

Remnant Life Church
May 25, 2025
The Good and the Bad of Expectations
Matthew 16:1-12

- Everyone lives in and deals with expectations
 - It is the way our minds work, the way God made us
 - It is also because we all live within a linear, sequential timeline
 - There is the past, the present, and the future
 - The past is no more and nothing can be done to change it
 - The present requires our immediate attention, thoughts, and actions
 - But because the future is unknown, we will often try and anticipate or determine what that future will look like
 - And usually with very little accuracy
 - It might be regarding an upcoming event
 - It can be either pleasant or unpleasant
 - A week of vacation
 - Or an upcoming trip to the dentist
 - Even an upcoming interaction with a person or a group of people
 - I was trying to remember if I had ever been on a blind date
 - I don't think I ever was, I have no plans to ever go on one, but that has to be the ultimate interpersonal moment of expectation
 - You anticipate what will happen, whether it will be positive or negative, and what you expect to receive or get out of that time

But if you tell me about your expectations, especially as it relates to people, I will be able to talk with you about disappointment

- Tell me about the details of what you expect to have fulfilled in your own life, perhaps what you have or have not accomplished, and I'll tell you what it means to often live with discontent
- I have come to liken expectations to my wanting to be able to dunk a basketball
 - As I got older and grew taller, I could run, jump, and touch the net, then the rim, then dunk the ball...once I think
 - But I could not do it again and again
 - Expectations are like that
 - They may very occasionally play out in the way you imagined or expected, but those are rare
 - And the greatest damage those occasional hits of accuracy do is increase your frequency for trying to figure out what is going to happen, how someone will respond, and what you will realize from it all
- But the greatest struggle with expectations will always involve people
 - Think back to a difficult time that was brought on by someone letting you down
 - How fresh and real is the pain of that memory even now, after you think about it for just a moment?

- Yet most people will still think and believe there is never a reason, no logical explanation as to why their expectations are not always met

DEF: A belief that something, as of yet unknown and yet to occur, will happen in a particular and specific way

- Consider this example of expectations made by Dennis Wholey (American author, mostly of self-help books) as it relates to life in general
- *Expecting the world to treat you fairly because you are a good person is a little like expecting a bull not to gore you because you are a vegetarian.*
- One has nothing to do with the other, yet expectations insist on making one dependent on the other

Question: Why do people continue to place expectations on one another?

- Ones, by the way, that they themselves usually can not live up to, and then become so angry, offended, bitter, and unforgiving when it doesn't happen the way they thought that it should?
 - Placing unwarranted expectations on another person is very often a powerful tool that satan will use to bring division in your home, your marriage, your relationships, and even your church
 - Notice, though, that I said very often, not always.

READ **Matthew 16:1-12**

We have talked in the past about both of these groups of religious leaders in Jesus' time, but here is a quick refresher

- The Pharisees and Sadducees were similar in their function among the people but very much opposed to one another in their philosophies
- We won't go into all of those but it begs the question: what could get two adversarial camps to unite together?
 - The answer is very simple: A common enemy.
 - 4th century BC saying - *The enemy of my enemy is my friend*
 - And the enemy of both these groups was Jesus Christ
- Both groups were very strict adherents to the law given by God through Moses (called the Mosaic Law)
 - What had happened was that these religious leaders had placed the law over God
 - Nothing and no one was more important to them than the law
- What was it about Jesus that could unite these opposing groups of vehemently loyal extremists?
 1. Sadducees – Jesus taught and often spoke of the resurrection of the dead and the presence of both angels and demons – something the Sadducees denied to be true
 2. Pharisees – Jesus was consistently showing them to be imposters and exposing their hypocrisy, pride, and the tyrannical way they ruled over the people they were supposed to help guide, protect, and love.

