

2019 New Year Message

Pastor James Foley – Shared Sunday, January 6, 20189

Main Theme – Beginning 2019 with a word from the Lord re: adjusting our expectations in Christ.

WORSHIP & PRAYER COMMUNION

At this time, I want to call forth the ushers distribute the emblems of Communion:

We have just come through a season of holiday celebrations (e.g., Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's). Let's talk about some elements commonly associated with CELEBRATION.

- 1) We tend to celebrate with a GROUP/crowd of people (i.e., family, friends, and/or acquaintances). Celebrating by yourself just doesn't seem to have the same feeling.
- 2) We tend to need a REASON to celebrate. We may celebrate a birthday, an anniversary, a promotion, etc. We may celebrate the start of a New Year; but there always seems to be a reason.
- 3) Our celebrations tend to look to the PAST. Birthdays, anniversaries, national holidays, etc., often commemorate past events and happenings worthy of remembrance and recollection.
- 4) Celebrations tend to highlight a PERSON or a past EVENT. Memorial Day is for fallen soldiers. Labor Day is for workers. Anniversaries are for couples. A birthday celebrates an individual.
- 5) Celebrations are often connected with FOOD and DRINK. Nobody celebrates with a diet! The diet might begin on January 2, but nobody goes without food on New Year's Eve or Day!
- 6) Celebrations are JOYOUS occasions. The Fourth of July might have its solemn moments, but it also has its fireworks!

KEY – We use that same word—CELEBRATE—in reference to the Lord's Supper. We often speak of 'celebrating' Communion, etc. Though this might sound contradictory, this is a time of celebration. Consider:

- 1) We celebrate the Lord's Supper in a GROUP. It may be a small group (even just 2 –3), but there is something communal in what we do in Communion.
- 2) We celebrate for a REASON. We celebrate the gift of eternal life provided through Christ's sacrifice and the reality that He has conquered death!
- 3) This celebration looks to the PAST. Communion provides for us an opportunity to look back—nearly 2,000-years—to consider and commemorate a momentous moment in history.
- 4) Some celebrations are for EVENTS – others are for PERSONS. Communion is a celebration of BOTH: The Crucifixion and the Crucified.
- 5) This celebration of Christ's gift is connected with FOOD and DRINK. The bread is symbolic of His broken Body. The juice is symbolic of His shed Blood. Some celebrations fatten the body – this one feeds the soul!
- 6) This celebration—solemn as it may be—is to be received with JOY. Consider the joy we have in and through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ (willingly undertaken for you).

1 Corinthians 11:23–26 (NIV)

23 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." 25 In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." 26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

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INTRODUCTIONS

Happy New Year! As always it is wonderful to see you. I look forward to these moments of worship and instruction. I pray that you are ready to receive what the Lord has for you today (as we enter into 2019). Please have your Bible at the ready and be prepared to take some notes.

SETTING THE STAGE PT. 1

Scripture offers the following word to those who would be used of the Lord:

1 Peter 4:11 (NIV)

11 If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

KEY – This morning I want to offer a word that I believe has prophetic edge; sharing as one who is called to speak forth as an oracle of God. As the Pastor of this assembly, I want to offer a word that will prayerfully set the **TRAJECTORY** for this upcoming year (2019).

NOTE – Consider the following word (spoken by the Lord to my heart in recent days). May we have ears to hear what the Spirit is saying in this hour...

“My people suffer from low expectations of Me, what life can be in Me, and low expectations of themselves” (REPEAT).

-We **EXPECT** too little of the Lord, life/living in Him and of ourselves

-We **ANTICIPATE/LOOK FOR** too little of the Lord, life/living in Him and of ourselves

KEY – At a deeper level, perhaps we **DESIRE** too little of Him, of life in Him and for ourselves. To quote C. S. Lewis (renowned author and theologian):

It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are too easily pleased.

KEY – With all of this said, I believe that God is calling us to a season of **GREATER EXPECTATIONS**.

SETTING THE STAGE PT. 2

In order to explore the depths of this word, I want to share a bit regarding its origins (CONTEXT).

Q. How did this word come to be?

Like many words that I receive from the Lord, this came to me in the midst of life and living. Specifically, it came to me subsequent to a conversation with a close friend (beyond our assembly) after a recent Sunday service. FYI – I do have permission to relay this back-and-forth:

- 1) My friend initiated the conversation with a rather typical question: “How was church today?”
- 2) I responded with the typical, “It went well,” adding, “Unfortunately a lot of people were sick or away, and we had to change things up regarding our worship time.”
- 3) Curious as to what I meant by “change things up regarding our worship time” he asked, “What do you mean?”
- 4) To this I replied that we had to rely on video worship, as Misty was scheduled to work and we had no Plan B due to illness, etc.

