

[UN]EXPECTED JESUS

DEVOTIONAL



September 9-15, 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

(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)opened
Sunday Sermon Review
September 9th, 2018

It happens, again, in our Gospel reading that Jesus does what no one expected or thought possible: He opened the ears and mouth of a deaf and mute man. All the people say of Him, "He has done all things well," which some theologians see as a connection to God's work of creation (see Genesis 1:31). As Jesus goes about bringing the Kingdom of God, we see that this involves restoring creation back to perfection. But then Jesus does something even more unexpected: He tells the people not to say anything to anyone about the healing he performed, this includes the man He healed—the guy can finally speak and hear, but he's not supposed to say a thing about it! This request for silence is generally understood because people were expecting a healing messiah who would rise up and conquer—but they had the wrong idea. This Messiah would come to heal, yes; would come to restore creation to the Creator, yes...but He also would come to die. For us, the way to the Father was closed, unopen, due to sin; Jesus, however, opens the way for us. And now, we no longer have any mandate to keep us from telling others, but to go and tell others, that their hearts may be opened!

The Scripture Lesson Summaries for Today:

Isaiah 35:4-7a: God speaks of how He will reverse sin's curse, bringing healing and justice to His sick, hurt and broken creation. God promises to act on behalf of His people!

James 2:1-10, 14-18: James warns against showing partiality or favor to others based on material wealth (or lack thereof); rather show the same love and grace to all people. He further speaks of good works as a natural outflow of faith in Jesus.

Mark 7:31-37: Jesus does what no one expected could be done—he opens the ears and mouth of a deaf and mute man. People marvel at how He does all things well!

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: Lord Jesus Christ, You opened the ears and mouth of the deaf and mute man. In You, we have true healing. Even greater, though, You came to bring restoration to Your fallen creation, and opened the way to eternal life by Your death on the cross. By Your Spirit, open the hearts of all Your people to grow in faith and to boldly open our lips to proclaim Your great name and love to those hurting around us. Amen.

Unrealized Danger

Monday, September 10th, 2018
By Lindsey Duerr, DCE

Text: Genesis 3:1-7

Emphasis: Verse 7: “*Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings.*”

When I was in Kindergarten there was a *Scholastic* book fair at my school where I bought a “Clifford the Big Red Dog” book. I had some money left over and a sixth grader conned me into giving it to her. Later that day she offered to walk me home, as we lived on the same block. I knew I was supposed to wait for my Grandma to pick me up, but I mean seriously! A sixth grader talking to ME!? I couldn’t pass this moment up.

We were almost halfway to my house when my Grandma drove by scolding me and telling me to get into the vehicle... busted. Needless to say, I refused and continued walking with my older friend as my Grandma trailed us in her truck. Of course I was told not to talk to strangers and I knew I shouldn’t have walked home with this girl, but I didn’t realize how dangerous of a situation I had put myself in until over a decade later. I didn’t fully understand the potential outcome or consequences but decided in that moment that I knew best – I knew right and wrong and I could decide for myself that this was okay.

Likewise, Adam and Eve chose their definition of right and wrong over God’s. Instead of being in a perfect garden, the world around them instantly changed and new emotions emerged – doubt, self-consciousness, fear, and shame. If only they would have realized how dangerous this situation was and how severe the consequences, perhaps they wouldn’t have indulged on the forbidden fruit.

Isn’t that the story of our lives though? Without realizing the extent of the danger or consequences (and sometimes even with realizing) we decide to test out the waters with underage drinking, pride, sex before marriage, control, and so many other things.

Regardless of the situations we find ourselves in, the consequence is and always has been the same... it’s death, it’s hell, it’s separation from God, it’s torture. But in realizing our sins and shortcomings, we see Jesus hanging on the cross, paying the price for those times we just didn’t realize how much danger we were in. We see Him dying and putting to death all those times we did realize it but did it anyways. We see Him resurrecting, taking us with Him to eternity. We see Him loving us.

Pray: Gracious Father, we don’t deserve you, yet you desire us. In our sin we deserve death, but you love us so much. You care for each one of us; you care for me. Thank you for sending your Son for ME – for all my sins, my shortcomings, and my failures. Amen.

