

# Expecting Christmas: Abba Father

Psalm 68:5

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One of the things about Christmas is we have expectations. As kids we had expectations of the gifts we might receive. Lists were made. Then there were the trips to see Santa so we could share our expectations.

When I had my own kids there was the expectation of the look on their faces. Gifts were, and still are purchased, with the idea their reaction in mind.

My expectations have changed over time. Instead of gifts my biggest expectation is being with family, eating cookies, and laughing a lot. Throughout the year I live in expectation of God the Father working in my life.

***Psalm 68:5–6 (NLT) Father to the fatherless, defender of widows— this is God, whose dwelling is holy. God places the lonely in families; he sets the prisoners free and gives them joy.***

***Exodus 4:22–23 (NLT) Then you will tell him, ‘This is what the Lord says: Israel is my firstborn son. I commanded you, “Let my son go, so he can worship me.” But since you have refused, I will now kill your firstborn son!’ ”***

**The best Christmas gift every year is being adopted into God’s family.** From the days of Moses to the prophecies of Isaiah God has been known as Father. God called Moses away from his family at the age of eighty to deliver the people from slavery. Moses heard the Lord proclaim that the people held in slavery were God’s children. This was a new way for the people to see themselves.

God was revealing Himself as more than Creator. God was revealing Himself as more than Judge. God saw these people as His children. It was important for the world to see the Lord rescue His children. What a powerful image for a father bringing home his children. God is not a piece of wood, or metal, or stone. God is living and caring, providing and powerful.

God spoke through the psalmists and prophets. They easily identified the Lord as a father. The prophets portrayed the Lord with the qualities of a father. They wanted the people to experience their Father God. Their Father was a judge, but also their provider. Their Father was powerful, but also leader. Their Father was compassionate and forgiving. The Father described by the prophets was calling His children back to Him.

Wondering children and rebellious children were being called to the Father or face discipline for their rejection. You know the difference between wondering, rebellious, and rejection? Wondering and rebellious people can always come home. Those who reject the Father are in peril of walking so far away that they can’t come back. The burden for returning to the Father is upon the children. The Father is always good.

Jesus often referred to God as Father. That’s appropriate Jesus is the Son. Jesus introduced His Father to us. He taught us to pray to His Father as our Father. He revealed the deep connection

between the Father and Son as being one. Jesus prayed for all who follow Him to be one with the Father.

The Hebrew for father is abba. Some describe the word as a child calling out daddy. Abba adds another dimension to our understanding of God. Elohim is our strong creator. Yahweh is our relational God. Adonai is the Master of All. Yeshua is our Savior. Ruach Hakkodesh is the Holy Spirit that dwells within us. Shalom is our peace. Jireh is our Provider. Mauzzi is our Refuge. Abba is our Father.

We have a God who adopts the most vulnerable. He knows His children. He provides and guides His children. He sets His children free. He calls out for the lost. He welcomes home the lost. For the Father it is as though they were never lost.

***Luke 15:20 (NLT) So the wondering son returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him.***

**We think we can do our own thing, but the Father always welcomes us home.** We know the story of the lost son or the prodigal son. He was the younger of two sons who wanted His inheritance before His Father died. The father being generous in everyway gave his youngest son his portion of the estate. As though his father were dead he took the money and left to do his own thing.

This was catastrophic. The son spent all of his money. Scripture says he lived a wild life. You judge what that means. Now being broke, without a place to stay, or food to eat the son went to work for a pig farmer. This is as low as a person of Jewish heritage could go. Pigs were forbidden animals, considered unclean.

While he was feeding the pigs he thought about eating their food, yuck, because he was so hungry. In his wondering away from his family, his rebellion against his father, and his rejection of his father's love the son realized what he had done. He determined to return home and become a servant in his father's house. When he returned home he was welcomed with an embrace and kiss.

Jesus told us this story to illustrate Abba's attitude and actions. Abba may give us what we want even if it's not what we need. But, He will also welcome us back home not as a servant but as lost child that has returned.

This is the expectation of Christmas. The Father will welcome home those who are lost. We can be filled with the expectation of the Father's mercy and grace. The Father won't give rebellious children what they deserve (mercy). Just the opposite the Father provides His returning children with more than they deserve (grace).

***Galatians 4:4-7 (NLT) But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children. And because we are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, "Abba, Father." Now you are no longer a slave but God's own child. And since you are his child, God has made you his heir.***

Again we think we can do what we want. We often follow our wants and desires instead of following Jesus. We deserve to be disciplined and even punished. Just because we do what we want doesn't make what we think or what we do right. We deserve the consequences of our thoughts and actions.

If the light is red and you drive through it, you deserve to get hit by another car, right? The red light is there to protect you from getting t-boned by cross traffic. It's also there to protect the cross traffic from your stupid, selfish choices.

