

**[UN]EXPECTED  
JESUS**  
DEVOTIONAL



August 26-September 1, 2018



## *(un)expected Jesus*

Everyone had their grand expectations of what the Messiah would do and how he would act. Instead, they got Jesus of Nazareth, a poor carpenter's son whose radical teachings challenged everything. What they expected and what they got didn't always align. He was expected, but so often doing the unexpected.

It turns out not much has changed in 2,000 years, though—everyone has their own ideas, their own understandings, their own expectations of Jesus: who He was and is, and what His life and teachings mean for us and our world today. Not even Jesus' own followers can agree.

Throughout this sermon series we will explore the appointed Gospel readings in Mark, encountering this *(un)expected Jesus*, examining what all this means for you.

### **We invite you to join us each week, too!**

Daily devotional booklets like this one will be provided each week in an effort to connect the Sunday messages with your daily life.

The Sunday devotional offers a “review” of the morning's Scripture readings and message, allowing opportunity to reflect on that day's sermon.

Throughout the rest of the week, each day offers a passage and a few thoughts to consider.

We pray these devotionals will be a blessing to you and your family, and in your Christian life!

And, if you miss a Sunday, you can always find our services and sermons online at [www.holytrinityedmond.org/sermons](http://www.holytrinityedmond.org/sermons)

## *(un)expected Jesus Sermon Series Themes:*

- August 26:** (un)inspired Words | Mark 7:1-13
- September 2:** (un)clean | Mark 7:14-23
- September 9:** (un)opened | Mark 7:24-37
- September 16:** (un)belief | Mark 9:14-29
- September 23:** (un)delivered | Mark 9:30-37
- September 30:** (un)stoppable | Mark 9:38-50
- October 7:** (un)broken | Mark 10:2-16

**(un)inspired Words**  
*Sunday Sermon Review*  
August 26, 2018

*“But we’ve always done it that way!” You hear people say these sorts of things in congregations as tradition sets in through the passage of time. Suddenly, tradition becomes “law,” the way it “has to be done.” What gets lost, though, is the “why” of the matter. Why do we do these things? Why do we say and do the things we say and do in worship? Why do we do certain programs and events? If we do them for tradition’s sake, perhaps we need to reevaluate things. This was the issue Jesus was addressing in our Gospel reading today. The Pharisees were concerned with traditions for traditions’ sake, upholding the uninspired words of “the Elders” of old. They should have been focused upon the inspired Word of the Lord. Jesus called them out for just going through the motions, rather than worshiping God with their hearts. We are encouraged to rely upon the inspired Word of God as our source and norm for our lives, and not rely upon ourselves and our actions or traditions. For it is in God’s holy, inspired Word we learn of His grace and mercy in Jesus.*

**The Scripture Lesson Summaries for Today:**

*Isaiah 29:11-19:* The Lord condemns His people’s lack of sincerity in faith and worship. Many are just “going through the motions.” Some even plot sinfulness without realizing God sees what is done in secret.

*Ephesians 5:22-33:* Paul describes a proper marriage relationship: Wives submit to their husbands (“submit” isn’t necessarily a bad word); husbands love their wives sacrificially like Jesus, giving up everything for them.

*Mark 7:1-13:* Pharisees question Jesus about why His disciples don’t obey the tradition of the elders. Quoting the Isaiah passage above, Jesus unexpectedly shows the error of holding man-made uninspired laws on the same level with, if not greater than, God’s holy inspired Word.

**Reflecting on Today’s Sermon:**

1. At what point was I confronted with the Law?
2. What comfort did the Gospel bring?
3. What story/phrase/teaching stuck out to me?
4. What did I learn about God from this sermon?
5. In response to the Word of God, I will...

*Pray: O Lord God Almighty, You call us to Love You and worship You with our whole heart. Our sinfulness often causes us to sometimes go through the motions, not worshiping You rightly. We sometimes dwell on our traditions rather than upon Your true and inspired Word. Forgive us, and lead us to worship You in Spirit and in truth. In the name of Jesus I pray. Amen.*

## In the Beginning

Monday, August 27<sup>th</sup>, 2018

*Text:* John 1:1-14

*Emphasis:* Verse 1-2: *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.”*

All books have a beginning. They have to in order for the book to make sense. But the Bible sets up a scene of a “time” before the beginning as we know it, before time and space were even created.

