**What You Can Expect**

Based on [Matthew 10:21-33](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Mt10.21-33)

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Third Sunday after Pentecost

Pastor Nathan Fuehrer

In last week’s gospel, Jesus Called his disciples into the office of the holy ministry and told them what to do. This week he continues by telling them what his disciples can expect for their discipleship. Jesus teaches that his disciples are supposed to manage their expectations according to his word. He teaches that, from the world, they can expect to receive persecution and slander. And he teaches that from God, they can expect divine protection and final deliverance. First, we will consider how God’s Word is given to help us manage our expectations.

Two of today’s lessons, the OT and Gospel, at their core have to do with expectations. We are by nature idolaters. The human heart is an idol factory. We create our own expectations for what our lives should be and look like, what makes us happy, and what we deserve for our labours. Then we project those expectations on God who never promised any of it. **And when God fails, or more to the point “refuses” to live up to our expectations, we feel lied to, let down, and deceived by God.**

Jeremiah thought when God called him to speak His word, to be a prophet of the most high God, Jeremiah expected that people would listen to him and obey. God called Jeremiah to say to his people “repent”, but God never said they would repent. So Jeremiah preached repentance and expected people to listen, they didn’t. So Jeramiah says in the OT lesson today, “O Lord, you have deceived me, and I was deceived.” “You made me think people would repent, and I believed they would, but they didn’t.” Of course, God never promised Jeremiah people would listen to him, and so really he deceived himself.

And when Jesus, the messiah came, the people expected him to be a political messiah. They expected him to raise up and lead an army against the Romans. Though he never promised that, his disciples believed it, and were disappointed when he didn’t live up to it. Even Jesus’ enemies, the Pharisees and Sadducees believed it, which is why they had him killed, because if he would rebel against Caesar he would disrupt the peace and their place in the current balance of power.

And when John the Baptist was imprisoned, he sent his disciples to Jesus to ask him if he really was the messiah, or if they should look for another. **John had preached that the messiah to come would bring swift judgment on God’s enemies, and Jesus hadn’t been living up to his expectations.**  Then Jesus speaks to the crowds who were confused because they had believed John was from God and yet he was in prison and the messiah was doing nothing about it. And Jesus began to speak to them saying, “**What did you go out to see” a reed shaken by the wind? A man dressed in soft clothing? A prophet**? He asked them to reflect on their expectations, “What did you expect to see?”

The crowds expected John to succeed, not be imprisoned. The disciples expected Jesus to conquer the Romans, not to die on a cross they made. Jeremiah expected people to listen to God’s word, not hate him for it.

Before I was a Pastor and when I came to faith I remember seeing things so clearly and was excited to share the truth with family and friends who didn’t know Christ, or didn’t seem to care much. But when I did, they didn’t seem all that interested. So I thought, “I know, I’ll become a Pastor, then they’ll listen because they’ll know I know what I’m talking about.” So I did. And what was once “you’re not a pastor I don’t have to listen to you” turned into, “you’re a pastor not a normal person, I can’t relate to you.” I was disappointed to find out that becoming a pastor made no difference in people’s willingness to hear me speak the truth. But God of course never promised it would.

All this to say that we are to hold on to the trustworthy word of God as taught, so that we do not set false expectations, and so that we are not disappointed when God doesn’t meet our idolatrous expectations.

From the world, disciples can expect persecution. Jesus says, “**Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, and you will be hated by all for my name’s sake.**” Jesus says many things like this in order to counter his disciples expectations, because by nature our sinful hearts assume what has been called a theology of Glory. A theology of Glory is the assumption that if God does something it will succeed right away and in a way obvious to the eyes. And conversely, if something fails, it means God wasn’t a part of it. On that view, if your brother or your father delivers you over to death, you must have said something wrong. If your children rise up against you, you must have done something wrong. If you are hated by everyone around you, you must be doing something wrong, something that is not pleasing to God. Because if what you do or say is pleasing to God, he wouldn’t let people treat you that way. Theology of Glory.

But Jesus teaches a theology of the cross. Failure, persecution, betrayal, opposition, when you suffer these things because of God’s word, it confesses one of the central mysteries of the faith. God said to St. Paul who was suffering his own thorn, “**My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”** If everything God touches in this world is supposed to turn to Gold, how is it that Jesus ended up on a cross? It is because when God comes, not in power, the powerful do not receive him, they rebel against him. God lays down his arms and says “See, I mean you no harm, I come in peace”, his sheep come to him and find rest, but his enemies seized the opportunity and crucified the Lord of Glory.

