

Expectations!

Overview

So good, so good. Yeah, I really do hope that you all had a good Christmas break. I noticed something this year on Christmas.

My kids are 10, 9, and 7. I realized this year that they are growing. Like you know they're growing, and I know that those of you who have grandkids or great grandkids or your own kids, you see them grow but you don't realize the subtleties in the change. So I remember when they were half this age, they were five and four and two.

I still remember each one of them Christmas morning because we open our stockings in the morning. They would like to pitter-patter the way, like they don't even know what time it is because they have no concept of time. They would walk into the living room and their eyes would just light up because the lights are on and their stockings and their presents show up.

They're like, what's going on? We had to teach them how to unwrap everything. Just as fast as it was open, they're like, what's going on? What's next? There's wrapping paper everywhere. I thought of that because this year, it was noticeable that pretty much a week before Christmas, my kids individually came up to me at all different times.

From December, basically 20th. No, 15th, 10 days before, nine days before, they would come up to me and say, hey mom, just to let you know, those stockings are empty. They're empty.

I was like, I'm aware, children, I'm aware that they're empty. But they all made it a point to say, mom, it's almost Christmas, why is there nothing here? But there's also something else different. They were able to open things and savor them a bit more because they're older.

It was beautiful. It was great. But it dawned on me that as they've grown up in noticeable and not noticeable ways, they've learned to expect different things.

They learn that this is what happens on Christmas. They learn that this is what we do, and they're good. But it made me realize that I miss that childlike wonder and awe when they strolled in and pitter-pattered into the room, where they just had no idea because their concept of life was just every day was just another day.

Their expectations were only that they would walk into the room and be like, I don't know, mom and dad are in here, and that's it. Why am I bringing that up? Because today as we end 2025, there's so many things we could talk about, right? But the Lord has placed on my heart to share a passage with you from Luke 24, and specifically to talk about expectations. Not because we need to walk out of here with different expectations, maybe.

But actually how expectations form us and shape us in ways that we don't really understand. Whether they're inherently good or bad is not really the question. It's more of how does it affect us? How do our expectations affect not only the way we see others and our life, but how do our expectations actually affect the way we relate and see God, and sometimes, unfortunately, limit the greatness and power of God? I wonder though, as we sit here, different generations in a room and online, maybe God, maybe God desires us to be a little bit more like those kids.

Not only Christmas, but a life where our expectations are less about what we know, less about what we think is going to happen because we've been there before, we've experienced it before, but more of a childlike faith and wonder, a stepping into a space in the presence of God, and being amazed every single time of who he is and what he does. Amen? So today, we're going to look at Luke 24, we're going to jump right from the birth of Jesus to the resurrection, fun times. But it's great because there's actually a few cool stories in here.

I'm going to summarize the beginning parts of Luke 24, because we're going to read from verse 19 onwards. But I'm going to separate these two stories because two interesting things happen. The first part is, at the resurrection, the woman goes to the tomb and doesn't find Jesus there.

The second story are the apostles, two apostles who are on their way to the town of Emmaus. I really believe that these apostles show us something that we need to know. So at the beginning of Luke 24, we see that it's been three days, Jesus has died, and people are just processing what has happened.

As a human being, and as human beings, I'm sure you would understand that was incredibly unexpected. So they're just gathering their thoughts, they're trying to mull over like, the Lord is gone. So women get all their spices ready, they're doing what they're supposed to do ceremonially, to go to the tomb.

But then when they get there, they find that the stone was rolled away, and so they go in. Number one, there was no body, there was no Jesus, but then they were struck with something. It says, they were struck with two men, suddenly, it was suddenly, God loves suddenlies, right? The unexpected suddenlies.

Two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. They had heavenly beings that came and intercepted their moment. And it said that they were frightened in a good way.

The reverence and fear when glory comes in your midst, they were frightened, they put their face down, and they asked these women, these two angels were like, why are you looking for the living among the dead? What did you expect to see today when you walked into, towards the tomb of Jesus? The logical and clear answer is that they expected a body, because that is what happened. And no one's denying that that is the truth of what happened. But yet, the suggestion of these beings were saying, why are you so surprised that he isn't here? How do you expect God works? And then they say, do you remember what he said when he was with you, ladies? The son of man must be delivered over the hands of sinners.

He was crucified and on the third day was raised again. And then the word says, then they remembered his words. A divine intervention reminds us and people of what God has already said.

They went back and they're trying to tell the apostles these amazing things. Guess what, guys? He's alive, he's not here. Can you imagine what the guy said? Well, it says what they said.

They did not believe them, the woman, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. Let's not make this about how men think that women are nonsense, okay? No, that's not it. Here's the fact though.

