

“Not So Great Expectations”

Luke 19:37-48

Series: *Cliff Notes Week 12. Jesus Final Week*

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Expectations. We all have them. We can't live without them. Some are routine and unerring: you expect the sun to come up in the morning. Some are unpredictable: you expect the trains to run on time or to get a good grade on your test. Some are unlikely: You expect your children to do their homework and chores without being asked (Good luck with that one!) You expect your parents to let you play video games all night (Dream on kids). Expectations focus on the future. Expectations are filled with dreams and possibilities.

Yet expectations can cause trouble - especially in marriage. Here are expectations a husband gave his wife to salvage their rocky marriage.

CONDITIONS

- A. You will make sure:
 - 1. that my clothes and laundry are kept in good order;
 - 2. that I will receive my three meals regularly *in my room*;
 - 3. that my bedroom and study are kept neat, and especially that my desk is left for *my use only*.
- B. You will renounce all personal relations with me insofar as they are not completely necessary for social reasons. Specifically, You will forego:
 - 1. my sitting at home with you;
 - 2. my going out or travelling with you.
- C. You will obey the following points in your relations with me:
 - 1. you will not expect any intimacy from me, nor will you reproach me in any way;
 - 2. you will stop talking to me if I request it;
 - 3. you will leave my bedroom or study immediately without protest if I request it.
- D. You will undertake not to belittle me in front of our children, either through words or behavior.¹

These conditions were given to Mileva Maric by her husband Albert Einstein. For the sake of their children she accepted them. Yet they are so ludicrous a few months later she left Einstein taking her sons to Zurich. They officially divorced five years later on Valentine's Day 1919. Einstein brilliantly discovered the formula for relativity but he failed to find the formula for how to relate with his wife and children.

Why are expectations so tricky and troublesome? They set us up for discouragement and disappointment when they don't come true. One friend of mine says,

¹ Einstein: His Life and Universe

“Expectations are pre-meditated resentments.” We get mad when they are not met. Why? Expectations are what we impose on people, places or things. We put pressure on others to perform according to our specifications. They put pressure on us through their expectations. Sometimes we meet or exceed expectations. Too often we or they fall short.

We even put expectations on God. What’s the main reason we lose faith in God, Jesus or the Church? Dashed expectations. “God, why didn’t I get the job I wanted?” “Why didn’t I get into the college of my choice?” “Why can’t I find someone to love me?” “Lord I prayed for healing and it didn’t happen.” “Jesus, I expected your Church to be holy and helpful not full of hypocrisy.”

Maybe, during our Cliff Notes tour of the Life of Jesus, you’ve been feeling a little disappointed. You long to follow Jesus and be more like Him, but you keep falling short. You want to believe you are God’s Beloved but you have your doubts. You try to keep your eyes fixed on Him but then the storms of life rise and you start to sink. You know Jesus is the Son of God, the only one to follow, but you are frequently distracted by the world. You feel it’s important to share the Good News about Jesus with your neighbors and network, but you’re afraid of their reaction.

I know it’s hard to follow Him. Some years ago I tried to deny myself, take up my cross and follow Him. What happened? I was crushed by my cross. And that’s what happens when we push our own plans on our own power. How do we escape expectations? Jesus tells us on a mountainside overlooking the holy city of Jerusalem.

Every year Jews are required to celebrate the Passover in Jerusalem. This is the backdrop of Jesus’ final journey. To avoid hostile Samaritan territory, they circle around to the Jordan valley and arrive in Jericho. From here, they make a hot and difficult climb from one of the lowest places on earth to the summit of Jerusalem. The mob of pilgrims swells the closer they ascend to the Holy City. And so does the anticipation. When Jesus mounts the donkey on Palm Sunday and rides to the top of the Mount of Olives overlooking Jerusalem, they have high expectations.

When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen. Luke 19:37

They expect Him to be crowned king in Jerusalem as the Prophet Zechariah promised:

Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your King comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. Zechariah 9:9

Here we see the first type of expectation: **Cheers**. On cue they burst into shouts of praise. Quoting Psalm 118 they cry, “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord” (Psalm 118:26). “Hosanna!” they cry. It means, “Save us!” Their salvation has finally come. What kind of salvation does He bring? Salvation from the oppressive Romans? Salvation from the corrupt priests and the ruling council? Salvation from poverty and slavery? Salvation from their sins, from death itself? All of the above. They

want it all. They shout for Jesus to turn everything upside down, to topple all the corrupt, cruel tyrants. They want revolution.

Why does the mob think Jesus will overthrow everyone? The miracles prove God is on His side. What's more they remember how two hundred years earlier a band of brothers named the Maccabees successfully drove a superior Greek army out of Jerusalem, cleansed the Temple and created an independent country ruled by Jews for a hundred years. This victory is the celebration of Hanukkah. They are cheering for God to bring His Kingdom again and this time it will last not for a century but an eternity, not just in Judea but to the ends of the earth.

What's wrong with cheering for our expectations? When I push my agenda I may gain some traction but it can quickly turn to tragedy. I'm going to clash with your plans and maybe crash. The cheering mobs probably forget the Maccabees eventually became corrupt just like the Greeks they drove out. What agenda are you pushing? In what way are you trying to get your way? Be honest with yourself. All you have to do is look at the most current conflict or argument occupying your mind. What would happen if you let go and asked God to give you His peace in this situation?

