

## **“GREAT EXPECTATIONS, MAJOR DISAPPOINTMENT.”**

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**First Christian Reformed Church**

**March 28, 2021, 9 and 10:30 AM**

**Scripture Texts: Luke 19:28-46**

**Prayer:** Holy Father, make your Son glorious this morning. Make Him and His Word personal to us this morning. Grant us the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that we may know you better and so that the eyes of your hearts may be enlightened in order that we may know the hope to which you have called us and the riches of the glorious inheritance that we share with all the saints. In the name of Jesus, the Living Truth. Amen.

### **Introduction.**

What a blessing the past two Sundays of our Missions Emphasis were. We were blessed to hear two excellent sermons.

Last week Von Golder challenged us to look at what is in our hands, at what God has given us, and how we can use what we have been blessed with to be a blessing to others, in ways that make a difference for 10,000 years rather than for 100 years. Whether that thing is a walker or a child or gifts, talents, resources, time. What can you do with what God has given you, and if it isn't obvious, then ask Him to show you?

As I was sitting there listening last week, being blessed by the preaching of a long time dear friend it came over me that one of the things God had given me was a friendship with such a man of God, and that I was having the blessing of sharing with you what God had given to me.

I have an idea for how we could be a blessing, to send an Easter card to one or more of our members at a care home. For the second year in a row they are facing the prospect of not being able to worship with their church family on Easter. We could flood them with blessings and love and encouragement that they are not alone, they are missed and remembered. In the announcements that were emailed to you this week all the names and addresses of those in care homes are printed, so you have all the information you need. Blessed to be a blessing.

### **Holy Week.**

Today marks the beginning of Holy Week. If you had to name the greatest week in human history, the most important week in human history, can anyone think of one more important, more world changing week than Holy Week?

This is the hinge of history. Everything hinges on this week, everything changes because of this week. The events of this week transformed the world in ways no other event in human history has. It has impacted everyone alive today in every country whether you believe in Jesus or not.

It is also true that this week unhinged all kinds of expectations and created some major disappointments. *Let's consider three*, the way Jesus entered Jerusalem, the way Jesus wept over Jerusalem, and the way Jesus cleansed Jerusalem.

### **Luke 19:28-40, Jesus rode into Jerusalem.**

The crowd hailed Jesus as the king who has come, but the manner in which Jesus rode into Jerusalem should have been a clue that their expectations were going to be disappointed. Jesus is often on a different page than we are.

Zechariah says He was “lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”

It wasn't a great war horse like Alexander the Great rode when he entered Jerusalem in 300 BC. It was a donkey, and not just a donkey but the foal of a donkey, and it wasn't even His, He had to borrow it from someone else. He didn't have a proper saddle, so they just threw some clothes on the colt. These are the signs of modesty, humility and poverty.

And Jesus rode into Jerusalem to the shouts of whom? The rich and powerful, the elite leaders, elders, scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees? No, the rich and famous, the educated and sophisticated, the chattering classes as they call them, they don't have much of a taste for this sort of king, or Messiah. These were the shouts of a few poor followers and disciples, the despised masses, country boomkins.

There is nothing of the regalia of a king here, nothing of the splendor and majesty, pomp and circumstance, the normal opulence and excess and display associated with grand events and important people.

So what is the point? Why is Jesus doing this in this way? Up until now He had tried to stay out of the spotlight, He had withdrawn from crowds, disappeared into the wilderness, and told those He healed to tell no one else.

Why now is He attracting this kind of attention? The time has come for Him to offer Himself as a Passover Lamb, as a sacrifice and substitute for sinners. The great offering was about to be killed and He wanted to draw the attention of the entire Jewish nation to Himself.

He purposefully entered during the greatest feast time in Israel, when the most people possible were in Jerusalem. The death of our Lord Jesus Christ was an exceedingly public event, witnessed by thousands. Whatever people may believe about the atoning death of Jesus, one thing they can't do and that is deny the fact that it happen.