Sometimes what is divine will appear nonsensical to human understanding and logic. That is the truth. How many times have we heard of experience and testimony of witnessing the power of God? And let's not lie to God ourselves.

Let's just not deny that there's parts of us at times in our life that we've hesitated to believe that it could be possible that God revealed himself this way. Because what we saw was something different. And it goes back to the question, what are our expectations of who God is and how he works? When we see even just this moment here of the resurrection, we see that the expectation was just as it is.

And it's not wrong because we are human. We are so limited. And if anything, this should show us how limited we are in our own understanding, in our own observations, in our own wisdom.

And so they didn't believe the woman. But one guy, Peter, says, oh, he's like, what's happening? So he ran to the tomb and he finds himself just a bunch of cloth. There's no body, no Jesus.

And it says, he went away wondering to himself, what happened? So seeing evidence only perpetuated a curiosity. Maybe, just maybe something has happened. That's the first story.

Then we jump onto the next verses following this. It talks about the resurrected Jesus on the road and he meets two apostles who are walking to the town of Emmaus. And it says very specifically in verse 16 that Jesus kept them from recognizing him.

We will definitely come back to this. Okay, it's important. So note that the reason why they did not recognize Jesus literally walking beside them is because Jesus made sure that that wasn't possible at this time.

So he walks up to them and he goes, Jesus is like, hey, what are you guys talking about? Because the two of them were in deep conversation, talking to each other. And the two of them look at Jesus saying, are you new, basically? Do you not know what has happened in these last few days? Because apparently everybody knew. And they were shocked that he didn't know.

So they went and they started talking to him. And I'm gonna read from verse 19. What things, Jesus asks, about Jesus of Nazareth, they replied.

He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death and they crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel.

And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning, but didn't find his body.

They came and told us what they had seen, that they had seen visions of angels who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and they found it just as the woman said. But they did not see Jesus.

And here's Jesus' response to apparently people that, you know, he didn't know. How foolish you are and how slow you are to believe what the prophets have spoken. Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter into his glory and begin with Moses and all the prophets, beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he began to explain to them what was said in all the scriptures concerning himself.

Fascinating. When we think through the lens of expectation, what do you think the apostles, even after three days, walking towards another town, having conversations amongst each other, what was their expectation of the Savior? They said it right here. Verse 21.

We had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. We had hoped that he was gonna save us. Translation, but he didn't at that moment.

Why? Because he's dead and he's gone. But we don't understand because his body's not there. If you think about their perspective for a moment, they've been waiting generations and generations to get away from this power-hungry reality of the Roman Empire.

And it is so normal to say, can you please just save us from this? If we could take a moment and think about our own life, the things that we think in our society, our governments, our ruling powers, the things that we are dissatisfied with and hopefully righteously so, does it feel like that? Please change this, God. I don't think that's a bad desire. There's righteousness and wanting to see injustice just.

Wrongs being righted. Things that are not of God to be of God. But yet in the midst of that, in the middle of that mix, comes our humanity.

No matter how long we've walked with God, our minds, our limited understanding comes into play. And I wonder the way that we expect God to solve the problems that we see in our world. Just like these apostles walking around going, when is the, he said he was gonna come, it was written, but he didn't do it.

Why? Because it wasn't the way they expected. That was why. Because when you zoom out outside of their experience, the fact and truth is God was working the entire time, was he not? God is in control, was in control the entire time, was he not? Yes.

But the problem wasn't that he wasn't, it was that they could not see it. Because partially of the expectations they had on how God was gonna do what he said he was gonna do. And so when we talk about expectations potentially limiting us, that's what we're looking at here.

In what areas of our life do we actually have unknown, like we're not aware? Just because we've, and honestly, there's times where we've walked with God for so long, we've seen him move, and so it's natural to expect that he will show up the same way. But at the same time, his ways are not our ways, friends. His ways are far greater, far wider, and to simply expect that God will do what he's gonna do the way we know is incredibly arrogant of us, if you really think about it.

How would we ever have expectations on God and how he's gonna work? And so Jesus reminded these apostles on the road to Emmaus of all the scriptures that were written about himself. Because why? God's plan for this to happen, the birth that we just celebrated to the resurrection to this point, it was always the plan. And so he started at the time of Moses and said, can you not see? And again, why are you so surprised, guys, that this is what God does? Why are you surprised that God surprises you? And why are you surprised that he works in unexpected ways? Friends, as we turn into the new year, I don't know personally what your life and what you're expecting and what you're even desiring for all good reasons and things you've been praying for.

But if you look at both these stories of the woman going to the tomb and then the apostles not believing them and then them walking with Jesus and still being like, I don't understand what you're saying, there's a reality we can all resonate with. When we don't understand something, and I'm sure we all have situations in our life currently that we don't fully, if not at all, understand why we're here, why we're still here, how God's gonna do his work, right? But the thing that we end up doing and we don't attribute it to us meddling, but it is, is that we bring in our expectations and in our minds and hearts, as we pray, we do desire the Lord to intervene, but yet we fill in the blanks. And before we know it, we have these expectations.