In the beginning of the book there is God – the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – an unfathomable and eternal God who was not created, but always was and always is. Shortly into the first chapter, creation ensues, and this omniscient, omnipotent God sets into motion a grand plan of salvation for His people through His Son, the Word made flesh.

This beginning is incomprehensible and a true miracle that inspired prophets, leaders, and teachers throughout the ages to pass on their faith and knowledge of God. That’s where John the Baptist comes into play. Called by God, he prepared the way for the Lord, teaching others and inspiring them to know God and to repent of their sins.

John the Baptist was inspired by several people and events. He met Jesus in the womb when the pregnant Virgin Mary visited. John was inspired so much by Him that he leapt in the womb. He was also inspired by his calling and his name which was unexpected and defied cultural norms of the time. His parents also played a vital role as they sang and praised God over their son for the work that he would do.

Likewise, we become inspired by others and our surroundings often in similar ways. Jesus inspires us as we look at His life and ministry. As the Word, He also inspires us through the Bible that we read in church, in our homes, and in our daily lives. Perhaps our parents or family members pray over us or with us, showing their faith and leaving us desiring something similar. Even other people can inspire us as they live out God’s calling for their lives.

We too can inspire others in their faith. The way we live our everyday lives is a walking testament of our faith. We can pray over other people and share the Word with them – the Word that became flesh and dwelt among us to not only live as an example for us, but to live a perfect, sinless life so that He could be the ultimate sacrifice. He showed His unflinching love for us, and that is all the inspiration we need to share it with others.

*Pray:* *Lord of heaven and earth, you set time and space into motion. You created each and every one of us and love us so much that you sent your Son to die for us. Help us to share the Good News – the Word with all those we encounter. Amen.*

## Withering Away

Tuesday, August 28<sup>th</sup>, 2018

*Text:* Read Isaiah 40:1-8

*Emphasis:* Verses 6-8: *All humanity is grass, and all its goodness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flowers fade when the breath of the Lord blows on them; indeed, the people are grass. The grass withers, the flowers fade, but the word of our God remains forever*

According to a 2005 NASA report, based on satellite imaging, there are about 40 million acres of lawn in the continental United States. The report indicates that turf grasses would be the single largest irrigated “crop,” taking up about 1.9% of the lower 48 states’ surface area—which is three times as much as irrigated corn.

It is estimated that Americans, on average, spend 70 hours a year on lawn care. Every day, roughly 9 billion gallons of water are used to water lawns in the U.S. In 2015, the average amount spent on lawn and garden care per person was \$90.23, which is over \$29 billion! And, it’s been reported that 1 in 5 Americans rank mowing the lawn as their least-liked chore...but we do it anyway, putting in all that time and money and resources.

However, this is not a devotional about either the merits or the terrors of mowing the lawn. I, personally, enjoy mowing my yard—I do some of my best thinking with a mower in hand! So, mow away!

But, isn’t it interesting that we do spend so much time and money, and literally pour resources into this thing that, in the end, just dies. “The grass withers, the flowers fade...” Interestingly, the passage even makes the analogy that people—you and me—we are “the grass.” How fitting is that?

We put in so much time in front of the mirror each day, trying to look good. We spend over \$20 billion each year on anti-aging products. Over \$16 billion is spent on plastic surgery annually. The average American woman spends nearly a quarter-of-a-million dollars on beauty products in her lifetime; and, while I don’t have the numbers, the popularity of beards among men these days is only increasing how much we spend, too.

We do all this and more, but in the end it’s the same result. “*The grass withers, the flowers fade...*” No matter the effort put in, death is the end result.

But our passage today offers hope! “*‘Comfort, comfort my people,’ says your God!*” He’s pointing to restoration and regeneration to a dying, fading creation. From grass and flowers to animals and humans, from war-torn countries to over-active cancerous cells, Your God brings comfort! So we can take heart, for while everything else passes away, “*the word of our God remains forever!*”

*Pray:* O Lord, Your Word endures forever. Amid all of the difficulties of life, and amid my weariness of this world, let me always take comfort in Your Word, looking to You alone. Amen.

## God Still Speaks

Wednesday, August 29, 2018

*Text:* Read Exodus 19:1-11

*Emphasis:* Verses 7-8: “After Moses came back, he summoned the elders of the people and set before them all these words that the Lord had commanded him. Then all the people responded together, ‘We will do all that the Lord has spoken.’ So Moses brought the people’s words back to the Lord.”

