

## Expect the Best

Luke 6:12-16 NIV

Often, we talk about how we should expect the best from God. God loves us and “*in all things God works for the good of those who love him*” (Romans 8:28). Yes, we talk about how we should expect the best from God. Yet, we don’t talk very often about God expecting the best from us.

At times, we say that God expects the best from us and what we mean by that is we should give God the best. I totally agree with the idea of giving God the best: the best of our time, resources, efforts, attention, etc. We should give God the best at all times.

However, the main focus of the word I want to bring you this morning is about God expecting the best from us not only in what we give, but what we can be. Today, I want to remind all of you that **God expects the best from us, even when we are not fully aware that there is something good and of value within us**. I want to remind you that even when we think we have nothing great to offer, God sees in us the potential that was planted in our core at the time we were created.

The Scriptures we read this morning remind us of this truth.

We read about Gideon and how he was threshing wheat, not in the threshing floor, but in the winepress. You may be thinking, “what’s the special thing about threshing wheat in a winepress?”. With such detail, the Bible is telling that Gideon was so afraid of the Midianites that he wanted to hide from the Midianites by changing the place where he worked. The idea is clear, Gideon was full of fear and was avoiding a confrontation with the Midianites.

Nevertheless, the Lord paid a visit to Gideon and the greeting was, “*The Lord is with you, mighty warrior*” (Judges 6:12). I am impressed by such a greeting. Perhaps, Gideon was surprised by the words of the angel of the Lord: *mighty warrior*.

When we first learn about Gideon in this passage, it is obvious that he is far from being a mighty warrior. We can make that affirmation at least from our human perspective. But, the God who knows all things and created Gideon knew something about this man that perhaps Gideon himself had forgotten. So, the Lord came to remind Gideon who he was deep down inside.

Here is one of the things that I see in the story of Gideon. When Gideon thought he lacked valor, God came to his rescue to let him know that he had been fashioned to be a strong fighter, not a scaredy-cat. God came to let Gideon know that even though he saw himself as a victim of the meanness of the Midianites, God had a different take on the situation. God saw Gideon as a victor, not a victim.

I see this happening throughout the Biblical narrative. For instance, the story of Zacchaeus. When people saw a traitor, deceitful, greedy person in Zacchaeus, Jesus saw more than that. Jesus saw in the little man a son of Abraham, a person with a genuine desire and the willingness to change. Jesus saw in Zacchaeus the potential that most people could not recognize. Jesus saw the great prospect Zacchaeus was. Jesus knew what Zacchaeus might become by the Grace of God. **God sees and expects our best!!!**

The same happened with the disciples Jesus called. The Lord Jesus not only saw impulsive and emotional people with temper issues. The Lord Jesus not only saw the doubts, the fears, and the bias the disciples store in their hearts. Jesus saw in his disciples world changers. Jesus saw in his disciples diamonds in the rough ready to be refined by the Grace of God.

I love the story of Jesus' first encounter with Nathanael. The Master was on his way to Galilee when he called Phillip to be a follower. Phillip was so excited that he could not keep the news to himself, and then extended the invitation to Nathanael, "*Come, we have found the one Moses and the prophets wrote about*" (John 1:45).

Everything seemed to be going well, until the place of origin of Jesus was mentioned. The one that was announced by Moses and the prophets came from Nazareth. Phillip had an encounter with Jesus of Nazareth and was inviting Nathanael to do the same.

Nathanael did not understand. The people from Nazareth were not known for having great achievements. The Nazarenes did not have the greatest reputation in the country. So, with great confusion Nathanael asked, "*Can anything good come from Nazareth?*" (John 1:47).

What I like about the passage is not the skeptical exclamation, the biased comment of Nathanael. What I like about this account is what Jesus said about Nathanael, even after the insensitive comment was pronounced. When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "*Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit*" (John 1:47).