Down to the Last Drop

Tuesday, September 11th, 2018

By Vicar Joshua Brakhage

Text: Read Genesis 21:8-21

Emphasis: Verses 19: “Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well. So she went and filled the waterskin and gave the boy a drink.”

It’s become one of our son’s favorite words: “bye-bye.” With just a little prompting – “time to say ‘bye-bye’” – and he’ll wave and say “bye-bye” on command. Not only that, but he’s taken to spontaneously saying “bye-bye” to dogs, chairs, toys, and whatever else might be within eyesight.

As enthusiastic as he is about *saying* “bye-bye,” he’s still not very good at handling goodbyes. He’ll wave “bye-bye” to Mama when she’s leaving for work, but as soon as she exits, he melts down and screams, “ma-ma-ma-ma-ma-ma-ma-maaaaa!!!” He’ll calmly say “bye-bye” to Daddy, but then flop on the floor and cry when Daddy walks out the door. He does the same when the babysitter leaves; no matter who stays behind, he hates seeing people go.

I wonder what Hagar said to her son – her *only* son – when she left him beneath a sad, scrubby bush in an otherwise desolate wilderness. After being kicked out of Abraham and Sarah’s household, I’m sure their journey was filled with a lot of parental stock phrases like “Everything’s gonna be alright” and “It’s okay; Mama’s here.” As their canteen became emptier and their situation grew more desperate, I wonder how much Hagar let on. When there was no water left, I wonder what excuses she gave Ishmael for not offering him a drink. And at the end, as she parked her dehydrated, dying little boy under a lonely bush in the middle of nowhere, I wonder if she said, “Time to say bye-bye” before she took off on her own.

Whatever she said, what’s clear from the Bible is that Hagar’s son didn’t handle goodbyes any better than mine does. Whatever hydration was left in Ishmael’s thirsty body was pouring down his parched cheeks, and “God heard the boy crying.” (21:17) He sends His angel to offer hope. First Hagar and Ishmael drink deeply of God’s promises, then Hagar’s eyes are opened to the nearby well that will quench their physical thirst. God satisfies Hagar’s most immediate need first. Before she needs water, she needs hope and her thirsty soul is satisfied by the promises of God.

Where do you go when you’re down to the last drop of hope? When the blessings of God seem to have evaporated and you feel alone and distraught like a toddler forced to say “bye-bye”? Whatever your wilderness, the Living Water has come to satisfy your most immediate need first. And He offers His true and living hope wherever His Word is proclaimed and His sacramental gifts refresh the people of God with His hope-filled promises.

Pray: Great God of heaven, open my eyes to your faithfulness. Allow me to see more than my wilderness, and refill me with hope in your promises. Through Jesus, Amen.

Surrounded

Wednesday, September 12th, 2018

By Pastor Jonathan Meyer

Text: 2 Kings 6:8-23

Emphasis: Verse 17: Then Elisha prayed, “Lord, please open his eyes and let him see.” So the Lord opened the servant’s eyes, and he saw that the mountain was covered with horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

John Paton was a nineteenth century missionary in the New Hebrides Islands in the South Pacific (today, known as the Republic of Vanuatu). One night, hostile cannibal natives surrounded Paton’s mission station, intent on burning out the missionaries and killing them. Paton and his wife prayed for God’s deliverance throughout the terror-filled night. When morning came they were joyfully amazed to see their attackers walk away.

A year later, the chief of the tribe converted to Christianity. Recalling what had happened that one frightful evening, Paton asked the chief what had kept him from burning down the house and killing them. The chief asked in surprise, “Who were all those men with you there?”

Paton knew of no men present that night. But the chief said he was afraid to attack because he’d seen hundreds of large men in shining garments with drawn swords circling the place. The baffled men then lifted up praise to God, recognizing it must have been the Lord who took action that night.

