

Kev's on-line eGroup sermon notes  
Ballantyne Campus  
Saturday – Dec. 14, 2019  
Pastor Steven Furtick  
Sermon title: "It Isn't What I Pictured."

Elevation Worship:

- Angels We Have Heard on High
- Who You Say I Am – by Hillsong Worship - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lKw6uqtGFfo>
- Love Won't Give Up – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RwegiATjmq0>
- Here Comes Heaven – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H0cJ3RmnXmY>

Scripture:

- Hebrews 11:3: (NIV) *"Faith in Action: 11 Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. 2 This is what the ancients were commended for. 3 By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible. 4 By faith Abel brought God a better offering than Cain did. By faith he was commended as righteous, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith Abel still speaks, even though he is dead. 5 By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death: "He could not be found, because God had taken him away." For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. 6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. 7 By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that is in keeping with faith. 8 By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. 9 By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. 10 For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. 11 And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the promise. 12 And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore. 13 All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. 14 People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. 15 If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them. 17 By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, 18 even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." [c] 19 Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death. 20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future. 21 By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons, and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff. 22 By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions concerning the burial of his bones. 23 By faith Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict. 24 By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. 25 He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. 26 He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt,*

because he was looking ahead to his reward. 27 By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible. 28 By faith he kept the Passover and the application of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel. 29 By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned. 30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the army had marched around them for seven days. 31 By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient. 32 And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, 33 who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. 35 Women received back their dead, raised to life again. There were others who were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain an even better resurrection. 36 Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. 37 They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated— 38 the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground. 39 These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, 40 since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.”

- Mathew 1:18 to 22: Joseph Accepts Jesus as His Son: “18 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. 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. 25 But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.”
- Isaiah 7:14: “13 Then Isaiah said, “Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of humans? Will you try the patience of my God also? 14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. 15 He will be eating curds and honey when he knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, 16 for before the boy knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, the land of the two kings you dread will be laid waste. 17 The Lord will bring on you and on your people and on the house of your father a time unlike any since Ephraim broke away from Judah—he will bring the king of Assyria.”

Sermon notes: “It Isn’t What I Pictured.” By Pastor Furtick:

- Opening prayer: Give our Lord a heart of praise. Thank you for inhabiting our praises Lord. We call out to declare how worthy that you are. And we recognize praise you according to our appraisal of you. We can only see so much. If we ever get a glimpse of how great you are, our depression would not stand a chance - because we would see your love so large over our lives. And we came here today to declare this: Although we cannot see it with our own eyes, we believe it in our spirit. You are a great God - and there is none like you – and we have a reason to rejoice in this season.
- Opening prayer 2: Because you chose to worship God today - instead of going shopping - everything will be deeply discounted later today. Oh, how he loves us. Not only does God love you - but I love being your pastor. I am your personal spiritual trainer – and we need to finish this set – as we approach the end of the

year - we have to push thru and finish strong. I know that you need to see your mother-in-law in seven days - however we can get through this. And we will get through this together - and hopefully we do not use cuss words in the parking trying to leave tonight. How many of you are so busy that you have not read your Bible all month? Just kidding - I would never call you out on that. Tonight, I cooked the meal – and you will receive it – and very little will be required of you. Now I’m not going to chew for you - that is gross. I am going to feed you what God shared with me - to strengthen you for whatever you need to see God’s perspective on.

- See Hebrews 11:3 - this is a Christmas devotional sermon.
- Thank you for all of generosity during the “Available” series and we will share a summary as to the how the church responds on Praise Party worship experience. Additionally, elevation worship will be recording a few new songs during the New Year’s Eve event.
- I like the Christmas season - however I love the new year - because it is a time for people to change momentum and change their trajectory.
- Opening prayer #3: God bless your word as it is received - so that it becomes flesh in our lives - and produces faith in our spirits in Jesus name – Amen.
- Recall the funny story of Pastor Furtick taking Abby on a carriage ride in Charleston South Carolina - the ride was not what she expected.
- Have you ever pictured one thing and then life delivered another?
- It’s a crazy thing when you study the Christmas story - it is so different than most of us picture
- the nativity scene on display during the holidays shows three wise men - there is no indication in the Bible that there were three - only three gifts. Additionally, the wisemen showed up about two years after the birth - but a two-year-old is not as cute as a brand-new baby Jesus.
- And the shepherd was not there the same time – yet we put them in the same picture – and this makes for a nice manger scene – forcing us to purchase more figures.
- Our home display show that Jesus was born in a manger - but it was more like a cave or guestroom.
- Overtime we take the tradition and then develop our own pictures.
- It does not mean that we all need to throw out our nativity scenes - it just means that the Christmas message is probably different than what you pictured.
- **Your relationship with God - as it refers to faith - might be different than what you pictured.**
- And the hamburger that you purchased at a fast food restaurant was different than what was pictured in the commercial – and everyone is writing their own commercial these days - on Facebook or on Instagram - as to how awesome their life is - And if you are single - and you are scrolling through pictures on Instagram - to try to get an idea as to what a relationship is really like – and by the time you get into a real relationship - it will not be anything like that you pictured.
- It’s not what I pictured - perhaps you can say this about parenting?
- I know that pastoring is not what I pictured - in some ways it is so much better - it is so much different.
- I was in meeting one day when someone said - you don’t look like a pastor - isn’t that funny? The person had an image of me before he had even met me.
- And people do this for people of a certain race, ethnicity, or gender - to develop a picture of what you think a person is like.
- My friend Israel Houghton leads worship music all over the world - and he is a great songwriter - and he was writing with someone - and was asked the question: what do you have playing on your iPod? Israel responded by saying Coldplay – and the person responded that “is not what I pictured” - since it was not Christian music and wasn’t gospel music.
- **How many of you can say that life was delivered to you in one form, fashion, or stage in a way that was different than what you pictured?**

