

Great Expectations

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[0 : 00] All right, well this morning we return to the story of Jesus as told by Luke. And today we're going to look at just a few verses. We pick up the story in verse 21 of Luke chapter 9.

Jesus strictly warned them not to tell this to anyone. And he said, The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the teachers of the law.

And he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. As we saw last week, Jesus is talking to his disciples in private.

And the conversation up till this point has been about who Jesus is. Remember they asked, Jesus actually asked the disciples, Who do the crowds say I am?

And the disciples go through a short list of the answers that they've heard from different people. Some say you are John the Baptizer, resurrected from the dead.

[1 : 25] Others that you are the prophet Elijah. He didn't die but was taken up to heaven by God and now perhaps God has sent him back. And some others say you are one of the prophets from long ago, come back to life from the dead.

Jesus finally asks the disciples themselves, What about you? Who do you say I am? And Peter, one of the twelve, answers, God's Messiah.

Literally, the Christ of God. Matthew records an even fuller answer of Peter's. In his gospel, You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.

That title, Christ, it means Messiah. And Messiah means Anointed One. It carries within it the meaning of being divinely chosen as king.

A king selected by God himself. Up until this point, there's been centuries of God speaking to the people of Israel through the prophets.

[2 : 47] And great promises have been made by God. There are these great expectations of a Messiah. A coming king who is chosen by God.

We're not talking about, you know, just a good and wise regional ruler for a time. We're talking about a king whose reign, whose kingdom will have global implications.

Something the likes of which the world has never seen. Even the great empires of old, even the modern day nations of today, don't come close to what is promised about the Messiah.

Long ago, through the prophets. A kingdom characterized by peace, that endures. By righteousness. By justice.

By justice. By justice. By justice. And not by the violence and corruption that we have seen through the centuries and even still see today all over the world.

[4 : 00] Well, because of these many great promises spoken by the prophets long ago, the Jews who had faith carried within them great expectations and a deep longing for this Messiah to be given.

And so Peter and the disciples who have been following Jesus for a little while now, they've been listening to his preaching, they have witnessed his miracles, and here's the moment where they finally come to answer this question of who Jesus is out loud.

When Jesus asks, who do you say I am? Peter blurts it out. You are the one. You are God's king. There was some wondering at first. If you recall the gospel of John, as they went and found each other and told each other about Jesus at first, we, you know, this could be the Messiah.

But this is that moment where Peter just sort of blurts it out and says, I know it for sure. But then what Jesus says next, which we just read, might be a shock to us.

[5 : 28] Jesus strictly warned them not to tell this to anyone. Matthew's gospel is even more explicit.

Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah. That's kind of surprising, isn't it? Like, why not?

Why can't we tell people? This is what this is all about, isn't it? And none of the gospels at this moment gives us a clear statement of why not.

Some suggestions have been made about this. Some think that perhaps just telling people that Jesus is the Messiah would have brought about opposition too quickly.

And in the gospel of John, we read that Jesus does seem to have this sense of God's timing and how things should unfold. We hear him say, my hour has not yet come.

[6 : 31] There's sort of a pace at which he reveals himself to the people. Another idea is that Jesus wants the people to arrive at this faith in him as Messiah, not by just hearing him declare, I'm the Messiah, but by looking at the signs.

And perhaps just, you know, saying it out loud all over the place right from the beginning would short circuit this process. The most popular suggestion is that Jesus commands them not to speak of him as Messiah because he knows that their understanding of Messiah and the people's understanding of Messiah is full of misconceptions and wrong ideas.

And so to go around declaring Jesus as Messiah at this point might stir up ideas of political revolution when God's plan for the Messiah will unfold contrary to expectations.

And this last idea kind of fits with what we see in these next words of Jesus in verse 22. Jesus strictly warned them not to tell this to anyone.

And he said, the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the teachers of the law.

[8 : 03] And he must be killed. And he must be killed. This is certainly not what anyone was expecting of the Messiah.

Let's look at these words a little more closely. We see that Jesus refers to himself in the third person as the Son of Man. That sounds strange to us maybe.

It's kind of a mysterious and veiled way of speaking. The Son of Man was what God called the prophet Ezekiel in the Old Testament. And as to its meaning, it's a figure of speech that basically means a male human being.

That's what a son of man is. But then there's this one passage where the prophet Daniel has a strange vision. Daniel chapter 7, verse 13.

And in his vision, this is many years before this, Daniel sees one like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven and approaching God.

[9 : 14] And this one like a son of man in Daniel's vision receives authority and glory and sovereign power and all nations and peoples worship him.

And he comes to rule and reign over this great kingdom that will last forever. Well, Jesus knows who he is.