It is certainly a scene reminiscent of our reading from 2 Kings 6, today. In that passage, Elisha’s servant was struck with a brief moment of terror and panic at the sight of the surrounding Aramean army. Meanwhile, Elisha was confident in the Lord’s deliverance—for He could see what no one else could. Soon, God opened the eyes of Elisha’s servant to see the reason for Elisha’s confidence: a powerful heavenly host on horses and chariots of fire protecting them. Then, at the prophet’s request, the Lord closed the eyes of their enemies and led them to a place where their eyes would be opened again, and they saw they were surrounded by Israel’s own army.

Both scenes of God’s protection for both prophet and missionary seem remarkable! We may question, “Where’s my invisible army, protecting me? Where is the Lord’s deliverance for me?” The truth is we may not see such an angelic army, but God does work for our deliverance.

He is faithful in defending His Church from all harm and danger, sin and evil. Bad things may happen, but we know He works through the bad. We are surrounded. God surrounds us with His Word of promise and hope. He surrounds us with His Holy Spirit working faith. He surrounds us in the fellowship of the invisible Church on earth. With eyes of faith, the Spirit opens our eyes to see we are surrounded by a God of love and deliverance.

Pray: Lord, I thank You for surrounding me with Your love even when I don’t realize it. With open eyes of faith, let me look to Jesus, who delivered me from all my sin. Amen.

Wait, Wait

Thursday, September 13th, 2018

By Vicar Joshua Brakhage

Text: Read Isaiah 64:1-9

Emphasis: Verses 1, 4: *“If only you would tear the heavens open and come down, so that the mountains quake at your presence – From ancient times no one has heard, no one has listened to, no eye has seen any God except you who acts on behalf of the one who waits for him.*

In Isaiah 64, the prophet has had enough of this “unopened” business. As we near the end of his prophetic writings, we see a sure and certain hope in Isaiah’s faith. He is sure the Lord will return to right the world’s wrongs and redeem His people. Isaiah is certain God is preparing a miraculous, earth-shaking restoration of the people of God. Even here at the end of Isaiah’s prophetic ministry, the waiting hasn’t weakened Isaiah’s faith. But he does seem somewhat impatient, eager for God to turn the page and open the next glorious chapter in Israel’s history.

This happens throughout Scripture to the people marked by God’s promise. Abram has the promise of descendants more numerous than the stars of the universe. But when the waiting becomes frustrating, Abram and Sarai take matters into their own hands and Abram’s firstborn son becomes Ishmael, the child of the family servant, Hagar. (Gen. 16) In John’s gospel, Martha expresses her frustration to Jesus at His waiting to attend to her brother, Lazarus, even though it’s clear she had the promise of the resurrection. (Jn. 11) So many others – including Moses, David and Paul – all had to endure the frustration that comes with waiting.

But eventually God opened the womb of Sarah - just as He promised – and preserved the family line that would eventually deliver a Savior. Eventually Jesus opened the tomb of Lazarus, demonstrating His power not just over sickness, but over death, cementing His claim as “the resurrection and the life.” And eventually, Isaiah’s prayer was answered, too.

“If only you would tear the heavens open and come down,” Isaiah prays. This verse has a clear parallel in Mark chapter 1: “In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. As soon as He came up out of the water, He saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on Him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: ‘You are my beloved Son; with You I am well-pleased.’” (Mk. 1:9-11) The prayer Isaiah offers at the end of his ministry is answered at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry. What was closed is finally opened. Heaven itself has come down, tearing its way into our sin filled world, to right the world’s wrongs and to redeem all people, just as Isaiah hoped, just as God promised.

Pray: *Lord God, sometimes the frustration of waiting weakens my faith. We thank you that waiting never weakens your promise. Nothing can dilute, diminish or water down the goodness you have in store for me because of the cross of Jesus Christ. Help me to stand firm in your promise, until you open heaven once again to welcome me home. In Jesus, Amen.*

Expecting Jesus

Friday, September 14th, 2018

By Lindsey Duerr, DCE

Text: Luke 24:13-35

Emphasis: Verse 30-31: “It was as he reclined at the table with them that he took the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him, but he disappeared from their sight.”

As a kid, I despised dresses and I honestly didn’t grow much fonder of them over the years. I’ll wear them occasionally, but they aren’t my go-to outfit. In fact, I wore capris and a nice plain V-neck shirt to my first high school dance. In hindsight, I probably looked extremely out of place. But at the time, I didn’t notice or really care.