- Is being a Christian is not what we pictured? Where we thought being a Christian would set us free from the struggles of sin? Yet we still struggle with sin even though that the penalty of sin has been paid - and the process of being set free from sin is a lifetime event - it is a journey – it is not a one-time experience. And often what life delivers in the form of the reality of walking with God – it is different from what we pictured – and a lot of people leave church because of this.
- See Hebrews 11:3 – “3 By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.” Things that are seen = manifest, tangible, and expressed. The thing that is present - the product. This verse says something about the nature of God - when God began the process of creating a son – it arrived in a manner that we have never seen before.
- See Matthew 1 starting in vs. 18 to 22.
- In literature, we call this an origin story - the back story - how things started for someone to become what they are.
- **Matthew had to explain this to his Jewish audience as to how Jesus came into the world - and this is important - because we won’t understand why Jesus came to the world until we know how He came into the world.**
- Until we understand some of the details of Jesus birth - a purpose that relates to his remarkable entrance into the world – it creates confusion.
- How many things in our lives did we want in a certain way? - But that God had to contradict what we had in mind - so that he could bring forth what HE had in store for us.
- Have you ever made a plan in your mind – and you get a picture as to how your life is supposed to be - and we can’t execute our plan because our picture contradicts God’s purpose.
- **You might have come to church just to check this off a list - however my purpose in standing before you today was to impart the word of God - and here’s what God will do - God will work past your plan to accomplish his purpose - in your family, in your life, and in your children.**
- **I can stand before you today to tell you that your picture might not be God’s plan – the question is - can you handle this?**
- What the Holy Spirit said to Joseph Matthew is the same thing the Holy Spirit wants to tell us.
- God tells Joseph this: Don’t be afraid since what is in her is from Me.
- And we all go through these things in our life - that we misconstrue as an attack from the devil.
- A Pastor Steven Classic: Within Joseph’s small group, he was probably rebuking the spirit of fornication. “Guys help me out here: my girl is telling me that God got her pregnant! - And I can’t forgive her because she is not apologizing and is doubling down on the “God got me pregnant story” - it even got the angel Gabriel involved!”
- It is very profound as to the timing that Holy Spirit speaks to Joseph - were the angel does not necessarily reveal when we want things to be revealed to us - God doesn’t always clarify things when we want Him to clarify things.
- **God does not give us 2020 vision in the year 2020 because we do not walk by sight - we walk by faith. If God made everything clear, you would not need Him - He’s not going to create a life for you that makes His purpose unnecessary.**
- The angel made Joseph go through the process of making a plan to quietly divorce Mary - God let him almost go through his plan - before Holy Spirit intervened.
- Let me modernize this for you: God lets Joseph major in a degree in college that he can’t use.
- We like to treat God as an overprotective parent - who was always going to keep us from mistakes - God let Joseph go all the way down the wrong track - and then said hey - what is in her is from Me.
- **God wants to confront you with a question - do you trust Me enough - so that when I interrupt your plan to bring forth my purpose - that you will be willing to participate? This is really the question.**