He is the Messiah. He is this Son of Man described by Daniel. But there's enough mystery around this title that many will not see the title as an explicit claim to be the Messiah.

Many will wonder about this. Some will see it and believe. And yet others who are looking to take Jesus out, they won't really be able to pin this on Jesus as an overt claim.

But even if they do, what Jesus is saying here is very surprising. The Son of Man must suffer many things.

[10 : 19] Well, there's nothing in Daniel's vision about that. We can imagine the disciples sort of sitting there in this moment scratching their heads like, what do you mean the Son of Man, the Messiah, must suffer?

What kinds of things? And Jesus goes on. He says, the Son of Man must be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the teachers of the law.

That's also probably not what the disciples were expecting. Perhaps they were expecting that eventually Jesus would win them over. That they too would come to own or recognize Jesus as their Messiah.

Yeah, there's been opposition. Yes, they've even been plotting to kill Jesus, but surely God's Messiah won't be killed by the leaders of Israel. He's supposed to be the one to unify the people, right?

Yet Jesus says, no, he must be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law. If we think about those three roles, that covers both the political side of things at the leadership level

in Israel and the spiritual side of things.

[11:41] Not just the Sanhedrin or the council of elders who ruled the daily affairs of the people, but also the spiritual leaders at the temple, the priests. Those considered authorities on how to understand the scriptures, all of them would reject Jesus.

Okay. So how's this going to work then, Jesus?

If you will be king, then what role or place will those guys have in the kingdom? If they reject you, then what will you do with them once you have the throne?

This is how I imagine the disciples trying to sort this all out in their minds. And then comes the jaw dropper. The son of man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law and he must be killed.

What? What? This is the first plain mention of this by Jesus to his disciples. What kind of king chosen by God, what kind of anointed one gets killed?

[13:03] How could that be? Jesus adds one more thing. He says he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

And this last part about being raised to life, we know the story, of course, what that's talking about, the resurrection, but this last part, it seems the disciples heard it, but it just didn't really sink in. It's like they were so shocked by the idea, the thought, that Jesus, the one they've been following, would be killed and how that might come about. That very little thought was given to that statement that on the third day, he would be raised to life.

Even after Jesus rises from the dead, there's that moment of, oh, yes, now I remember he said something about that. He said that he would be raised to life on the third day.

But for now, it's like they hear the words and they don't really hear it. The part about getting killed must have been so utterly unexpected, so contrary to the expectations.

[14:16] In fact, at this point in the conversation, we read that right after saying this, Peter takes Jesus aside and begins to rebuke Jesus. We read of this in Mark chapter 8.

Peter takes Jesus aside and begins to rebuke him. You can almost imagine Peter in this moment like, what are you talking about, Jesus? They're not going to kill you.

You're the Messiah. Don't say things like this. We're not going to let anything happen to you. If anybody even tries to lay a finger on you, and if you keep talking like this, Jesus, you're going to start scaring the people away.

We need their support if we're going to challenge the elders and the chief priests and the teachers of the law. We can only imagine what Peter said as he rebuked Jesus.

It doesn't say. Well, in Mark's gospel, Jesus comes back at Peter with a stinging rebuke of his own. Get behind me, Satan.

[15:26] Jesus said, you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns. So this is a clue that neither Peter nor the rest of the disciples had the right expectations of how things would go with the Messiah.

I guess it seems that they envisioned this great movement just sort of picking up steam and the followers increasing and as more and more people become followers then eventually they all just parade Jesus right into Jerusalem and toss out the Romans and put Jesus on the throne and the glory days of Israel will begin.

Kind of like in the days of King David. I mean, look at the miracles that we've been able to do, Andrew, in the name of Jesus.

Look at the power and authority that he has. He is God's chosen one. He is the Messiah. This is it. And then Jesus just seems to start raining on his own parade.

It's wonderful that you figured out who I really am, Peter. But now don't tell anyone.

[16:54] I'm going to suffer many things, be rejected, and be killed. This isn't going to go how you think, Peter.

And it truly baffled the disciples when Jesus said these things. We're going to see that bafflement in the weeks ahead.

What kind of kingdom begins with the suffering of its king? What kind of king gets fiercely hated and despised by the people in the land before he comes to the throne and then is put to death?

How can this be, the kingdom of God? Why would God allow anyone to do this to his chosen king? This can't be right, can it?

This can't be how the story goes, can it? But it is indeed how the story goes. It was in fact the plan of God right from the beginning.

[18 : 03] And Jesus knew this. think about this from the disciples perspective. What a crazy thing, eh? It finally comes to that moment where they realize that Jesus is the Messiah and they say it out loud and now Jesus says good.