Later on Jesus is warning his disciples about false messiahs and false prophets that will come, and he says, “**See, I have told you beforehand**.” He has told us beforehand not to expect the worlds favor or appreciation for being his disciples. He tells his disciples to count the cost of following him, to realize what is to come so they are ready. Persecution is one, the other is slander.

Jesus says, “**A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master…If they have called the master of the house Satan, how much more will they malign those of his household**.” There were men who saw Jesus cast out demons and heal people with their own eyes, and in order to draw people away from him they said he worked for Satan. They didn’t prove it and of course they couldn’t. They just said it to try and stop him from doing the work of his Father. And Jesus says today, they will do even more to slander his disciples. And he tells them this, not so they can look out for it and avoid it, nor so they can be sure only do speak His word and do his works in front of people who will appreciate them for it. **They are called to preach the word in season and out of season; when it is received and when it is rejected**. He tells them this so they will not be shocked or surprised, but so they can expect the slander and know it’s only what he assured them would happen to them on account of him.

From the world, Disciples of Christ then and now only have the right to expect persecution and slander for their discipleship. Sometimes the world will surprise us and by God’s grace tolerate those he sends into it. But we have no right to *expect* it. **And as our society becomes less and less attached to the Christian morality that created it, we can only expect less tolerance and more persecution and slander, which the devil would use to tempt you to keep God’s word from your neighbor and hide it in your heart, and read and hear less and less of God’s Word which calls you to confess Christ before men lest he deny you before his Father.** Repent, stand for Christ as he has stood for you. Sacrifice your life for Christ, as he has sacrificed his for you. Jesus said, “**Whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel will save it**” (mark 8:35).

No person, by his own powers is able to give up his life for Christ. But the Holy Spirit has called you by the Gospel, which in today’s reading promises two things from God that are worth more than all the treasures and friendship of the world. First, God promises his divine protection. “**Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.”** Who you fear is who you worship; which is why the world, the devil and your sinful flesh threaten to punish you if you don’t give into them. They want your worship, but you cannot serve two masters. Fear God, not because he’s eager to punish you; but because he is more powerful than all your enemies, and you are of great value to him. He knows what He’s doing, and though you are persecuted in the body, he will let you be tempted more than you can bear (1 Cor. 10:13).

The second thing he promises is final deliverance. He promises an end to all your suffering and persecution. He says, “**The one who endures to the end will be saved**.” What unimaginable torture it would be to suffer persecution and slander while knowing it will never end, that whatever you suffer now you will suffer for eternity. Brothers and sisters, that is hell not just a place of suffering worse than anything experienced on earth, but an eternity of it with no hope no possibility of escape. Jesus is right to say, “**Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell**.” Fear God.

But the Gospel is this, your suffering is temporary, and not only that, once the end has come you have in store for you an eternal treasure of endless joy with God and all the saints in paradise. **Jesus Christ sacrificed himself for you, just as he has called you to do for him, only there’s one big difference**. Your death saves no one because it’s no more than what we deserve; but when Jesus died an undeserved death, his precious blood bought for you an imperishable treasure in heaven that moth and rust cannot destroy. And though you cannot access the full measure of that treasure here and now it is yours by right through the adoption into God’s sonship through faith.

Right now you probably have money in a savings account that you hope to spend one day. That money is doing you no good as you sit here right now except for the comfort in knowing it’s there, ready for the time that you will use it. But the truth is, the banking system could collapse, the market could collapse and all that savings gone one unexpected morning. But your treasure in heaven stays there. You cannot squander it in your sin. You cannot fail to invest it rightly. It’s there in trust with God. You cannot lose it except if you deny it. And while no one would deny an inheritance of treasure per se, this inheritance is a person, Jesus Christ. Just as you cannot access your account from a different bank, so too you cannot access your heavenly treasure from a different Christ. But you who know who your savior is, the salvation he won is yours, and will be delivered to you on the last day. In the meantime endure the cross, knowing that neither life nor death, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor death nor persecution nor slander anything else in all creation can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.