And every day and every month and every year that goes by, if those things don't happen, we're going, God, where are you? I thought you were gonna do this. You made me a promise. You said you were gonna do this.

This is what the apostles were doing post the resurrection. They're like, we don't understand. And then they spin and cycle into the why, why, how, how.

And the result of that only leads to more whys and more hows, because the understanding that we seek cannot be from human understanding, cannot be from human wisdom, cannot be from the logic, from our mere experiences, even though those are good, even though those do build the foundation of our faith and form us, even though that does affect the way we act and live, at the end of it all, we like to control what we don't understand. And these expectations internally become how we see God and then how we expect God to move. And we actually orient around our own experiences and expectations.

So as we turn this year, the invitation from God for us, me included, is how can we expect the unexpected from the Lord, because he is who he says he is and he doesn't need our help to do what he's gonna do. Amen? Now, the other part that is revealed in these two stories is the trouble that these apostles had was not just that they filled in the blanks with expectations. It was also that they had trouble and struggled with believing Jesus at his word.

It's subtle, but it's there. How foolish you are, Jesus says, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken. It is so hard to believe Jesus at his word.

And we don't wanna walk around thinking, no, I don't doubt the word of God. But here's the thing. Jesus was with them and literally told them, this is what's going to happen.

They couldn't grasp it because it was so beyond their understanding. They're like, okay, sure, you say this is what's gonna happen but you're here to save us, right? Save us from the oppression, save us from our enslavement, save us from our poverty, save us from being life like this, the struggle, because the expectation is that saving us means you're gonna remove the struggle and you're gonna remove the pain and I will be okay. That's not a bad desire.

But yet the Lord is far greater and deeper and his desire for his kingdom, not just for Israel, not just for you and me. His plan was always to send Jesus, for who? For all people. And the people of Israel and the apostles here, even though they were actually part of that new covenant, they were like, I don't know what you mean.

There was so much more that God was gonna do and is doing. But yet with the expectations that came in, it was limited in understanding. And they struggled to believe but yet here's the greatness of God.

He is so kind and he's so generous and so merciful that he will divinely show up and remind you of what he said. That is why this is the living word. Because even in our lack of hearing, our lack of understanding, the spirit of God who's in us is gonna show up, he's there.

And he will do the work and say, remember what he said. And then you remember what he said. And you realize that as much as you tried or you thought or we wanted to, we didn't believe Jesus at his word.

Because he says this, it's actually gonna happen. And that's all we have to know. How, when, why, with who? Also up to him.

But that's hard because that requires what? Trust. In the building of the foundation of faith, something actually happened within that last week leading up to Christmas that reminded me of this even in my own family. I left to run errands and I was supposed to be back at 2.30. My oldest daughter Brooklyn, she's learned to do her hair by herself since she was like three.

I never taught her anything. But of course she cares about her hair. And because there's so little that I really care about, she's always like, mom, can you make sure before we go at three o'clock to, I think it was someone's house, I want you to come home and do my hair.

I can't seem to make it work. I'm like, no problem. So in my head, I had a plan.

One o'clock, I'm leaving, going to Dollarama. 1.30, I'm gonna go here. My aim the whole time was to be home at 2.30. I talked to my husband Matt about it.

I'm gonna be at 2.30. So while you're at home for an hour and a half to two hours, you do A, B, C, D, E with the kids and then by the time I come home, we're gonna go. I'm gonna do this and we're gonna go. But what I didn't do is I didn't tell Brooklyn.

Why does she have to know? She's just at home. I got back at 2.30. I opened the door and she was in, she was a mess. So apparently she was freaking out and crying for two hours that I was gone.

Why? You said you were gonna come home and do my hair. And then every half hour that came back. Do you know why? She was stressed out for two hours of her day from the time I left to the time I came home exactly at 2.30 because she did not believe what I said.

I'm gonna caveat that I've not always been consistent with doing what I'm gonna say because I am human. But here's the thing. I learned a little bit about myself and my daughters and my kids.

It really motivated me to understand how important it was to be the type of person that's gonna have the integrity to do what I'm gonna say for people and especially my kids. It's easier to tell your kids you're gonna do something, you're not gonna do it. But really for them to trust you at your word, it means they see that that's who you are.

And I realized that number one, I have not been consistent with that. So she had a reason. But when I talked to her, I said, Brooklyn, Brooklyn, I didn't tell you my plans because I didn't have to.

You didn't need to know. Your job was just to stay at home, clean your room, and get dressed. She's like, but, but, but, but, but, all the buts.