3. Finally, for both groups – Jesus did not meet the expectations they had of who and what the Messiah would be
- In this passage, we read they were demanding a sign from Jesus that He was the Messiah
 - They wanted again what happened when God gave the law to Moses (**Ex 19:16-20:25**)
 - They wanted the thunder and lightning which to them would confirm the power of the presence of God
 - Theirs is the very definition of believing by sight and not by faith
 - The very thing Jesus said to Thomas when he would not believe until he had put his fingers in the nail holes (**John 20:27**)
 - Then, their expectation was that Jesus would come as a political and even a military advocate to subdue and drive out the Romans and that is not what He was doing or teaching
 - They were expecting the “Son of David” to be a conquering king just like David himself back in the time of Israel’s glory and splendor – which were the most powerful times of the Law
 - They certainly already knew of the miracles Jesus had performed
 - But had Jesus had done a miracle then in that moment at their command it would have become just one more way for them to exalt themselves and, at least in their own minds, secure their power
 - But Jesus was not in any way like what they wanted Him to be
 - He was humble, unobtrusive, avoided the limelight; discouraged publicity, even going so far as to give instructions to people that He had healed not to tell anyone
 - Contrast that to the actions of the Pharisees and even the actions of many in ministry today
 - Jesus did not meet their expectations
 - They were disappointed
 - They were being embarrassed
 - and they were angry
 - But those are most often the results of expectations

Jesus came with one primary message, and it still resonates today

- That message is given in the very first words recorded at the outset of His ministry
- **Matt 4:17** – *From that time, Jesus began to preach and say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”*
 - Were the Pharisees and Sadducees interested in repentance? Not at all!
 - They only wanted their expectations met, and their positions of power and importance solidified

And so, for each of us this morning, how do you avoid placing unrealistic or inappropriate expectations on others?

In other words, how can the times of expectation be positive instead of so often negative?

1. Don’t allow dependency on others to become your source
 - a. God is my first source of all things (**Phil 4:19**)

- b. The story again of our first year at RLC and depending on God as our source...
 - c. He has created in you and blessed you with His presence
 - d. What more do you need when you trust Him and have faith in who we know He is through His Word
- 2. Honestly consider the motivation of your expectations
 - a. Who benefits from what you expect to happen?
 - b. Most often, when you are disappointed, it is because what you wanted did not happen
 - c. If your expectations are for the benefit of others, you will never be disappointed personally for what does or does not happen
- 3. Make a conscious effort to stop trying to control the environment of your life, especially as it relates to other people
 - a. What does our desire to control everything say about our faith in God?
 - b. Understand and accept the foolishness of pre-determining someone else's decisions, behavior, or actions.
- Over the last 25 years or so of my life, I have come to the place where, with the exception of a few select people and situations, I have stopped expecting anything from anyone.
 - That way, I am delighted when someone does or says something nice for me
 - I am not disappointed when they don't because I wasn't expecting them to anyway

But I don't want you to think that I have no expectations at all

My expectations:

- 1. I expect God to always be true to who He says He is in the Bible
 - a. But that is not about who He is – He is timeless and true to all that we know of Him
 - b. That is about my setting my eyes and my focus on Him
- 2. I expect my wife to love me unconditionally
- 3. I expect my family to love me in spite of myself
- 4. I expect my closest friends to have my back
(But even that is a very small group of people)
- What do I expect from God?
 - Listen to **Isaiah 9:6** - *For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*
 - He is my Wonderful Counselor – I have an expectation of His wisdom (top advisor)
 - He is Almighty God – I have an expectation of power (mighty warrior)
 - He is the Everlasting Father – I have an expectation of care (provider forever)
 - And He is the Prince of Peace – I have an expectation of wholeness (life calmer)

- When we are willing to stop placing expectations on others just to satisfy our own wants and desires, we will cut off a constant stream of disappointment flowing into our lives and instead we can then make our focus the only true source of real contentment – our Heavenly Father and a personal relationship with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.
- Must expectations always lead to disappointment?
 - They don't, but they almost always do
- You can stop hurting yourself and others by placing your belief in what will happen in places where it does not belong.

In 1922, Helen Lemmel, a songwriter and composer born in England, directed the chorus groups for many of Billy Sunday's evangelistic meetings

- Billy Sunday may or not be a name you recognize
 - He was born in 1862 and died in 1935
 - He was a major league baseball player for 8 years in the 1880s playing for 3 teams including the Philadelphia Quakers
 - Toward the end of his playing career he became a Christian and began to preach
 - He was the Billy Graham of his day, and many later considered him as a forerunner to Graham who would come to prominence just as Sunday was finishing his ministry
 - Helen Lemmel wrote over 500 hymns and poems and one she wrote and played at Sunday's crusades was called "The Heavenly Vision"
 - Biblical source: *Let us fix our eyes on Jesus* – **Heb 12:2**
 - You know the title of the song by the words of the first line of the refrain, and they tell us exactly what we need to do in order to avoid the disappointment and discontentment that come from foolish expectations

Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face; and the things of earth will grow strangely dim; in the light of His glory and grace