

“Life Changing Expectations!”—Matthew 21:8-11

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Life Changing Expectations!”, is Matthew 21:8-11 → *Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. And the crowds that went before Him and that followed Him were shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” And when He entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, “Who is this?” And the crowds said, “This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee.”* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

Expectations—those hopes and desires we have in our lives and relationships. People have expectations about everything they do. They may expect their jobs to provide them joy and a comfortable living. Relationships are expected to provide acceptance, love and affection on various levels. They even expect their stuff to serve them properly when they use it and hope that it will make their life better.

What happens when your expectations are not fulfilled? Do anger and resentment show their ugly faces with some kind of pouting? One

of the strongest “let downs” in life happens when we plan, work and wait for a big event to happen only to walk away from the event feeling like it didn’t do for us what we thought it should. We walk away with a feeling of being unfulfilled.

Our text records a joyous event taking place in the lives of God’s people in Jerusalem. It was an event filled with great life changing expectations on the part of many people, all of which were bound up in one person—Jesus.

As Jesus prepared to enter Jerusalem on that first Palm Sunday He too was fulfilling some expectations as revealed in the details of His preparations. He instructed His disciples to acquire the necessary transportation for this entrance into Jerusalem—a donkey. Why would He need a donkey? To fulfill some expectations, of course.

Jesus had entered Jerusalem many times during His earthly ministry. However, this time was different. This time He was going to enter in a very specific manner to fulfill God’s expectations as prophesied in Zechariah 9:9 → *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is He, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.*

While they rejoiced greatly and shouted aloud, hailing Jesus as *the Son of David . . . Who comes in the name of the Lord*, verse 11 records

*the crowds referring to Him as Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee. They even expected Him to save them as they cried out Hosanna, the Hebrew plea for divine help, salvation and deliverance. Their description of Jesus as the prophet come to save them harkens back to what the LORD had told Moses in Deuteronomy 18:18 → I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him.*

It was time for Jesus to reveal Himself as the fulfillment of these “expectations” (i.e. God’s prophecies), bringing about God’s greatest deliverance in their lives—a deliverance for which many in faith had awaited with much anticipation! When Jesus intentionally rode into Jerusalem on this donkey these people had reason for such great expectations of Him since He was telling them **by His actions** that He was their promised King and Deliverer—their Messiah.

Picture yourself as a citizen of a nation whose freedoms are being repressed as a result of another nation’s rule of tyranny. If you can’t imagine such a picture because you enjoy the freedoms which exist in your context, picture your freedoms being threaten or possibly taken away by another nation. Would you be greatly concerned? Would you have great expectations of your governmental leaders to protect your freedoms? If a leader arose claiming to be your savior in such a situation

wouldn't you have great life changing expectations for his coming into power, especially if you were already being oppressed by that other nation? Absolutely!

These types of life changing expectations are present in our context as well, such as when an election takes place in our own country. People have expectations for their candidates to make their lives better economically and environmentally; to make their lives a safer place to live by properly dealing with crime; to take care of the people of their nation through various programs; to bring war on all levels to an end; and so forth. Many times we too bind up all these expectations for better changes in our lives into one person, much the same way as the people of Jesus' day had done with Him.

With such life changing expectations at stake, is it any wonder that the people responded to Jesus' coming into Jerusalem as they did? They gave Jesus a king's procession by spreading *their cloaks on the road*, as well as cutting *branches from the trees and spreading them on the road . . . shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"*

Knowing the nationalistic concepts of His disciples' expectations to *restore the kingdom to Israel* (cf. Acts 1:6), it is very likely that their life changing expectations of Jesus were simply earthly. Was He going to be the One sent by God to overthrow the Roman government, restore the

Promised Land to them and establish them as God's nation once again?

Yet, just five days later Jesus was crucified **for being their king!** What happened? Could it be that Jesus did not fulfill their life changing expectations in the way they had hoped? This had happened many times during Jesus' three year earthly ministry. One time His teaching was so difficult to "swallow" that *many of His disciples . . . said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?" . . . After this many of His disciples turned back and no longer walked with Him.* (cf. John 6:60,66) Could it be during that first Holy Week that Jesus didn't fulfill their expectations and change their lives in the way they wanted them changed so they ended up rejecting Him?

Many people still have life changing expectations of Jesus such as: making their context a better place in which to live with the absence of anger, stress, depression and unhappiness; expecting Him to relieve their pain and keep suffering away from them; expecting Him to always grant physical healing; expecting Him to make them more prosperous and financially "secure." Likewise, many walk away blaming, accusing and even rejecting Jesus because their physical expectations were not fulfilled to their satisfaction. Unfortunately, we sinners have life changing expectations which we place before Jesus **on our own terms**. God warns us in 1 Corinthians 15:19 → ***if in this life only** we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.*

Jesus did not come to take away the physical struggles in your life.

**Rather, He comes with His own life changing expectations and enters into those struggles with you!** Whatever those people on that first Palm Sunday may have been expecting with their prayer of *Hosanna in the highest!*, they would experience in Yahweh's salvation in **His** way, by **His** power, according to **His** plan. Whatever you are expecting the LORD to do for you this first Palm Sunday in your prayer of *Hosanna in the highest!*, you will experience in **His** way, by **His** power, according to **His** plan of salvation for you through faith in Christ Jesus.

We can experience the spiritual life changing power of the LORD everyday! Why? Because Jesus did not give in to fulfilling human expectations but remained faithful to fulfilling the LORD's expectations for our lives to be changed eternally! Thus, you need not fall into the trap of defining your relationship with Jesus based upon how you interpret your life in the midst of your "world" with all its struggles in the presence of sin. As you come to Jesus in humble repentance and faith you submit to Him, expecting the Holy Spirit to empower you to live in the midst of your "world" as He enters your life everyday through His written Word (i.e. the Bible) and His Sacraments. This spiritual renewal will affect your relationships, the fulfillment of your vocations in life and your expectation in the certain hope to eternal life with Jesus! Amen.

*So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away,  
our inner nature is being renewed day by day.*

*For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us  
an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,  
as we look not to the things that are seen  
but to the things that are unseen.*

*For the things that are seen are transient,  
but the things that are unseen are eternal.*

(2 Corinthians 4:16-18)