And I was like, you know what happened the last two hours? Your life was miserable for two hours. You stressed, you thought, you waited. And of course, then you made your father quite irritated.

And you probably made your siblings a little bit more miserable too. I was like, you could have enjoyed. You could have done what you were supposed to do.

You could have just rested. I was like, mom, I was like, see, I'm here. And then I did her hair in 10 minutes.

And she's like, I was like, see? It only took 10 minutes. It seemed like such a mundane moment, but it taught me, and I hope, something really big. That trusting, trusting someone and then trusting God at his word is actually a trust, not on what he's gonna do, but a trust on knowing and believing truly who he is.

It is deeply real. And it is scary because it will leave us in a place where we need to be aware daily that we are not in control of our own life. It'll require a daily surrender of letting go of the ways in which we meddle with the results we want and the expectations we expect to see.

If we believe that God is who he is, could it be possible that God's control over our life and how God's gonna move will defy our expectations and understandings? Yes. Could it be possible that the same God that was doing his perfect will by sending Jesus to the cross and then resurrecting him, could it be possible that even though the apostles and disciples could not see it in the same way that he's working now in our world to redeem and to further his kingdom, even though there's so much stuff that's happening that we want him to fix, could it be possible that the same God has the same control and the same plan from the beginning of time and is continuing now? Yes. He doesn't change, friends, and I think we know this, but what does that mean for us as we start another year, as he wills for us to live to 2026? We've never been here before.

The world has never been like this before. And while it seems like it's worse than ever, frankly, it's nothing that God does not know or expect. So the invitation, friends, is for us to believe God at his word for who he is and what he's gonna do, because he promises that he's gonna return, amen? But until then, he promises so many things.

He will never leave us nor forsake us. We are not alone. And what does that mean for us, for it to be so true that it translates from our life to those around us? Friends, when we expect God to be who he is by expecting that he's always gonna work in unexpected ways, it postures us correctly before him.

It postures us correctly as creation and him correctly as creator. Because once we forget that is when things start spinning and we see how humanity works, because that's how we work. And there's a beautiful ending to this part of Luke 24, and it's gonna invite us to the Lord's table too in a few minutes.

I'm gonna read Luke 24, verses 30 to 35. When he was at the table, so we got here, the apostles invited Jesus and said, he's getting dark, come and stay with us. So they share a meal.

And it says here in verse 30, when he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and began giving it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him. And then just as quickly he disappeared from their sight.

They asked each other, were not our hearts burning within us as he talked with us on the road and opened the scriptures to us? They got up, returned once to Jerusalem where they found the 11 and those with them assembled together and saying, it is true. The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon. Then the two told what had happened on the way and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

Such a beautiful turn of events here, friends. I know you know this happened, but let's marvel at this for a moment, eh? First of all, at the moment that Jesus took bread, just as he did at the Lord's table, and he gave thanks to God, and he made it about sharing and being the body, and he handed it to those around him. Their eyes were opened.

Something happened in a divine way. Because that is what happens when God is present, when Jesus is there. And that's why he tells us to do this in remembrance of him, beyond the practice of remembering logically.

He's saying, do you believe that when you remember me and do things in my name and thank God that you posture yourself correctly so that your expectation is that God is gonna do something right here and now? Like opening the eyes of our hearts to see him? Yes, because that is what happened. And then what happened after they saw him was, they were able to see the truth. They spent days cycling and having conversations, and I've done this myself.

Guys, I don't understand why this happened. Oh, I planned for this. Everyone was bewildered.

They couldn't understand. And they were telling other people they were meeting on the road. Why don't you know? Why don't you understand? We can't figure it out.

The moment they came together and broke bread, and the moment that the spirit moved, their eyes were open and they were able to see the truth. And what did they do? Just like the woman. They ran and told everyone else.

It's true. He's alive. How awesome is that? Then you, I mean, I was asking myself when I was thinking of this.

Why do I spend so much time circling in my own head? Why do I spend so much time trying to figure it out? Because there's pride in me. And I hate, I really hate to admit it. But somehow in my life and experience, I think I understand God more.

And with His grace, I do a bit, but not really. Because there's no way that we could ever fathom the greatness of God, friends. Good thing, because He is God and we are not.

And so the way for wisdom and for the way for truth to be truth that we're truly looking for is to lay down our expectations. Because honestly, even the expectations of ourselves, I would argue or question whether or not God has those expectations for us. Because again, when we posture ourselves in humility and say, God, all these things and all the ways in which I've expected you to work, forgive me.

I will surrender. And isn't this a way to move into another year where we are that much more surrendered and trusting in who God is and that we're desiring that much more to trust the Lord at His word, that He really is who He says He is. And then how He's gonna do what He's gonna do is still up to Him, amen.