of Christmas.

And at Christmas, we have celebrated with family & friends, opened gifts,

exchanged love, and ate way more than we should have.

Today is the feast of the Baptism of the Lord, the last day of the Christmas season

and after today we will can take down all our decorations, and get back to normal.

But can we?

The first line of the gospel is very interesting... "The people were filled with expectation.

Now I know that at Christmas all the stores, social media, radio and TV

were all promoting Christmas.

Back in the time of John the Baptist they did not have any of that.

What was it that was driving the expectation?

First you need to realize that we live in a visual culture.

If it is not in front of our eyes, it isn't happening.

Between social media, radio, TV and the constant things that are happening in our society,  
our visual senses are constantly being bombarded.

In a sense it is our visual sense of sight that is driving us...leading us to expectation.

2000 years old it was not so much a visual culture, as it was an audible culture.

People were attune to what was being said.

This is one of the reasons Jesus spoke in parables.

People remembered stories...every minute detail of the stories they heard.

So when they started hearing stories of John baptizing in the Jordan...

that would have been front page news...

if it were happening today, all the social media, radio and TV would be a buzz with it.

Combine this with the fact that travel was a lot slower.

Now I can fly to Israel, hop on a bus and travel to the Jordan

in about the same amount of time

that it would make someone to walk from Jerusalem to the Jordan.

So when people travelled to the Jordan to be baptized by John, it was a major event...

and would have been the talk of the town.

(pause) Hold that thought for a moment,

We have all used the expression. “Don’t shoot the messenger.”

We use it when we hear some news that we don’t like,  
and to it make it go away, we think that if we get rid of the messenger—  
the news will also go away.

Well the exact opposite was happening to John the Baptist.

They didn’t want to shoot the messenger, quite the opposite---  
they wanted to exonerate the messenger.

John was giving them such good news that they mistook him as the Messiah.

He had to clarify...and my bet is—he had to clarify more than once,  
that he is not the Messiah, he is only the bearer of good news.

So where does all this leave us. For the most part we live our lives in expectation.

Children are excited when Christmas approaches.

Feb 14 is just over a month away,

and young couples, in love, are anxiously awaiting the day.

All couples are excited when the anniversary of their marriage comes up...

as they get to remember the love that brought them together.

Most people, especially children, look forward to their birthdays with great expectation.

Having said this, I doubt there is anyone who is waiting with great expectation for Christmas of 2022.

No one is thinking, about what their new year’s resolution is going to be, for next year.

That is just too far away.

When something isn’t expected for a long time, or doesn’t happen for a long time,  
our excitement level wains very quickly.

So let get back into our time machine. And go back to the very beginning.

To the time of the Fall, when Adam and Eve get kicked out of the garden.

At that time God set about a plan of salvation that would include sending his own son.

Fast forward through the centuries...God is constantly making covenants with humans.

Constantly reminding us that he will be our God, and we will be his people.

Noah, Abraham, Moses, then with the Old Testament prophets

he referred to a new covenant, he would make with his people.

In all that time the people were living in great expectation of something greater.

Even in times when we wander away from God, he does not abandon us.

In those moments we need to remember the words of the first reading,

“Comfort, oh comfort my people.”

Isaiah’s message of comfort is as relevant today as it was 2500 years ago.

We know that Christ is coming again in all his glory.

We know that the day will come when we will be with him for all eternity.

But we have been waiting. Waiting for 2000 years.

That’s a long time, and we begin to wonder...will he ever come.

And just when we get our hopes up something comes along.  
The dark ages, the black plague, world wars,  
and now we have to content with COVID.

We are left wondering...will he ever come.

To everyone who is despairing

I would say the same thing to you that Isaiah said to the people in exile,  
—"Comfort, oh comfort my people."

In times of stress...when we do not feel the presence of God at our side  
we need to hear "Comfort, oh comfort my people.

We need to be reminded that that God is at our side.

That the final promise he made to us before his ascension was

"Remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Baptism helps us to remember that we have been made one in Christ.

And what is more, we have been baptized into his mission.

In the time of Jesus there was a whole world that needed to hear the message  
that Jesus was with them.

In our day, there is still a whole world that needs to know that Jesus is with us.

So back into our time machine...one last time...jump to Jan 8/9, 2022.

In the next year we are called to live each day filled with expectation.

We may not feel him...at times he will even feel distant,  
but the reality is, he is always with us.

If you have any doubts, open your eyes for the next 20 minutes of our celebration.

Jesus will manifest himself in the breaking of the bread,  
he will enter into us, when we receive him,  
and he will transform us from the inside out.

If this is not enough to tide use over until we see him face to face, I don't know what is.