



JESUS OF NAZARETH

EXPERIENCE & EXPECTATIONS

MATTHEW 11:1-30

5-17-20

All = bold sections – read together

Leader = regular font – leader reads (choose or rotate leaders)

Sung together = italics

NOTE: Please have a white candle ready to light. We will continue to light the candle until we meet again.

Reflect

You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in you.

— St. Augustine

Rest and be thankful.

— William Wordsworth

Welcome

Good morning! Whatever you may be experiencing this morning, may you turn your eyes to Jesus now.

May the love and joy of the Father, the grace and peace of the Son and the courage and comfort of the Holy Spirit be ours in abundance. Amen.

Candle Lighting – Light the candle again this week as a reminder that Jesus is the Light of the world!

Call to be the Church: Acts 2:42-47

“And” is a conjunction that links words and phrases together. Notice the repetitive use of this word:

And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.

And all who believed were together and had all things in common.

And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.

And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people.

And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Why is the word “and” important to understand what it means to “do church” based on these verses?

Song: Holy, Holy, Holy -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AgHrNNM23p8>

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!

Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee.

Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty!

God in three persons blessed Trinity!

Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness hide thee.

Though the eye of sinful man thy glory may not see

Only Thou art holy. There is none beside Thee.

Perfect in power, in love and purity.



*Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
All thy works shall praise Thy name in earth and sky and sea
Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty!
God in three persons blessed Trinity!*

Psalm of Praise: Psalm 136

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.

Give thanks to the God of gods, for his steadfast love endures forever.

Give thanks to the Lord of lords, for his steadfast love endures forever;

to him who alone does great wonders, for his steadfast love endures forever;

to him who by understanding made the heavens, for his steadfast love endures forever;

to him who spread out the earth above the waters, for his steadfast love endures forever;

to him who made the great lights, for his steadfast love endures forever;

the sun to rule over the day, for his steadfast love endures forever;

the moon and stars to rule over the night, for his steadfast love endures forever;

to him who struck down the firstborn of Egypt, for his steadfast love endures forever;

and brought Israel out from among them, for his steadfast love endures forever;

with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, for his steadfast love endures forever;

to him who divided the Red Sea in two, for his steadfast love endures forever;

and made Israel pass through the midst of it, for his steadfast love endures forever;

but overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea, for his steadfast love endures forever;

to him who led his people through the wilderness, for his steadfast love endures forever;

to him who struck down great kings, for his steadfast love endures forever;

and killed mighty kings, for his steadfast love endures forever;

Sihon, king of the Amorites, for his steadfast love endures forever;

and Og, king of Bashan, for his steadfast love endures forever;

and gave their land as a heritage, for his steadfast love endures forever;

a heritage to Israel his servant, for his steadfast love endures forever.

It is he who remembered us in our low estate, for his steadfast love endures forever;

and rescued us from our foes, for his steadfast love endures forever;

he who gives food to all flesh, for his steadfast love endures forever.

Give thanks to the God of heaven, for his steadfast love endures forever.

Song: Psalm 136 (Your Mercy Endures) -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KvNzt9jOMzE>

Give thanks to the Lord for He is good, He is good, good.

Give thanks to the Lord for He is good, He is good, good, good.

Your mercy endures forever and ever, Your mercy endures.



*To Him who alone does great wonders, does great wonders be praise.
To Him who spread out the earth upon the waters, the earth upon the waters we say.
Your Mercy endures forever and ever. Your Mercy endures.
Your Mercy endures forever and ever. Your Mercy endures.
God of Gods and Lord of Lords, Your mercy endures, Your mercy endures.
God of Gods and Lord of Lords, Your mercy endures, Your mercy endures.
Give thanks to the Lord for He is good, He is good, good.
Give thanks to the Lord for He is good, He is good, good, good.
Your Mercy endures forever and ever. Your Mercy endures.
Your Mercy endures forever and ever. Your Mercy endures.
God of Gods and Lord of Lords, Your mercy endures, Your mercy endures.
God of Gods and Lord of Lords, Your mercy endures, Your mercy endures.*

Song: In Christ Alone -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gMixnWehee0>

*In Christ alone my hope is found, He is my light, my strength, my song.
This Cornerstone, this solid ground, firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace; when fears are stilled, when strivings cease.
My Comforter, my All in All; here in the love of Christ I stand.
There in the ground His body lay, Light of the world by darkness slain:
Then bursting forth in glorious day, up from the grave He rose again!
And as He stands in victory, sin's curse has lost its grip on me,
For I am His and He is mine, bought with the precious blood of Christ.
No guilt in life, no fear in death, this is the power of Christ in me.
From life's first cry to final breath, Jesus commands my destiny.
No power of hell, no scheme of man, can ever pluck me from His hand.
Till He returns or calls me home, here in the power of Christ I'll stand.
I find my strength; I find my hope; I find my help in Christ alone.
When fear assails, when darkness falls, I find my peace in Christ alone.
I give my life; I give my all; I sing this song to Christ alone.
The King of Kings; the Lord of Lords; all heaven sings to Christ Alone.*

Prayer

Heavenly Father, may we who are merely inconvenienced by this pandemic remember those whose life or livelihood are at stake.