That was strong. God could actually look at you and say that was a stupid, selfish choice. But God reserves judgment, giving you the opportunity to say that was stupid and selfish, I was wrong, forgive me and empower me not to do it again. That's mercy and grace.

We didn't have mercy and grace until the Father sent Jesus His Son. The Father's timing was perfect to send the Son, Jesus. The expectation of Christmas is the Father sending us His Son.

We wonder away from God pursuing our ideas, dreaming up our plans, focused on what we want. We may rebel against God defying His commands, ignoring His laws, and creating our own rules. When the time comes to be rescued the Father is there. You can call out to your Father. You can say Abba. You will be saved.

***1 Chronicles 28:6 (NLT) The Lord said to David, 'Your son Solomon will build my Temple and its courtyards, for I have chosen him as my son, and I will be his father.'***

**As a child of God your relationship with Him is profound, personal, and prized.** Solomon was given a chance to enter into a profound relationship with the all powerful Creator, the holy Giver of life, the unmistakable Savior. He was going to be a Child of God. The Lord was going to be his Father.

This was a deep relationship. There was nothing causal about this relationship between the king and God. The distance between the God who is nothing like the creation was being shrunk to the point of Father and son.

Let me be absurd. For all the energy and time I put into being a Buckeye fan, it's not really personal. I'm emotional when I cheer for the Buckeyes. I respond enthusiastically when I hear O H. I build my plans and my life around kick off. But, are you ready for this, it's only a football game.

When they win I might be ecstatic, but my soul hasn't been won. If they lose, I'm not going to be condemned. My life goes on. It may seem like life and death while I'm watching, but at the end my soul has not been saved. Okay, no coach comes to me and says give me your burdens and I will give you rest. Not one of the players calls me and says I gave my life as a ransom for your sin. Not even the best of them says I want to enter your life and make you like me.

Is that deep enough for you? That is profound. We devote our lives, time and energy, to many things. We might even let those things rule our thoughts, our words, and our actions. We might become slaves to some stuff.

I can still be a Buckeye fan, buy their merchandise, yell and scream, jump up and down, and shout O H while being in a personal relationship with God the Father. As a Child of God my attitudes, what I say, and what I do have been reprioritized. The Father and His Son are most important to me. It is

their Holy Spirit dwelling within that makes the difference. I want to talk with my Father. I want to be in a relationship with His Son. I want to hear from the Holy Spirit. This is the expectation of Christmas. The Father has made me His child.

***Romans 8:14–15 (NLT) For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God’s Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, “Abba, Father.”***

There is nothing like being a child of God. I prize my relationship with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I treasure the truth that I am a new creation. I cherish the moments I can call out to my Father and know that He hears me, and that He is with me. Once I had become a slave to all the other stuff. The Father not only set me free, He made me His child. He is willing to give me everything I need. He is compassionate. He is caring. He is wise. He empowers me. He encourages me. He is my hope. He is my peace. I want Him more than anything else in the world. That is the expectation of Christmas. I am a child of God. He is my Father.

***Isaiah 64:8 (NLT) O Lord, you are our Father. We are the clay, and you are the potter. We all are formed by your hand.***

**Give yourself a gift this year, allow the Father to transform you.** The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are worthy of our devotion. The Father who rescued His children from Egypt is worthy of our devotion. The Father who delivered His children into the Promised Land is worthy of our devotion. The Father who called a mere human being His Son is worthy of our devotion. The Father who gave up His Son to be a person and die on the cross is worthy of our devotion.

I want my Father to guide and direct my life. I make mistakes. I want my Father to change my attitudes and my thoughts. I’m guilty of thinking the wrong thing and holding onto bad attitudes. I want my Father to show me how to live. I’ve followed the wrong people. My expectations of myself get me in trouble. I think I’m better than I really am. Then I do things demonstrate I’m not that good. That’s followed by beating up on myself. I need a Father who loves me. I need a Father who sees me as I am and wants to transform me. The transformation my Father wants to make in me is to be like Him. That is the only expectation I have for my life.

Living up to your own expectations is limiting; letting the Father transform you is limitless. You could have the expectation to go to the moon or mars. That is a big expectation. But unless the Father is forming you to be like Him, you are limiting yourself. You could have the expectation of being wealthy beyond imagination. That is a big expectation. But unless the Father is forming you to be like Him, you are limiting yourself. You could have the expectation of leading a quiet life. But unless the Father is forming you to be like Him, you are limiting yourself. You could have the expectation of being happy. But unless the Father is forming you to be like Him, you are limiting yourself.

You get the point. No matter what your expectation, your goals in life, your achievements they are nothing unless you are transformed by the Father. He will take a wondering, rebellious, denying child and transform that child into someone who is loved, cherished, and empowered.

Which one would you rather be? Is your expectation to live however you want, pursuing your own desires? Is your expectation to be transformed by the Creator, Savior, and Deliver?

