

Sermon Title: I'll be home for Christmas: Bethlehem

Basketball Story:

Why would I be telling you a basketball story on Christmas?

- Tonight we are continuing our sermon series and talking about the city of Bethlehem.
- I'm guessing that Joseph said that same line to Mary at least once during Jesus's birth.
- What did you expect?
- Someone once told me that our happiness is directly tied to our expectations.
- I want each one of us to take a look deep down inside of ourselves and ask ourselves, what do we expect about life and why?

Luke 2:1-7

Bethlehem:

- It was a small town about 7 miles south of Jerusalem, and it's only claim to fame is that the greatest King in Israel's history, King David, was born there.
- Then we have our few verses from tonight, that explain to us because of a census in the Roman Empire, Joseph and Mary had to go to Bethlehem to be counted, and when they arrived there was no room at the Inn.
- Casting Crowns song "While you were Sleeping"
 - Oh Bethlehem, what you have missed while you were sleeping, For God became a man and stepped into your world today, Oh Bethlehem, you will go down in history, As a city with no room for its King.
 - The song goes on, and the last verse is all about the United States of America, asking the question of when Jesus comes again, will we be sleeping, will we go down in history as a country with no room for the King?
- Our call this Christmas, is to not be like Bethlehem, and to make room in our lives for Jesus.

What do you expect?

- If we are like Bethlehem, and have no time and space for Jesus in our lives because we are busy, what do we expect from God in return?

- The Bible teaches us that not everything is going to go perfectly in our life according to our plan.
 - We talked earlier about this, that this was probably not the way that Mary expected to give birth to the savior of the world.
 - The Bible does teach us that God has a plan, and that his plan is perfect, and everything is going to be perfect according to his plan. But we are not God.
- What do we expect for BRC for 2026?
 - Things are going to be different, but different isn't always worse.
 - The fallen and broken world is not going to remind us to spend time with Jesus.
- Some of those things could be seen as lowering your expectations, which again isn't a bad thing, but lowering our expectations is for the purpose of having better reactions.
 - If we don't expect perfection, we won't be as disappointed when it doesn't happen.

Good expectations of God

- Because of Christmas, I hope that you truly expect and understand how much God loves you!
 - John 3:16
- You should expect that God will always be with you.
 - Romans 8:38-39
- You should expect that things will change over time.
 - Romans 12:2

Christmas Presents:

1. Make your expectations for your friends and family this Holiday season realistic.
 - a. Along those same lines, have realistic expectations about God. Don't expect tomorrow to go perfectly, but do expect that God's plan for your life is perfect.
2. Examine your daily routines to see if your life has more room for Jesus in it than Bethlehem did.
 - a. You should go to your doctor at least once a year, and you should examine your spiritual health at least once a year too.

Bethlehem wasn't ready when Jesus arrived. He is coming back again, the only question is will we be ready for him when he returns. Are we ready for him right now?

Scripture passages to go up on the Screen:

Luke 2:1-7 - In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. 2 This was the first registration when[a] Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3 And all went to be registered, each to his own town. 4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, 5 to be registered with Mary, his betrothed,[b] who was with child. 6 And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. 7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.