KEY – He looked at me as though he had seen a ghost. He could NOT fathom worshiping to a video v. a live worship team. He then added, “Well, OUR worship was AWESOME!”

SETTING THE STAGE PT. 3

To be honest, something in his final comment BOTHERED me. Perhaps it was the WAY he said it, poking fun at the fact we weren’t able to pull off a live worship set. But since I love the kid and I know his heart toward me and the Lord, I chose NOT to take offense . . .

KEY – Yet there WAS something deeper about his remark that I couldn’t let go: i.e., WHAT was so amazing/awesome about his worship experience? I wondered quite a bit about this:

- 1) Did the glory of the Lord fill the church so that people couldn’t stand/function (as in the days of old)? When Solomon brought the ark of the covenant into the newly completed Temple—offering prayer and praise—Scripture records the following:

1 Kings 8:11 (ESV)

10 And when the priests came out of the Holy Place, a cloud filled the house of the Lord, 11 so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord.

KEY – I THINK NOT

2) Was there the sound of a violent wind from heaven and tongues of fire setting upon the worshipers gathered, transforming feeble figures into mighty witnesses for Christ (as on the Day of Pentecost)?

Acts 2:1–4 (NIV)

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

KEY – I THINK NOT

3) Were people called to the mission’s field by the Holy Spirit in the midst of the worship, as in the days of the Early Church?

Acts 13:1–3 (NIV)

1 Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. 2 While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” 3 So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

KEY – I THINK NOT

4) Were people set free from bondage as they worshipped, as happened in the days of the apostolic community?

Acts 16:25–26 (NIV)

25 About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. 26 Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone’s chains came loose.

KEY – I THINK NOT

5) Were people saved by the manifestation of God's presence in worship (as in days gone by)?

Acts 16:27–31 (NIV)

27 The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. 28 But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!"

29 The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. 30 He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

31 They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household."

KEY – I THINK NOT

6) Did people rush home from that worship service last Sunday to tell their families about the Jesus they had come to know (as happened in this account)?

Acts 16:32–34 (NIV)

32 Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. 33 At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his household were baptized. 34 The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole household.

KEY – I THINK NOT

TRANSITIONS

Well, if it WASN'T such truly awesome things WHAT WAS SO AMAZING about his worship service?

KEY – The MUSIC was good & he enjoyed playing his respective instrument on the worship team... i.e., The worship was awesome when his EXPECTATION OF/DESIRE FOR music and excitement was MET. That was his anticipation; what he looked for in the worship meeting.

NOTE – Please do NOT think that I am throwing my friend under the bus. Rather I am placing MYSELF under the tires. What struck me about these sentiments is that they are the PRECISE METRIC I have used to grade many a worship service myself:

- A worship service was deemed a success when there was NO worship at (because of the music)
- A worship service was deemed a failure when God moved mightily (because of an OFF mus. perf)

KEY – What I am saying is that MY EXPECTATION of a good worship service has been misguided and ill-informed at times. What I EXPECTED of a worship service; what I ANTICIPATED in a worship service; what I DESIRED of a worship service was AMISS! I was LOOKING for too little!

DELVING IN (WORSHIP)

KEY – I want to ask a series of questions related to our WORSHIP experience:

- Q.** When you gather on a Sunday for worship, what are you expecting (spiritually-speaking)?
- Q.** When we assemble for worship, what are you prayerfully anticipating? Looking for? Desiring?
- Q.** Do you arrive with expectation at all? Are you conscious of your desires/anticipations?
- Q.** Is your definition of a 'good' worship service any better than the one I have had at times?

NOTE – I want to put forth the question: “WHAT IF THERE IS MORE TO WORSHIP THAN THIS?”
i.e., What if we should revise our expectations, anticipations and desires in an UPWARD manner?

- Q.** What if we arrived with the expectation that God might manifest His glory once again?
- Q.** What if our corporate desire was fueled by the sense of meaningfully connecting w/ Him?
- Q.** What if we arrived anticipating divine transformation and supernatural empowerment?
i.e., As a result of our worship, we would be changed and better fit to serve as change agents.
- Q.** What if we arrived anticipating for God’s presence to break bondages, setting at liberty those who are captive and catalyzing personal/familial salvation?

KEY – OR we can be content with a good worship service where they played the songs we like...

NOTE – I will be the first to say that we cannot FORCE a genuine move of the Spirit. What I am referring to is something beyond our powers to gin up or manufacture. But I AM SAYING that God’s people tend to get what they seek, ask for, pursue, hunger and thirst after, anticipate, believe and expect.

Matthew 7:7–8 (NIV)

7 “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

James 4:2b (NIV)

2 . . . You do not have because you do not ask God.

Matthew 9:29 (KJV – Jesus Speaking)

29 . . . According to your faith let it be to you.