Imagine the wonder in the Israelites’ minds. Evacuees from Egypt, nomads in the wilderness, they have come to camp at the base of the mountain of God, Sinai. They are in the very presence of God. Even though they are warned not to come too close to the mountain, they are close enough to hear the voice of the Lord.

For the Israelites, this is exciting and terrifying. The voice of God is so great, so powerful. The next chapter of Exodus describes the sound the people heard as thunder and a blaring trumpet, so loud you could almost *see* it. In that same chapter, the people insist that Moses continue as sort of a “middleman” bringing their words to God and God’s words to them. “But don’t let God speak [directly] to us,” they plead, “or we will die.” (Ex. 20:19)

At some points in your story, maybe you wanted to hear directly from God. Maybe you asked for His guidance with a big decision, His comfort after a family tragedy, or His assurance during times of trial. In seasons of uncertainty, we wish that God would simply speak up and reveal His plans for us and our futures. When we’re longing to hear from God, we need to be reminded that God still speaks. And not only does He still speak, you have heard from Him personally! God spoke to you when He claimed you as His in Baptism: “I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” And He doesn’t stop there.

Through His holy Church, God the Holy Spirit has called men to follow in the footsteps of Moses. They bring the words of the people to God and they bring God’s Word to the people. God is still speaking as the pastor proclaims the good news of Jesus each Sunday morning. You hear the voice of the Lord from the pastor’s lips when he says, “I forgive you all of your sins.” You hear the voice of your Savior, Jesus, when you hear, “This is my body, given for you. This is my blood, shed for you.”

While God is still speaking, we need to be cautious when we hear others say God speaks directly to them. Some Bible teachers claim to get private messages from God. Sometimes those messages can sound weird, nothing like the God we hear speaking in the Bible. We should ask the question, “What did God say?” Does the message point to the Scriptures, God’s inspired Word? Or does it point to the person receiving the message? Or something else? When God speaks today, you know it’s true and reliable when it points back to the never-changing truth of God’s Word.

*Pray:* Lord God, let your unchanging Word lay claim to my heart as you help me to hear you speaking. In Jesus, Amen.

## Pure Words

Thursday, August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018

*Text:* Psalm 12

*Emphasis:* Verse 6: *The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver refined in an earthen furnace, purified seven times.*

There's a story of a group of women gathered for a Bible study. They were reading through the book of Malachi and got to the third chapter. There, the Lord speaks through His prophet, telling the people that He will "*sit like a refiner and purifier of silver.*" The women had a general understanding of the process of refining silver, but one of the women wanted to get a better understanding of it. She reached out to a silversmith in a city nearby.

She watched the silversmith hold a piece of silver over the fire and let it heat up. He explained that in refining silver, one needed to hold the silver in the hottest point of the flame in order to burn away all the impurities.

As she watched, the woman thought of the verse that led her there in the first place; about how "*The LORD sits as a refiner and purifier of silver.*" She asked the silversmith if he had to sit there in front of the fire the entire time the silver was being refined, or if he could position it there and leave. The man informed her that not only did he have to sit there holding the silver, but he had to keep his eyes on it the entire time it was in the fire. If the silver was left in the flame for even a moment too long, it would be destroyed, useless.

"But how do you know when the silver is fully refined?" she asked.

The silversmith responded, "Oh, that's easy—when I see my image in it."

I don't know if it's a true story or not, but it is an accurate depiction of the Lord and His work in us, making us pure. He doesn't leave us in the "hot seat" of life, but is there with us, refining us like silver, making us pure.

I told that story, though, so you could get a better idea of the refining process. Because our passage today isn't about God refining us, but about the purity of His Word. As Psalm 12 indicates, human words are full of deception. We live in a world of "fake news," people's changing opinions, breaking promises, words of accusation, and questioning what is truth. But God's Word can be trusted, for His Word is pure.

We look to the Bible as our source and norm for doctrine and life—not because it's full of some good ideas from a bunch of men a few millennia ago. We uphold Scripture because it IS the pure Word of the Lord! Purer than anything in this world! Let us always look to His pure Word.

