

For the week of 15 November: Freedom!

We live in a consumer culture of “more” — more speed, more stuff, and more options. Look at the average cable/satellite television plans. The channel lineup is ridiculous! We subscribe to 300+ channels so that I can watch the dozen stations I am actually interested in! But we expect choices and we expect more for less! A winning combination for sure!

So what do we mean by this years’ Advent/Christmas theme: “Expect Mas This ChristMAS!”?

What does it mean to expect more spiritually? As our foundation let’s review a couple of passages and make some quick observations:

2 Corinthians 1.20: *“All of God’s promises have been fulfilled in Christ with a resounding “Yes!”.*

All the birth narratives intentionally associate the birth of Jesus with God’s promises to Israel. Why? Because God’s promises express His faithfulness.

Ephesians 3.14-19: *For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, 16 that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*

Here Paul’s prayer is that the Ephesian community would experience more strength (16), more love (17), more fulness of God (19) - that they would know the breadth, length, height, and depth. This certainly sounds like a description of “mas” to me!

One of the tragedies of our times is that many Christians do not expect God to promise them anything “more” than life after death. We have lost all sense that we are children with a purposed destiny because our God and Father has spoken over us before we were ever born. God wants us to enjoy our salvation and the fulfillment of His purposes for us.

God’s promises in Jesus give us permission to “Expect Mas”. Expectations established upon God’s revealed promises are not hubris or presumption. These are expressions of “faith”, a heartfelt cry of dependence, and a surrender of a soul to God’s purposes. “Expecting Mas” is a refusal to capitulate to the narrow limitations of our culture that defines expectations solely with money and power. These will not inhibit God’s capacity or desire to deliver “mas” to you this season.

Advent/Christmas is a season to reflect on hope, love, joy, and peace. What will “mas” love, “mas” joy, “mas” hope, and “mas” peace look like for you? Let’s visit about that this week!

Enjoy your LifeGroup! Mark

The Mystery of Christmas

*He was created of a mother whom He created. He was carried by hands that He formed. He cried in the manger in wordless infancy. He, the Word, without whom all human eloquence is mute.*

* *Augustine*

Getting to know one another…

When you were growing up what did the weeks between Thanksgiving and Christmas mean to you?

What is your most meaningful Christmas memory growing up?

What is your favorite Christmas carol? Why?

Reflecting on “Mas”…

Do you find it difficult to have expectations of God? Why or why not?

Can you think of a time when God met or exceeded your expectations? Explain.

Using our Advent/Christmas theme, “Expect Mas This Christmas”, reflect on the following questions:

Expect more love: what might this mean to/for you? Might this be love of/for/from others? love of/for/from God? Is more love a provision? an opportunity? a relationship?

Expect more hope: what might this mean for you? What is hope? Is there an area of your life that seems hopeless? futile? disappointing? what does hope mean for/to you?

Expect more joy: how do you define, “joy”? what might “more joy” mean for you? Is “more joy?” something for you? or something more for God to give others through you? Are there areas in your life that are “joyless” that you would risk expecting “more joy” for?

Expect more peace: how do you define, “peace”? Are there areas in your life for you to risk “expecting more peace” in? What would this “more” look like? What would be the tangible impact of more peace? Do you think that God might want to give “more peace” to others through you? Who? What might this look like?

What does a LifeGroup that expects more look like?

How can your LifeGroup be a “vital community of more” without going off the rails into a name-it-claim-it-blab-and-grab community that behaves foolishly?

My prayer requests (think of what you want to share in advance)

Praying for my group…