That they were hailing Him as king didn't matter, that wasn't the main point, what mattered was that He had the attention of Israel for all that was about to happen.

They thought they were witnessing a political event, a militaristic take over, but in reality they were witnessing a spiritual conquest, the victorious triumph of God over sin and death and the kingdom of Satan.

They were praising Jesus for something so small in comparison to what He was really coming to accomplish. They were praising a flashlight, Jesus was coming to be the sun. They were praising a king of the Jews, He was coming to be the King of all kings, the King of the world.

They thought they were celebrating the power and authority of a man to drive out the Romans and the oppressive rulers. They had no idea the power and authority that was before them.

This was not the kind of king they expected and His was not the king of kingdom they hoped for. Jesus' kingdom is different. His kingdom is centered on a cross, on suffering and sacrifice.

### **Luke 19:41-44, Jesus wept over Jerusalem.**

What a contrast, the people are rejoicing and Jesus is weeping. Why is the king crying?

Jesus knew what was about to be done to Him by wicked men, He knew their cruelty, their lies, their stubbornness, their hatred of the truth. He knew the injustice of the suffering they would inflict on Him. Yet knowing all this, He wept for them out of genuine compassion.

Jesus knew this was the hour of their salvation and He knew how it would be received. If only they had known the true nature of the salvation they were being offered and were rejecting.

He knew the judgment of God that hung over this great capital, that contrary to all their expectations it would soon be destroyed and laid to waste. He wept over their blindness, that they didn't recognize their Messiah though they had been told in so many ways.

What do we feel toward those souls who are lost, who are unconverted, who are destined for hell? What do we feel toward those in our country who are increasingly vocal about their opposition to Christianity and Biblical morals? What do we feel toward those who are tearing down the spiritual foundations, and trampling truth, and promoting what is godless?

Do we have the spirit that was in King David when he said, "My eyes shed streams of tears, because people do not keep your law"? (Psalm 119:136).

Do we have the spirit of Paul who said, "I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart for my fellow kinsman (the Jews)"? (Romans 9:2-3).

Do we have the tender compassion of Jesus for those who are hateful and violent and wicked? Could we pray, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do"?

Do we pray for the eternal salvation of their souls to be spared from an eternal death?

Do we pray for God to give them eyes to see Jesus for who He really is?

And do we pray for ourselves and those we love and hold dear, that none of us would be a cause for Jesus to weep? May none of us reject so great a Savior or put off for another day the offer of salvation He holds out to us.

What a strange contrast. The people are rejoicing over an idea, over a shallow expectation, a false hope and Jesus wept. Do you think anyone noticed, did anyone see it and ponder in their hearts what it meant? How often are people happy who have no real clue of what is going on? Is ignorance really bliss? What do we take delight in that makes Jesus weep?

### **Luke 19:45-46, Jesus cleansed the Temple in Jerusalem.**

Jesus is being hailed as the new King. They expected Him to go to the palace, to the halls of justice, to the centers of Roman government. Instead He goes to church, to the temple.

What is Jesus saying by this action? What is the crucial central institution in any city? Where's the power, the hope, the future? The capital buildings, the court houses, the commercial centers, Washington DC, Wall Street? No, the most important building in every city is the place of worship.

The church of Jesus Christ is the most important institution on earth and the only thing that will survive the fire at the end.

Jesus is again showing what king of King He is. He is King and High Priest who presides over His Temple, over the place of the worship of God. Jesus didn't come to purify the land or the government, but to purify the worship of Almighty God.

The crowds expected Jesus to deliver them from the tyranny of Roman government, but there was something worse than living under an evil government, something they needed more, to be saved from living under the oppressive tyranny of false religion, of dead religion, of works righteousness that blinded people to God's grace through Jesus Christ.

When God's judgment comes, it begins with the house of God, with the people of God. Yet again expectations turn to disappointments because Jesus is not on our page.

Does the church hold the same place in your affections as it does for Jesus? Jesus came to die for her, she is His beloved Bride. She has first place in His affections.