*Pray:* *Gracious God, You have given us Your Word, revealing Your love and Your will for us. In a world of lies and deception, teach me to learn from Your pure Word. Amen.*

## Winning a War of Words

Friday, August 31, 2018

*Text:* Read Luke 21:5-19

*Emphasis:* Verses 15: [Jesus said to His disciples,] *“For I will give you such words and a wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict.”*

I’ve always been interested in doing a Bible study or hearing a sermon series on “The One-Liners of Jesus.” Jesus is king of the one-liners. Not only did He preach rousing sermons and tell memorable stories, Jesus knew how to use a single sentence to offer wisdom to the confused, hope to the downhearted, and comfort to those in pain. The power of Jesus’ one-liners often left His detractors dumbstruck.

Think of the time a woman was dragged in front of Jesus, charged with adultery. Jesus turned aside a bloodthirsty mob with the words, “The one without sin among you should be the first to throw a stone at her.” (Jn. 8:7) Or when critics wanted to trap Jesus in an impossible situation, pitting Him against both the civil and religious authorities, He turned the tables with “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things that are God’s.” (Mk. 12:17)

Jesus’ replies trap His opponents in their own logic, undoing their ambush, neutralizing their attacks. I don’t think I’ve ever come up with a witty retort quite as well-timed, quite as well-phrased as Jesus. Who could? It’s not surprising that the Word made flesh is the ultimate wordsmith. It’s not unexpected that the One who knows the hearts of men would also know how to shut their mouths.

So we should take Jesus seriously when He promises in our reading to inspire His disciples to speak words of wisdom in times of persecution. These words are packed with power to overcome the objections and counter-arguments of enemies of the faith. Jesus says it’s not a matter of practicing a few stock phrases that can shut others down. The Word Himself is their defense; He will supply every syllable.

However, it’s not their ticket out of trouble. After this promise, Jesus also tells them they will be hated, betrayed by those closest to them, and some will be killed. Yet even in the darkest circumstances, the Word is their defense, safeguarding the souls of the faithful against the worst evil can offer.

Peter knew this. Jesus’ promises rang true in his life. Tradition has Peter numbered among the apostles who would be murdered for their faith. Yet, Jesus continued to supply Peter with words of wisdom. He writes, “be ready at any time to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.” (1 Pe. 3:15) Peter’s admonition is not to rehearse a reply, but to be prepared for the opportunity to let the Word speak through you.

*Pray:* *Prepare my heart, Lord Jesus, and equip me with your words in times of trial. Defend me and undo others’ evil arguments by the power of your Word. Amen.*

## True to the End

Saturday, September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018

*Text:* Matthew 24:32-35

*Emphasis:* Verse 35: “*Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.*”

True or False? Diamond is the hardest substance. Pluto is a planet. George Washington’s teeth were made of wood. The Great Wall of China is the only man-made structure you can see from space. Newton theorized on gravity after an apple hit him on the head. Swallowed gum stays in your body for 7 years. Camel humps store water.

Perhaps you learned or heard some of these in school, or perhaps you read somewhere that some of these aren’t true, or perhaps some of the information has even changed over the years. Regardless, (at the time of me writing this at least) these statements are all false, but are thought by some, if not many, to be true for one reason or another.

It’s easy to assume we can trust everything we hear in school, or read in a book, and for some, even everything we see online regardless of the source. But unfortunately, that isn’t true. While most of these things, except poorly cited and sourced internet posts, articles, etc. are generally reliable, there still poses a chance that something is inaccurate. History is full of opinions and perspectives, theories can be proved wrong, and definitions can change.

In the midst of false information, the Bible provides us with words that won’t change, fade, or lose meaning. Sure, we might misinterpret something, but the text itself is True because the Word – Jesus is the Way, Truth, and Life.

In our text for today we see that Jesus’ words will never pass away. They will always be available for teaching, correcting, rebuking, etc. Part of this is because the Word is alive!

When Jesus rose from the dead the Word became alive and defeated sin, death, and the devil. The Word overcame everything in His way, setting into motion some of the future prophecies – namely the end times and the resurrection of the dead.

When we read and quote Scripture as it is and use Scripture to interpret Scripture we are speaking Truth, Truth that surpasses time and change, Truth that we can cling to and rely on. This is the same truth that links the words “In the beginning” with the words at the end “Amen” – let it be so. And it will be so, because the Word is Truth – unchanging, unfaltering, and eternal Truth.

*Pray:* Heavenly Father, thank you for your Word – the Truth written down for us to read so that we can learn about and grow closer to you. Your Word is perfect, help us to cling to it for Truth. Amen.

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