

Christmas at the Movies – National Lampoons

Good morning and welcome to CHC. We are so grateful to have you in the room today. Just a couple of days before Christmas.

Hopefully you get to spend time making wonderful memories with your family and friends this Christmas.

Let me invite you one more time to our Christmas Eve services...also a great opportunity to give back and serve.

Today, we are wrapping up (no pun intended) our series **Christmas at the Movies**. We've been combing faith and film to see some important messages for us to live by.

Christmas time brings out a ton of emotions. There is joy and peace and comfort for some. Others feel anxious, pain, or even fear.

Christmas also seems to be a time where expectations really become a factor.

Present you thought you were getting but didn't.
Present you gave that you thought would be a home run, but wasn't
Family traditions that you wanted to do, but didn't happen
Family traditions that others expected you to do, but you didn't want to.
The help you thought was coming, but never showed up
The party you threw and had many-no shows

We are going to jump right in and get real today...Unmet expectations can be a source for frustration and disappointment and all kinds of negative feelings.

When the normal rhythms of life are broken, sometimes expectations get highlighted.

Statistics say that Christmas time is the highest time for depression, anxiety, and feelings of loneliness.

We are going to look at a couple of stories today of some unmet expectations.

Let's start with the more humorous one.

Show Clip I 25:33 – 26:48

Everybody's favorite Clark Griswold had to deal with some unmet expectations. He thought he had done all the work. Everything was set and it was time to show it off.

Everyone else was there thinking this was going to be amazing. Only to be let down. Context: The angel had already gone to Mary and told her about carrying God's Son Jesus. She was engaged to be married to Joseph, and he hadn't heard the news yet.

Turn with me to **Matthew 1.18-19** | ⁸ **This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit.**

¹⁹ **Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.**

It seems that Joseph's fiancé has been unfaithful...it looked like things weren't going as planned. This isn't what Joseph expected or wanted. This is not how all of this played out in his mind.

Joseph was a Godly man. He was devoted to His faith. But He is now faced with this question, the same question you and I can be faced with.

What do I do, when God doesn't do what I thought He should do?

How do I respond when expectations and results are not the same?

Let's look at what Joseph's response...**Vs. 19** | **Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.**

Joseph's first reaction was what... to end the relationship.

Whoa...this isn't what I signed up for. This isn't how I thought it would be so I'm out.

It's human nature to focus on the lose instead of the gain. The negative instead of the positive.

We can hear 10 great things about us and 1 bad...what's our focus? The bad.

Because of this fact here are two things we must practice...1. **Look for what God is doing rather than what He is not doing.**

We can get fixated on what God isn't doing...even if it's that one thing. Don't miss what He is doing while looking for that thing He isn't.

Don't miss all of the wonderful things God is doing.

Illustration: I heard a pastor tell a story of a family who had children and 1 of the children tragically passed away. This pastor was counseling with the child who survived, and the child told him, "I don't feel like I even exist anymore." The pastor asked why..."All mom and dad see is the child who isn't here anymore"

Because of pain or distractions, we can miss what God is doing because we only look at what we feel like He isn't.

Look around for what He is doing. Find his grace, and wonders, and mercies. And when you do Praise Him, Honor Him, Serve Him....for what He is doing.

Finding a healthy and Godly perspective.

Let's jump back to our movie for a second and see how important perspective really is.

Show Clip | 1:04:23 – 1:06:22

Not very much going according to plan or expectation for the Griswold's. But they kept a positive perspective..."It's just a little dry."

Let's go back to Joseph...Joseph made a decision based on what he was seeing. But then something changed.

Matthew 1.20-24 | ²⁰ But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." ²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ²³ "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us"). ²⁴ When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.

Even though this was not what he was expecting...He took her home to be his wife.

What God said became more important than what Joseph saw. He had this encounter with God, and it changed everything.

Here is the second practice we need to implement in our lives...When there are unmet expectations

2. Fall forward (Don't fall away)

The natural thing to do when things don't go as planned...Run.

Don't run from disappointment. Avoiding discouragement doesn't eliminate discouragement.

When God doesn't show up in the way we thought he should...we tend to pull away.

Fall toward Him...Run to the one who can help in your time of need. Don't run toward the darkness, run toward the light.

When we can't make sense of what God's doing...step forward in faith

Joseph didn't get it all figured out...but He listened to what God said.

The real meaning of Christmas...God sent His Son so that we can have hope. We can have a Savior who is with us when we need Him the most.

A little later in Jesus' life He tells his guys...**John 8.12 I Jesus spoke to them again: "I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows me will never walk in the darkness but will have the light of life."**

That's what I want to fall towards. *(Light handout to remind of this)*

What does that look like? Practically speaking...Take one moment and get to the presence of God....Why not just give it a try?

You've been fighting unmet expectations for long enough. You've been trying to think your way into feeling better. Its time fall forward.

We can live a life that is overflowing with hope this Christmas.

Sometimes even hope comes from unlikely places...

Show Movie Clip I 1:26:44 – 1:28:36

Sometimes unmet expectations turn out for the good.

Conclusion:

There are people like Joseph and Clark...that your situation is confusing and full of unexpected or unmet expectations.

Two words that may be holding you back: "I thought"

I thought I should get that job or promotion.

I thought I should have been recognized for the job I did.

I thought when I got married this would look different.

I thought you were going to grow up and be this perfect child.

I thought God was going to _____.

Is "I thought" what's standing between you and peace? You and healing? You and God.

God says in **Isaiah 55.8-9 I "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. ⁹"As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.**

Let's practice looking for what God is doing instead of what He's not. Let's fall forward into the presence of an almighty and all-knowing Savior.

There is hope this Christmas...and just as Joseph found out...His name is Jesus.