See that you don't tell anyone. And from here on out I want you to know that your expectations for the Messiah are way off. It's going to go the opposite of how you think in the short term.

At this point Mark tells us that Jesus actually calls the crowd to him. And so these next things that we're about to read he says to the disciples and to the rest of them to them all.

Verse 23 Then he said to them all whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.

for whoever wants to save their life will lose it. But whoever loses their life for me will save it.

[19 : 21] What good is it for someone to gain the whole world and yet lose or forfeit their very self?

whoever is ashamed of me and my words the son of man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the father and of the holy angels.

So while Peter's probably still trying to figure out why Jesus rebuked him so sternly and called him Satan Jesus is already speaking to the crowds and proclaiming a message of denial and death.

Jesus said in private to them that he must be killed now he turns to the public and he says if you want to be my disciple if you want to be a follower of mine then you must take up your cross and follow me.

You must stop trying to save your life and lose it for me. I'm not even sure how the crowd would have taken these words.

[20 : 34] When they heard that word cross take up the cross did they picture convicted criminals being marched down the street to the place where they would be executed or was Jesus saying this so that later they would understand as they watched Jesus carrying his cross to his death.

death. I'm trying to think of how they would have thought of these words. Is Jesus calling us to die for him? Are things about to get ugly or violent?

We're going to talk more next week about what Jesus is saying about being a disciple of his with these words. But for today through all of this we see Jesus hinting to the crowds.

We hear him alluding to what he just told the disciples in private. Not only will he be killed but he will be crucified. The cross.

He calls them to follow him. How? By taking up their cross. Jesus knows that this is what he will do in the days ahead.

[21 : 57] The cross was the method used by the Romans to execute criminals and make a spectacle of them. It was a bloody and torturous death.

Slow, painful, brutal. But the Bible tells us that this was the plan of God. That this was the only way to restore the relationship between God and man.

A relationship that is broken because of our sins. A sacrifice had to be made. A sentence had to be served.

Justice had to be done. Jesus' enemies, as they crucify him, meant it for evil, but God used it for good.

The Bible tells us that by Jesus' death, he made atonement for the sins of the world. It tells us that we can be forgiven of any wrong we have done in the sight of God because 2,000 years ago, Jesus stepped forward and allowed himself to suffer many things and be rejected and be killed.

[23 : 26] He took upon himself the punishment that we deserve for our sins so that we could be healed, forgiven, restored to God.

God, why would Jesus do this for us? The answer of the Bible again and again is it's because of his great love for us.

It's amazing. Why would God, holy God, offer eternal life and forgiveness to stubborn and rebellious sinners like you and me because of his great love for us.

Listen to how the Apostle Paul puts it in his letter to the church in Rome. He says, you see, at just the right time, while we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.

Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person. Though for a good person, someone might possibly dare to die, but God demonstrates his own love for us in this.

[24 : 52] While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. trust, God does something amazing and wonderful.

He gives us a new birth. He gives us a new life. He changes us. He saves us from what the Bible tells us is coming.

As we talked about this morning in Sunday school, yes, judgment and wrath are what we deserve. But there is a way that God has provided to be saved from that.

And that way is through faith in Jesus, the one he sent. Not only that, but he promises us citizenship in his kingdom when Jesus returns.

Many in our world are asleep at the wheel and headed for disaster. By God's grace and mercy, he has awakened us to the danger ahead and he has shown us the way out.

[26 : 14] And now he has sent us to go and to wake others to the danger ahead and show them the way to be saved. And that way is not complicated.

Sometimes we overcomplicate it. It's just telling people this very story of Jesus. The whole thing, from the beginning to the end.

From his birth, to his miracles, to his message, to his death, to his resurrection, or as much as they're willing to hear. By putting their faith in him and what he has done, they can be saved, just as we have.

The people in Davidson, the people in Crake, the people in Keniston, out on the farm, in town, young, old, people in the farm, the people who have good news of God's love and rescue.

And the climax of that news is the cross. We're going to take a few minutes now to remember and to thank God for the cross, how he used the evil of men, done to his innocent son to forgive us and to restore us to him.

[27 : 48] So in just a moment, we'll pass out the bread and the cup. And if you believe in Jesus, that he is the Christ, then of course the next step for you is to be baptized in his name.

But if you believe in Jesus like we've been talking about, then please join with us in remembering the body and blood which was broken and poured out for our salvation.

Let's take a few minutes now to quietly pray and to reflect. And then we'll have Dave and Simon come and serve the elements.

We'll wait until everybody has been served and we'll give thanks and we'll eat and drink all together. Let's do that.