For the spring dance I decided I was going to surprise everybody and wear a dress. I also happened to be getting contacts around the same time, so I decided to wait to wear them in public until the dance. And, since I was going all out, I decided to curl my long hair and put on make-up too. Needless to say, I looked quite different than what I normally looked like, even for a special occasion.

I arrived at the dance and went up to my friends, some of who didn’t even notice me until I started talking! My appearance was definitely not what they were expecting, especially after the stunning outfit I wore to the last dance. I don’t think any of them had ever seen me in a dress, and I know none of them had ever seen me without glasses. This unexpected apparel prevented them from noticing me right away.

The disciples experienced a similar situation in our text. With Jesus being dead, no one was expecting Him to just appear again! That’s why it took them so long to recognize Him. In fact, Jesus tried to reveal Himself through Scripture and then through the breaking of the bread. Finally, they realized that it was Jesus they had been with all along!

Are you expecting Jesus? Do you see God at work in the world around you? Do you see His sustaining work on the Earth? Do you see how he works in creation? Through miracles? Through people? Do you expect to see God? You should! Matthew 18:20 says, “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there among them.”

God is with us. He is at work around us and through us and one of the best ways to see Him is to expect Him. Look for Him and the ways He works. When you go to church, bask in His Word and the gift of Holy Communion. Taste and see that the Lord is good – experience Him – expect Him, because He is there.

Pray: Father, thank you for sending your Son, Immanuel – God with us, to be with us, to walk on this Earth, and to die for us. Help us to expect you, to seek you, to yearn for you. Help us to see the many ways that you are at work around us. Amen.

We Get Our Happy Ending!

Saturday, September 15th, 2018

By Pastor Jonathan Meyer

Text: Revelation 5

Emphasis: Verses 4-5: *I wept and wept because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or even to look in it. Then one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep. Look, the Lion from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered so that he is able to open the scroll & its seven seals.”*

There is always such mystery and intrigue when looking at the Book of Revelation. It is mysterious and intriguing because we cannot fully understand what every image means (be careful of anyone who says they can understand it perfectly). It is mysterious and intriguing because we are curious about “how it all ends.” It is mysterious and intriguing because we aren’t the Apostle/Evangelist John—we weren’t there.

But today’s passage, at least, is a bit more clear for us—even with the obscure visual of a seven-horned, seven-eyed slaughtered-yet-standing-lamb who can grab hold of a scroll. In spite of that imagery that our mind tries to envision, this particular passage from Revelation is a bit clearer because we can understand it through faith and what we know about our Savior.

John is no different than you or me; he wants to know what comes next, too. So, when it seems no one can open the scroll, of course it is upsetting. When it seems the story of eternity won’t go on, of course tears are his natural recourse. When it seems the glorious, promised happy ending we all long for won’t happen, of course he weeps. When he stands before the awesome, heavenly throne of God with such powerful forces all around, yet there is still no one capable of opening it, of course he cries uncontrollably. You would cry, too, if it happened to you!

If that were the end of John’s Revelation, the end of the Bible, it would be a most gloomy finish. The hope of salvation would appear somewhat questionable. The ultimate, final victory over Satan, sin and death would seem unresolved. The sure and certain confidence we have by faith would be reduced to a strong “maybe” at best. But thankfully, that’s not the end!

John is an emotional wreck until, behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world appears! And—again, in spite of the hard-to-imagine description—we understand it fully. It is Christ Jesus, the Lord; the very Son of God and Son of Man! He alone is worthy! He has opened the way of salvation to all the Baptized faithful people of God! Amen!

Fellow Christian—whatever you are going through in life right now, know that the story does go on beyond present circumstances. In Christ, we get our happy ending! When you feel hopeless, know there is One who has purchased You; One who is coming again for YOU! He is Christ the Lord!

Pray: *Lord Jesus Christ, You have opened the way of salvation for me! I praise You for this! In all life’s situations let me always look in faith to You and Your promises. Amen.*

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