The second expectation on this day is **Fears**. The citizens inside Jerusalem are frightened by this boisterous mob outside Jerusalem.

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, "Who is this?" Matthew 21:10

The word "stirred" means agitated, shaking, quaking, trembling with fear. Remember, Jesus and His unruly rabble are not from the Judean homeland. They're from Galilee, that frontier on the northern border filled with dirty Gentiles and dangerous theology. The residents of Jerusalem don't know Jesus very well and have no reason to trust Him. They remember how in AD 6 another leader from up in Galilee named Judah raised an army, resisted the Romans, and refused to pay taxes. His revolution was brutally put down leading to countless deaths. That kind of change they can do without.

What change is coming on the horizon and causing you to fear? Perhaps you're in the middle of it right now. You expect things to stay the same, status quo. Then some person stirs the pot. What transition is causing you to tremble? What would happen if you let go and asked God to give you His peace in this situation?

The third expectation involves **Sneers**. Afraid the cries of the mob will bring a bloody crackdown, the Pharisees tell Jesus to silence His disciples.

Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!" Luke 19:39

Jesus doesn't comply. He turns over the tables in the Temple and teaches there.

Every day he was teaching at the temple. But the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the leaders among the people were trying to kill him. Yet they could not find any way to do it, because all the people hung on his words. Luke 19:47-48

In the first century, a few powerful priestly families control the highly coveted role of High Priest by pleasing the Roman Governor. At Passover, the Roman Governor Pilate is in Jerusalem to oversee crowd control. Roman soldiers patrol the outer walls of the Temple and keep a watchful eye on any commotion. An unholy alliance between politics and religion keeps the people under control and the chief priests and leaders in power.

Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin. “What are we accomplishing?” they asked. “Here is this man performing many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our temple and our nation.” Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, “You know nothing at all! You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish.” John 11:47-50

Human history is largely the story of powerful people trying to keep control over others. We judge others and develop prejudice against those we fear will take control. It’s such a strong drive in our species that even when God shows up to take back rightful control we kill Him. This is a weakness for all of us. Who do you judge? What are you trying to manage? Who are you trying to control? What would happen if you let go and asked God to give you His peace in this situation?

The fourth expectation is **Tears** and it comes, from of all people, Jesus. At the moment of triumph, with palms waving and multitudes singing, what does Jesus do? He weeps. He wails. He mourns. He loudly laments. That’s one way to rain on their parade.

I’m sure the disciples are baffled. Three years of miracles, the fulfillment of countless prophecies, the swelling momentum of multitudes marching with Him from the hills of Galilee to the gates of Jerusalem, expecting the final, long-awaited victory of God over all their enemies...and now this? Tears? Conquerors don’t cry. On the eve of His victory why is the Savior sobbing? He can see what they can’t – namely – the future.

As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, “If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God’s coming to you.” Luke 19:41-44

During its long history, Jerusalem has been besieged 23 times, attacked 52 times, captured and recaptured 44 times and utterly destroyed twice. From heaven, the Son of God sees all this. He witnessed Jerusalem attacked by the Assyrian, sacked by the Babylonians, corrupted by the Greeks, conquered by the Romans. Every time it is a

bloodbath. The crowds expect triumph. Jesus knows it will be torn down. The multitudes want an empire. Within forty years Jesus knows Jerusalem will be laid waste and empty. During the First Jewish Revolt in AD 70 the Romans will burn down the Temple. During the Second Jewish Revolt in AD 135 they will level the city. Today, you can still dig in the dirt and find the layer of charred scorched earth they left.

This is why when Jesus cries over Jerusalem, it's a gut-wrenching, shoulder-shaking sorrow. It's the anguish of a parent whose child is out of control, the agony of a spouse who tried everything to save the marriage, it's that shattered feeling when you say goodbye as they close the casket. That's how Jesus grieves for Jerusalem.

Are you depressed over the collapse of your plans and dreams? You never expected your career, your marriage, your family, your life would turn out like this. Most times you can handle it. But in your private moments, you just grieve. What would happen if you let go and asked God to give you His peace?

Does this mean Jesus has expectations for us? After all, He never wanted us to sin, rebel, kill or destroy. He longs for us to run to Him not run and hide from Him. If expectations demand an outcome from people, place or things, if expectations try to control the results, then I say no – Jesus does not have expectations. Jesus has hope. Hope doesn't demand an outcome, it doesn't require a result. When expectations are dashed, we fall into disappointment. But

Hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. Romans 5:5

The Holy Spirit's love takes the place of disappointment when we let go of expectations and hold on to Hope. Expectations trust in our plans. Hope trusts in God's plan.

There is a little chapel on the Mount of Olives which offers a breathtaking view of Jerusalem. It's called Dominus Flevit. It means "The Lord Wept." It remembers the tears of Jesus for a city that loved its own expectations more than God's plan. A short distance away, at the bottom of the Mount of Olives is another sacred spot – a church beside a garden of ancient olive trees called Gethsemane. Here, Jesus prayed a prayer of Hope – "Not my will, but yours be done."

Let go of your expectations. Hold on to Hope. Stop imposing your plans on people, places and things. Receive God's peace.