- **Stated another way: if the purpose that God has for your life is dramatically different vs. what you pictured, are you still going to try to create your own picture (like trying to build a puzzle with pieces of another board game)? You know why we are stressed out, miserable, and broke? Because we are trying to build somebody else's picture with our own pieces - to be this certain type of person - or this certain type of man - or this certain type of mom - or some other type of preacher.** We all have to create a picture of what God created us to be - with the pieces that He gave us - not the pieces/traits/characteristics of other people.
- By the way, God can build a beautiful picture with broken pieces.
- Don't worry about what is not in the box.
- Don't worry about who is not in your life.
- Don't worry about who can't stand you.
- So, Joseph has a choice to make.
- Who had it harder in bringing the Christmas story in the world? Mary or Joseph?
- Yes, Mary had to give birth - Joseph only had to give the baby a name – however – Mary knew what was inside of her was from God - because it was in her body - all she had to do was consult her own experience.
- Joseph did not know - he had to believe that Mary was not with another man. Joseph had to wonder - even after God spoke to him. He had to go by faith.
- A Pastor Steven classic: Joseph had to walk around town looking at guys and wonder if he needed to consult Maury Povich with DNA testing.
- See Hebrews 11:3.
- **There are only two ways to understand your life: through faith or through fear.**
- When it is not what we pictured, we withdraw so that God is not with us - and we assume that if God was with us – that this would not have happened to us. What we are seeing, we conclude that it is not matching what God said.
- Hebrews 11 says world was framed by the word of God.
- **Framing is a term that can be applied in several ways - one way to apply this is the image created by a camera. Sometimes events take us outside of a camera frame. When you frame your life through fear and not of faith, you feel yourself spilling out of the camera frame.**
- The world was framed by the word of God.
- Therefore, I can't go by what I see because it might not be what I picture
- Faith comes by hearing the word of God - even when you do not feel God with our senses.
- And His word will never fail me because He is with me.
- Emmanuel - God is with us - in this season of our lives - regardless of what we are going through.
- We go by what we know - and we know that God is with us.
- All of this happened in order to fulfill the bigger picture.
- See Mathew 1:22
- Is adulthood not what you pictured?
- A Pastor Steven classic: I now have a driver's license – and this sucks – now I have to buy gas – buy insurance and drive everyone else around.
- **Which profit are we talking about in Mathew 1:22?**
- **See Isaiah 7:14: "14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son - and we will call him Immanuel."**
- **Isaiah could see past the picture and look towards Gods purpose.**
- **By understanding how He came, we understand why He came.**
- **And Jesus came for the following:**

- **The Impossible (virgins don't give birth unless they are empowered by something that is supernatural) – Jesus came to heal the impossible cracks in your heart and break impossible family situations.**
- **The insignificant – we never heard of Mary – and the only reason that we know her is because God found favor in her – she was not famous – where Jesus tells us that our lives matter – and Christ in us is the hope and glory – not looking towards some celebrity or rock star or model or influencer – God is using school teachers – God is using coaches - God is using left out kids sitting at the lunch table - God is using police officers - God is using painters - God is using all of you.**
- **And he came for intimacy - He will be with you.**
- **What in your life is different than what you pictured? And do you need to reframe it by faith instead of reframing by fear.**
- What in this season of your life that is keeping you from what seeing what God wants for you on this earth?
- A lot of time, your mind will lie.
- You can't always decide with your mind.
- **If you decide with your mind all of the time, you will be weary – you will give up on people, you will give up on purpose – and you will lose your peace – because some decisions can't be made at the logical level – and it will take a word from God to properly frame the situation.**
- Where it comes from determines where it leads to.
- And if it came from God, nothing can stop it.
- And if it came from God, you can trust it.
- Some of the situations in our lives that we are crying about - are from God – to bring forth Christ in a broken world -to draw us close to Him in intimacy - the God of all possibility.
- **As this year closes, begin a new year by framing the situation by faith - and not by fear - not by frustration - not by fatigue - not by failure.**
- Closing prayer: What is in you is from God. And do you know what this means? We have every piece that we need for the picture God has for our lives. This is what the angel told Joseph. This is what the angel of the Lord is saying to you. The Lord says: "what is in you is from Me" – and since it is from Me – you can trust that it is enough for whatever you are facing and for whatever you have been called to be – and God's purpose will prevail. And we shall call him Emmanuel – Go is with us and God is for us - as we wait for the revelation in the purpose of God, we believe by faith. It is true in human physiology as well as the spiritual sense - our lives are framed by the words that we receive in the womb of our belief system - I come against whatever my brother/my sister has believed and received in their spirit – that has given birth to depression, discouragement, and despair in their lives. We thank God that you have a different picture of us. We see ourselves marred by sin – and marked by mistakes – and we see our situations as impossible – where we perceive our gifts, our abilities, and even our lives as insignificant. But I thank you Lord that you have a different picture. You know exactly how we fit – exactly what we go with – exactly when, where, and how you are with us. I ask you now that each person that here today receive a fresh perspective from you – and in this moment to see themselves as You Lord see them. You do not see them as filthy sinners – and you do not see them through the lens of fire, judgement and condemnation. You don't see them from the perspective of family origin. We thank that the same substance of God that was born into the world is also inside each one of your children - that is gathered here today. And we thank you for the substance of Your Spirit this Christmas. We thank that we have the same Jesus in us that Mary carried. We thank that we have the same Jesus in us that got out of the grave. And we are seated in heavenly places and we thank you for it. The Spirit of Christ is within us. The Spirit of victory is within us. The Spirit of Joy is within us. Power is within us. Peace is within us. Purpose is within us. The world was framed by the word of God. For every impossible

situation or every seemingly insignificant life in this room – if the hope of the world came from a Palestinian teenager in a cave, God can do it through you. Father I thank you. No word that you ever spoke fell to the ground – and accomplishes what was intended – and never returns void - your word is good seed and our hearts are good soil. Amen.