



**Introduction:** How many of you have heard of William Carey, the father of modern missions? Ironically, growing up Catholic in India, I had never heard or read about him. At age 22 I started my first job as a journalist with The Statesman newspaper group, “directly descended from The Friend of India”. When at age 25 I left India for graduate school in the US I had a dream to return to launch a magazine of my own. That was not to be as I then settled in Canada. At age 33, after becoming a follower of Jesus, I started attending BBC. A lover of books, my first ministry was in the library, the same one over there. It was in this church library I finally read about William Carey who, together with his missionary colleagues, launched India’s first periodicals (including The Friend of India) in 1818 - yes, 200 years ago!

At age 55, God gave me the vision to return to India to launch a bilingual magazine to give voice to India’s majority Backward Castes – the Dalits, the Tribals and the OBCs. Anybody who came into my editor’s office in New Delhi saw a poster with a picture of William Carey and his inspiring motto: *Expect great things from God. Attempt great things for God!*

Just as I introduced many there to my hero, William Carey and his source of inspiration, I hope you will permit me to do so with you this morning. Let us pray ...

As a journalist I embraced what the “prince of preachers” Charles Spurgeon had said, we should have the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other! But before him, Carey had said, “To know the will of God, we need an **open Bible** and an **open map.**”

In his humble cobbler’s workshop in England he had created a world map on which he noted details of the demographics of various nations that he gleaned from reading books by explorers including Captain Cook. At the same time he studied the Scriptures. Carey looked at the world through the lens of God’s word.

Inspired by the Moravians in Europe and their many courageous missionary efforts, William Carey urged his fellow Baptist ministers in England to form a missionary society. At first there was little interest. On

one occasion an older pastor sneered at his appeal, saying, "Young man, sit down! When God pleases to convert the heathen, he'll do it without consulting you or me."

But Carey persisted. In 1792 he wrote his "Inquiry into the Obligation of Christians" that became almost a charter for modern missions.

Isaiah 54:2-3 was the text of William Carey's "deathless sermon" in Nottingham in May 31, 1792. He quoted what the Lord said to a barren, hopeless Israel returning from Babylonian captivity:

***"Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back; lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes.***

***For you will spread out to the right and to the left; your descendants will dispossess nations and [will] settle in their desolate cities."*** - Isaiah 54:2-3 (NIV)

Notice the strong, vigorous language of what God expects us to do. On the other hand God guarantees the outcome: Will ... will ...

God tells the barren woman to expand her tent! Jesus says that the tiny mustard seed will become a giant plant in which birds will nest!! Expect great things from God!!!

When Carey, stepping down from the pulpit, saw the people quietly dispersing, he seized the leader Andrew Fuller's hand and pleaded, 'Are we not going to *do anything!*' he demanded. 'Oh, Fuller, call them back, call them back! We dare not separate *without doing anything!*'

Soon afterwards, Carey met with his companions and said, "I will go down into the pit, if you will hold the ropes." As a result, the Baptist Missionary Society was formed. William Carey offered himself as the Society's first missionary and, with his young family, left for British India in January 1793.

## **EXPECT: God**

### **1. To initiate**

What can and should we expect from God? Obviously if God has great expectations of us, our expectations of our great God should even greater!

We can certainly expect God to take the initiative as he has done from the beginning of the Word and the world: *In the beginning, God ...*

**Before God does anything through us he begins his work in us**, calls us to himself, to do his good work in us.

*For we are **God's handiwork**, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.* - Eph 2:10

And I am sure of this, that **he who began a good work in you ...** will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. – Phil. 1:6

... for it is **God who works in you** to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose. – Phil. 2:13

He who **calls you** is faithful; he will surely do it. – 1 Thes. 5:24

## 2. To equip and empower

While God starts the work by calling us, he then goes on to prepare us – he equips and empowers us.

... to **equip** his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up. – Eph. 4:12 [NIV]

“... you will receive **power** when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses ... to the ends of the earth.” – Acts 1:8 [NIV]

... and his incomparably great **power** for us who believe. That **power** is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead ... Eph. 1:19-20 (NIV)

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to **his power that is at work within us**, - Eph. 3:20 [NIV]

## 3. To bring to completion

Our great God brings to completion whatever he initiates, even what he does in and through us.

**The Lord has done what he planned**; he has **fulfilled** his word ... - Lamentations 2:17

Therefore say to them, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says: None of my words will be delayed any longer; **whatever I say will be fulfilled** ...’ - Ezekiel 12:28

And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you ... **will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ**. – Phil. 1:6

... for it is God who works in you to will and to act **in order to fulfill his good purpose**. – Phil. 2:13

He who calls you is faithful; **he will surely do it**. – 1 Thes. 5:24

## ATTEMPT: We

### 1. To join God in his work

To discover the secret of attempting great things for God we only need to look to Jesus.

