



Great expectations

Scene: family kitchen with breakfast bar and 2 high chairs/stools and something to represent a cupboard.

Cast: husband, wife, bishop, narrator and possibly child.

Husband is a bit cynical about spiritual matters, wife with christian faith, but very good marital relationship, so as not to distract from main theme.

Narrator

Reading from Matthew chapter 11

After Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in the towns of Galilee.

When John heard in prison what Christ was doing, he sent his disciples to ask him, "Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?"

Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me."

As John's disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: "What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind? ⁸If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes are in kings' palaces. Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written: 'I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.

Mary (wife) enters and busies herself cleaning the table, getting crockery etc. from cupboard preparing for morning coffee which she intends to serve in the lounge.

Enter Jimmy (husband)

So, what are you doing this morning, my love?

Mary

You'd never guess who I had a call from this morning.

Jimmy

No, go on

Mary

I had a call from the bishop

Jimmy (surprised)

The bishop?.....and what did he want?

Mary

Well, I was surprised too.....as you know he is new in this area..... he said he was just trying to get to know people and could he call around. I didn't have time to think.....so I said yes, of course.

Jimmy

Wanting to get to know people.....huh! I'll bet he's looking for something.....it will be either money or wanting you to do something.....what time is he coming?

Mary

About 11, he said. It's just as well I baked that that chocolate cake last night.

Jimmy

Well, count me out. You know what I think of clerics....and this fellow, a bishop.....they go around dressed in clerical garb sporting a cross as though they were holier than everyone else. Hypocrites! I'll just go down to work in the garden shed while he's here.

Mary

I know your views.....so do whatever you wish (said caringly)

Jimmy

Well, I have most of an hour.....*sits down to read the paper*

No sooner than he sits down, there is a ring on the doorbell.

Mary,

I wonder who can that be.....I hope they won't delay me long.....I need to get the lounge ready for my visitor.....*then calls to her son* would you ever answer the door for me please.

Offstage, son shouts in Mum, it's the bishop *just as he enters the kitchen.*

Bishop enters just as son announces. Mary taken by surprise; Jimmy stands up, clearly dumbfounded at the bishop being totally different than expected. Bishop is a friendly character, dressed in smart runners and jeans and contemporary top – no clerical garb at all.

Bishop *in really friendly tone*

Hello Mary

Mary

Er.....welcome.....your grace (*wiping her hand in her apron and holding it out to him and he shakes generously*)

Bishop

Just call me Ben....i'm not much into fancy titles.....i hope you don't mind me calling a bit early.....i was finished my shopping earlier than expected. *He sees Jimmy and turns to him with a smile and holds his hand outand this is....*

Mary

Oh, meet my husband, Jimmy.

Bishop

Very pleased to meet you Jimmy *and they shake hands*

Jimmy *a bit faltering*

....pleased to meet you too and nice of you to call (*hypocritically*)well I was just going out....i have an appointment. *And does his best to exit gracefully.*

Mary

Won't you sit down?.....we'll go into the lounge

Bishop

Would you mind if we sat here in the kitchen?....i love sitting in kitchens....the heart of the home, you know. I feel more relaxed there.....and you probably do too.

Mary

Yes, of course.... *as she directs him to a high seat by the breakfast bar.* You will have a cup of tea...or maybe you would prefer coffee?

Bishop

Tea would be great please

They chat as she makes the tea

Mary *now relaxing a bit*

You know, I was expecting you to be very different.....more formal....but you seem relaxed and friendly

Bishop

Yes, people have all sorts of expectations when they hear the word 'bishop' but you know what they say....don't judge by a title.

Mary

Do have some chocolate cake

Bishop

I'd love some please....did you make this yourself?

Mary

Well.....i try my hand a bit

Bishop *as he takes a first bite*

This is marvelous.

He chews for a bit, takes a sip of tea, puts his cup down

You probably didn't know what to expect when you heard I was calling or why I came at all.....

As you probably know, I am new in this job and I come from a different part and I don't want to let all those ecclesiastical issues take over...my interest really is in people. So I am calling on a number of folk across the diocese, just to get to know people and understand their day to day issues, hear how they are doing and see how the church can be most relevant to people's lives in the modern worldyi.....and there are so many who think Christian faith is passé and I would like to show the opposite.....and there are many people who are hurting.....I could go on.

Pause for more cake and tea

But I am delighted to be here to meet you – I've heard you are a loyal member of St Mark's and a keen Christian.

Mary

Well.....i wouldn't go as far as that but yes, I am a Christian.

Bishop

Would I be very rude to ask for a little more of that delicious cake?

Mary

Of course....even bishops are entitled to little indulgences!

Bishop

Touché! (She cuts him more cake)

Thankyou.....so tell me a bit more about yourself and your family

The two freeze, one with cup half way up while

Narrator

Ben and Mary chat about all sorts of things, her family, her teenage sons, her job, interests and her thoughts on moving the church on in a modern world and so on and on. Ben clearly at ease and in touch with life – not at all what she had expected from a bishop.

Bishop

Bishop

My goodness, look at the time.....i must be going. It has been so good talking to you – I've got some new insights to think about and all this helps me in trying to get the churches in my diocese be more in touch with the many people who rarely come to church..

Exit bishop, shaking hands warmly and both saying goodbye

Mary starting to clear the table

Wow! He was very different from what I expected

Just then, Jimmy puts head inside the door

Jimmy

Is he gone?

Mary

Yes.....you can come out of hiding now! There's tea left in the pot...want a cup?

Jimmy

Yes please (*he sits down to the table*)so, what did he want?

Mary (*trying to keep a straight face and watching Jimmy for reaction*)

Just a donation of €1,000 for the cathedral

Jimmy *explosively*

What did I tell you! that's all these visits..... (*he spots her trying not to laugh.....oh, go on!*)

Mary

You're so predictable!*She sits down facing him....* Actualyym he just wanted to chat...to understand more of what is happening with people in this diocese so he can work to make church life more meaningful and see how we can best present Christ to the non-churchgoing community.

Jimmy

Well, he wasn't anything like I expected

Mary

You should have seen your face when he walked in..... I guess we both had our expectations blown apart. And that's got me thinking that our expectations are often far from reality.....especially when it comes to matters of faith.

Jimmy

Yes, that's natural - we all have imagination and how things should be.

Mary

For example.....what is one of your expectations of God?

Jimmy

Well....like you and I talked before(*slightly animated*).....that he should do something about all the suffering and violence in the worlddeal with those who carry it on and do evil ...those who exploit others.....then I might take more notice of him.

Mary

That's an expectation many people have.....but the reality is rather different - but in order to do that he would be taking away free will from human beingswhich includes you and me, for we've done wrong things too.....and acted selfishly..... instead, he sent Jesus to rescue us..... if we want to be rescued, that is.

Both (*turning to face the audience*)

When it comes to God.....Expectations?or reality?

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