### **Conclusion and implications.**

They are no different than us. They thought Jesus was coming to *make Israel great again*, to overthrow the terrible Romans. They were paving the way with palm branches. There is a new sheriff in town, who is going to clean it all up, drain the swamp.

The crowds were looking forward to things getting back to normal, back to the good old days when the Jews ruled their own country. They were looking forward to when their taxes would stay in their country. They were looking forward to when their borders would be closed to these foreigners who were ruining their country. They were looking forward to when their religion wouldn't be tainted by these idolaters with their other religions and gods.

They were looking forward to a day when they would have their God back in their schools, their Ten Commandments back on the walls of the court house, their freedom of speech restored from those culture-canceling Romans. They were looking forward to when the plague of foreign rule was cleansed from their midst.

What they didn't realize was Jesus came to make God great again, Jesus didn't care about the politics, He cared about the hearts and souls. He didn't care about the economics, He cared about salvation and grace. The path to His kingdom leads through a cross.

The root of the human dilemma is not our political problems, it's our sin. The problem is not our countries unprotected borders, but the unprotected borders of our hearts and what we have let into them. The reason we have no idea what Jesus is doing in our midst is because we don't have a right understanding of the real problem and the real need and that only a king on a donkey could truly save our souls, and fully satisfy them forever.

Jesus was especially not interested in getting things back to normal. Jesus is anti-normal. Normal was part of the problem. Normal is what He came to change, to turn upside down. There is something wrong with normal if the Son of God has to come to earth and die a horrible death of crucifixion on a Roman cross. To want normal is to want Jesus to stay off the cross.

Here is the problem with so much of what has been said and done about this past year. Our problems aren't the pandemic, our problems are spiritual. The political solutions are secondary, they are a band aid. They are numbing the pain, not treating the disease. Our problems are spiritual problems and they need spiritual solutions. The only solution to our countries problems is in the Gospel.

Just look in all our hearts, our attitudes, our fears, our judgments, our anger, our divisions. They expose our heart issues that shouldn't be ignored.

How often are we disappointed in Jesus, because we are thinking one way and He is going another way? How often are our expectations different because we can't see the big picture, the whole picture of what God is doing? How often are we misunderstanding because we have a 10 year perspective and God has a 10,000 year perspective?

During Covid most people have been crying, "Hosannah – save us, deliver us, rescue us." But how many are surrendering and submitting their expectations to Him as King, trusting His wisdom, trusting His will and His way?

*On a more personal level*, how many of us are living a life we never really wanted to live, or at least some aspects of it? The reason our expectations are not met is because our expectations are not what we most need. Let go of the life you expected. Let go of the life you wanted, you hoped for.

By God's grace embrace the life He has given you, seek His contentment, and fix your eyes on the joy that is set before you, which will enable you to endure your cross, as it enabled Jesus to endure His.

Expect to find Him in places of suffering, hardship, weaknesses, in places of confusion, doubt, perplexing questions, situations beyond our ability. Expect to find Jesus at that cross.

As one pastor put it: "Occasionally, weep deeply over the life you hoped would be. Grieve the losses. Then wash your face. Trust God. And embrace the life you have." What's in you hand?

In your deepest disappointments know that Christ is present and that these light and momentary trials are nothing compared to the glory of His Kingdom that awaits all who don't grow weary and persevere. Our King has prepared a future inheritance that teaches us not to despair at what should have been, but rather to rejoice in what will be.

**Prayer:** Holy Father, forgive us for our small thinking, for our thinking that puts you in a box, for our thoughts that are so far below your thoughts. Lift up our eyes, our vision to see beyond our short horizons, to see you and your blessings as they truly are and not just as we expect them to be. Free us from the tyranny of our own selves and our own imaginations. Thank you that you are not limited by our human thinking, that you are able and always do more than we ask and imagine. Glorify your Son Jesus in our hearts and homes and expectations this day and this week, in His name we ask this, Amen.