When the source of his power was challenged, Jesus gave them this answer: *"Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does."* John 5:19

If it was good enough for Jesus and his followers like Carey, it should be good enough for us. We need to scan the map, even of our cities, country and the world and looking through God’s eyes, discover where God is at work and join him. For Carey and his colleagues it was India. Where does God want you to join him? It could be across the street or around the world.

Let me tell you a story, a true story: Back in 1929, a Sikh international student, Bakht Singh came to study agricultural engineering in Winnipeg. An older Christian couple, John and Edith Hayward invited him to live with them. The Haywards always read the Bible at every supper; they also gave him a Bible. He liked their company and he visited church and started reading the Bible. He became a follower of

Jesus and was baptized in 1932 in Vancouver. Bakht Singh went on to become a renowned evangelist who planted over 10,000 churches in India and overseas.

## 2. To join with others in the work

Not only does God call us to partner with Him in his work, he wants us to work with others that he calls to the work. The first seven years in India Carey laboured in the back of beyond of Bengal largely on his own. Against all odds, battling near poverty, disease, the death of a son and, finally, his wife losing her mind, Carey soldiered on - trusting in the God who called him there.

In 1800 he moved his family to the Danish protectorate of Serampore, where he joined two newly arrived English missionaries, Joshua Marshman and William Ward. They formed such a bond, in fact signing a covenant, that to this day they are celebrated as the **Serampore Trio**. They each brought their strengths and skills to the team but never moved until they had complete consensus.

A very important part of the broader team was **Hannah Marshman**, who besides her motherly and educational skills was a gifted entrepreneur. In 2013 on the way back from doing my PhD research at Serampore I was reading a booklet on Hannah. I kept turning to my wife besides me and saying, "She's so much like you" – then corrected myself to say, You are so much like Hannah. Having your partner on the same page with you is very necessary in serving the Lord. No wonder, Carey put a big emphasis on the vetting of wives of those called and being sent.

## 3. To persevere to the end

Towards the end of life, after having mastered many Indian languages, some of which he taught, succeeding in the reform of grave social evils in India, not to mention his primary work as a missionary, here is what Carey said to his nephew, "Eustace, if after my removal any one should think it worth his while to write my Life, I will give you a criterion by which you may judge of its correctness. If he give me credit for being a plodder he will describe me justly. Anything beyond this will be too much. I can plod. I can persevere in any definite pursuit. To this I owe everything."

The end of Carey's mission here on earth also coincided with the completion, the perfection of God's work in him. The greater his accomplishments, the humbler he became!

It brings us back to the confidence with which Paul wrote to the Philippians (1:6), "He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion by the day of Christ Jesus".

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Though Carey attempted and accomplished much in his lifetime, 200 years since his arrival in India, the launching the first university in Asia and the first Indian language periodicals, much remains to be done even in India let alone the rest of the world.

In fact, 2000 years since the Apostle Thomas arrived on Indian shores and brought the Gospel to south India, according to the latest census only 2.5% of Indians call themselves Christians – no doubt a large number because of India's 1.2 billion population but still only 2.5%

We can certainly expect our faithful God to great things. The question is whether we are faithful in attempting greater and greater things for God's glory? Nobody can say they are too young or too old.

We have examples right here where two young ladies from BBC have literally set sail for a couple of years to be open to where God may be calling them long-term. At the other end, a retired couple has just returned from their sixth 6-month assignment in an Asian country. And they are waiting to go back again!

Then there are people who have signed up to go on short-term mission trips this summer - to Quebec and to Japan. But not all can go so far or for so long. Then how about checking out opportunities to serve in our community through one of our partner agencies who are out recruiting in the lobby today?

If you cannot yourself “go down into the pit” then surely you can “hold the ropes” of prayer and financial support for those who do. Pray for our global and local outreach partners. Give generously to the Mission Fund, the GMC Special Projects and to the fundraisers for Quebec and Japan teams.

Even in his day, Carey’s reputation spread far and wide within India and even to America. Towards the very end of his life, a young Scotsman, Alexander Duff arrived in India with great plans for improving education in India. He had been inspired by Carey and went to visit him while he lay on his death bed. At the end of the visit, as he was almost out the door, he heard his name being called, softly but firmly, “Mr. Duff, you have been speaking about Dr. Carey, Dr. Carey, Dr. Carey! When I am gone, say nothing about Dr. Carey - speak only of Dr. Carey's Saviour.”

You have heard of the great expectations of Carey’s Saviour who does great things and the great things Carey and his colleagues attempted for God. Are you going to leave this morning like Carey’s Baptist audience in 1792?

Do we need Carey to say to us, “Are we not going to *do anything!*... We dare not separate *without doing something*”?

Let us pray to Dr Carey’s Saviour and ours, the Lord Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, the one who initiates, empowers and brings to completion the great work of extending his kingdom, his family - even as we give our all in attempting the mission – joining with God and others he calls, while persevering to the end ...

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church (this church) and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! (And all God’s people say) Amen!