I hope you see through these accounts that indeed, **God sees and expects our best!!!**

The examples are many throughout the Bible. We have looked at some of them the last couple of weeks. When Jeremiah thought he was too inexperienced, God saw in him a world-class prophet (Jeremiah 1:5). God said to Jeremiah, "*Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart... Do not say, 'I am too young.'... I have put my words in your mouth. <sup>10</sup> ...Today, I appoint you over nations and kingdoms...*"

When David was overlooked by his family, when not a single person in the household remembered to call the shepherd boy so he could meet the prophet who was anointing the next king of Israel, when his family thought that he was only good for tending sheep, the least important among the brothers, God saw in David a king, a man after God's own heart.

Mary Magdalene was considered demon possessed, but Jesus saw in her the loyalty of a faithful disciple. Paul was a terrorist, but Jesus saw in him an extraordinary love and passion for God. God sees the best in us, our potential, what we can become by the Grace of God.

I am so grateful that God sees our best, even when we cannot recognize it. I am so thankful that God reminds us who we are, especially during times when there are so many competing voices trying to form our identity. I am so glad that **God's version of who we are is much better than we can imagine**. God sees and expects our best. That's awesome news.

This wonderful news has practical implications in life. As people who are called to emulate Christ, as people who are striving to resemble more and more the image of God in a broken world, we are called to do as God does. This wonderful news, of God seeing and expecting our best, is a source of comfort. But, it should also be a source of inspiration for us to do likewise.

God not only sees and expects our best. God calls us to be our best, and that means we should expect the best from others.

The story is told of a guy who was driving out in the country on a dark, rainy night when all of a sudden, he got a flat tire on a lonely road. This person got out of the car, looked for his spare tire, and then noticed that he did not have a lug wrench. Seeing a nearby farmhouse, he set out on foot.

Surely the farmer would have a lug wrench, he thought. But would he even come to the door? And if he did, he'd probably be furious at being bothered. He'd say, "What's the big idea getting me out of bed in the middle of the night?" This thought made the guy really angry.

Finally, the man reached the house. Frustrated and drenched, he banged on the door. "Who's there?" a voice called out from a window overhead.

"You know good and well who it is," yelled the man, his face red with anger. "It's me! And you can keep your old lug wrench! I wouldn't borrow it even if it were the last one in the country."

It is important that we learn to expect the best from others. When we don't do so, our thinking may lead us to take positions and engage in actions that are not healthy for us or for others. It is important to keep this in mind because our expectations have a way of becoming self-fulfilling prophecies.

Imagine what would have happened if the expectations of the man who had a flat tire would have been positive. As people who are the representative of God on earth, we have to expect the best from others.

When you expect the best from people, you are providing them with an ideal to strive for. When you expect the best from people, you are telling them that:

1. They are more than their current situation.
2. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, they have the capacity to do what is right.
3. They can rise above the shadows that attempt obscure the future God intends for all of us.
4. Through God's grace, they can achieve greatness
5. You are pulling them up, so they can reach new heights.

The American lecturer, philosopher and poet, Ralph Waldo Emerson put it this way, "*Great things are achieved by those from whom great things are expected.*"

Listen to the end of the story of Gideon. Because of the words of the angel of the Lord, Gideon, who was hiding because of fear, was filled with courage. Gideon went from victim to victor.

Here is something I learn from the story of Gideon. Seeing and expecting the best from people can be what will inspire them to walk the path to victory. As the people of God, I invite you to see and expect the best from others. I invite you to bring an encouraging greeting to those in need.

- Say to those who are weak, rise up, you who are strong; the Lord is with you.

- Say to those who are disheartened, the Lord has plans to prosper you... plans to give you a hope and a future... Be confident in the Lord...
- Say to those who think they have nothing to contribute, the Lord is with you and you are equipped with unique gifts and talents.
- Say to those who are under the shackles of addiction, the Lord is soaking you with Grace, and that Grace enables you to “say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passion, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age (Titus 2:12). God’s grace is enough...

Expect the best from others as God expects the best from you. Jesus always looked for the best in a person. In Zacchaeus, Mary Magdalene, Peter, James, and John, Jesus saw not only who they were, but who they might become by the grace of God. You can do the same.

You have heard the word... now, you are called to be a doer of the word...

May God add a blessing to the hearing of his Word...