KEY – MAYBE IT IS TIME FOR GREATER EXPECTATIONS!

DELVING DEEPER PT. 1

NOTE – This principle extends beyond the arena of our experience in WORSHIP. It informs and impacts EVERY SEGMENT of Christian life and living. Consider a few examples (briefly):

THE ARENA OF TRAINING

Q. What are your expectations re: biblical instruction/personal study? When you open the Word?

Q. When you arrive to a study or Sunday sermon, what are you expecting; anticipating; desiring?

Q. Are you expecting, anticipating and desiring a timeless/timely word from the Lord that can bring deeper insight, understanding, wisdom, correction, and more so that you might more effectively serve the Lord and others?

2 Timothy 3:16–17 (NIV)

16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the servant of God[a] may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Q. Are you desiring to sit at Jesus' Feet, giving your time & attention to that which matters most?

Luke 10:38–42 (NIV)

38 As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. 39 She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. 40 But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

41 "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, 42 but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

Q. Are you looking for a principle/nugget of truth that you can hide in your heart (battle w/ sin)?

Psalms 119:11 (NIV)

11 I have hidden your word in my heart
that I might not sin against you.

Q. Are you expecting to hear that which can aide you in your spiritual warfare/battle?

-cf. Jesus against Satan in the wilderness – "It is written" – we're in a BATTLE!

KEY – Or are you CONTENT with hearing just another 'good' sermon or reading words on a page?

DELVING DEEPER PT. 2

THE ARENA OF FELLOWSHIP/CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

- Q.** What are your expectations re: Christian fellowship and the ‘community of the saints’?
- Q.** When you arrive to a study or Sunday potluck, what are you expecting; anticipating; desiring?
- Q.** Are you expecting to be edified/positively impacted by the gifts given to our brethren?

1 Corinthians 12:7–11 (NIV, Emphasis Mine)

7 Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the COMMON GOOD. 8 To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, 10 to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. 11 All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

- Q.** Are you expecting to be encouraged in your walk with the Lord?

1 Thessalonians 5:11 (NIV, Emphasis Mine)

11 . . . encourage ONE ANOTHER and build EACH OTHER up, just as in fact you are doing.

Hebrews 10:24–25 (NIV)

24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, 25 not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

- Q.** Do you anticipate any spiritual ‘sharpening’ and refinement?

Proverbs 24:17 (NIV)

17 As iron sharpens iron,
so one person sharpens another.

- Q.** Are you desiring to be challenged in your walk with the Lord (if you are amiss)?

Galatians 6:1 (NIV)

1 Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted.

KEY – Or are you CONTENT with talking about a sports team while sipping coffee after church?

DELVING DEEPER PT. 3

THE ARENA OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE & OUTREACH

Q. What are your expectations re: your Christian service & outreach (i.e., witness for Christ)

Q. When you act as an emissary of Christ (in both word and deed) what are you des.; ant.; exp.?

Q. Do you anticipate/desire the manifestation of God's power as you serve/witness?

Mark 16:15–18 (NIV)

15 He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. 16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. 17 And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; 18 they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well."

Acts 1:8 (NIV)

8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Q. Do you anticipate that/desire for God to use someone just like you to do His work?

1 Peter 4:11–12 (NIV)

11 If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

KEY – Or are you CONTENT with . . .

- 1)** Not Serving or Sharing
- 2)** Not Trusting in His Promises
- 3)** Reaching Out in Your Own Strength
- 4)** Believing the Territory is Too Hard (v. Jesus' words "The Harvest is Plenty")

CONCLUSIONS PT. 1

KEY – I END this message as I STARTED it...

“My people suffer from low expectations of Me, what life can be in Me, and low expectations of themselves.”

- We EXPECT too little of the Lord, life/living in Him and of ourselves
- We ANTICIPATE too little of the Lord, life/living in Him and of ourselves
- Perhaps we DESIRE too little of Him, of life/living in Him and for ourselves

KEY – BUT things do NOT have to stay this way. We can adjust our expectations, anticipations and desires (as the Spirit calls us this morning)! THIS is to be a season of GREATER EXPECTATIONS!

CONCLUSIONS PT. 2

Q. Where do we go from here?

- Q.** Will you allow this word to sink into the soil of your heart?
- Q.** Will you feed and water this seed as the Lord leads and enables?
- Q.** Will you allow the Lord God to bring forth the increase (desired fruit)?

NOTE – As we walk into 2019, can we allow the Lord to inform, impact, reorient and/or change...

- OUR Expectations
- OUR SENSE OF Anticipation
- The Desires of OUR Minds & Hearts

KEY – I don't think we understand fully what could happen if we allow for this change as a church, but I would love to be a part of a body that was willing to seek the Lord and try! Happy New Year!