May we who have no risk factors remember those most vulnerable.

May we who have the luxury of working from home remember those who must choose between preserving their health or making the rent.

May we who have the flexibility to care for our children when their schools close remember those who have no options.

May we who have to cancel our trips remember those that have no safe place to go.



May we who are losing our margin of money in the tumult of the economic market remember those who have no margin at all.

May we who settle in for a quarantine at home remember those who have no home.

As fear grips our country, let us choose love.

During this time when we cannot physically wrap our arms around each other, let us find ways to be the loving embrace of God to our neighbors.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Offering

We remember that giving is an act of faith, a practice of hope and an expression of love.

(You can give by sending your offering to the church, P.O. Box 217, Oakdale Ca 95361 or consider giving online through your bank. Our deacons can help you with this if necessary.)

Youth Celebration

As we enter into the latter part of May, we are reminded of how Covid-19 has impacted our youth. This week, we lament the loss of activities our youth normally had the opportunity to participate in -- from sports to ag shows to arts performances and more. The frustrations and disappointments can run deep as many expectations were not met. Next week, we will acknowledge all those who are graduating without a proper graduation.

Our youth are important to CCRC because of their presence and active participation. Over the next several weeks, we will celebrate one particular way they powerfully contribute to our community to help nurture and shape our discipleship culture. (Adapted from Shane Stacey)

The Gift of Passion: The raw, idealistic passion of adolescents is a gift to the body of Christ that pushes adults beyond comfort and cynicism. Youth keep the church fresh. They ask why and push beyond the status quo. In her book, Practicing Passion, Kenda Creasy Dean said,

Youth are wired for passion. They are looking for something worth dying for knowing that therein they will find something worth living for...and yet all too often we give them pizza.

Youth are wired for passion and willing to abandon even good things for something they believe will give them meaning, purpose, love or pleasure. We've all seen a young person abandon lifelong friendships to pursue a new romantic relationship. Or, the teen throws away the trust and love of their parents to pursue the momentary pleasures of a drug fix. Or, a young athlete who pours everything into their sport because in it they find purpose and value. They are looking for a love that will satisfy their greatest longings. When youth, therefore, genuinely encounter the living Christ, they are often unstoppable. I'm sure we can all tell stories of students whose expressions of faith inspired our own.

The unbridled zeal of youth is a gift to the body of Christ that challenges us out of our risk aversion, comfortableness and even cynicism.

Scripture Reading: Matthew 11:1-30

We will continue our series from the book of Matthew entitled *Jesus of Nazareth*. In chapter 11 we will encounter Jesus dealing with people's expectations of him. John the Baptist needs reassurance that Jesus is the Messiah and Jesus compares his generation as people who misjudge him (and John the Baptist) based on false expectations of who they were supposed to be and do. He then condemns the cities he

had done the most miracles in for their lack of faith in him and ends with a magnificent promise to his disciples that if they are yoked to him, they would find rest for their souls! Let's pray before engaging with the holy, inspired Word of God.

Heavenly Father, give us humble hearts to receive your good Word and minds with room to receive your truth and wills that desire to seek first your kingdom above all else. May your Holy Spirit in us strengthen our faith, enliven our hope and deepen our love in Christ. Amen.

Please read Matthew 11:1-30

Gospel Message: Experience & Expectations

Expectations. We all have them; of ourselves and others. We can't live without them but we can manage them. And manage them well we must for false or unrealistic expectations are the fuel and foundation of frustration, resentment, anger and unbelief.

The comic strip, Hagar the Horrible illustrates this:



His expectation is hot pizza but his experience is cold pizza. They are in conflict. Hagar unrealistically believes that pizza can be delivered hot by a canoe out on the sea! Because of this false expectation, he refuses to tip the delivery guy who paddled all the way out there. The pizza guy is at the receiving end of Hagar's anger for his unmet expectation. When life experiences do not match life expectations, a toxic cloud can descend around our soul. Think silently of unmet expectations you might have for:

- your spouse....
- your children....
- your parents....
- your teachers....
- your students....
- your extended family....
- your neighbors....
- your co-workers....
- your boss....
- your employers....

If the unmet expectation is justified, then grace and mercy and forgiveness are required to navigate the issue. If the unmet expectation was unrealistic or false, then a change by the person holding the expectations is warranted. Our passage in Matthew 11:1-30 focuses on the latter.

In our text, John the Baptist, who is Jesus' slightly older cousin, has been in jail since the beginning of Jesus' ministry of proclaiming the gospel and demonstrating his authority as the Messiah. Apparently,



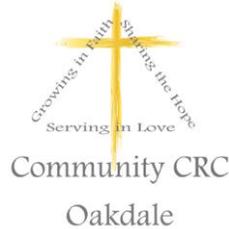
John the Baptist's experience of being in jail was not matching up with his expectation of how Jesus was going to be the Messiah and how that was going to look like and play out. His experience and his expectation were in conflict and he needed reassurance and clarification before a toxic cloud of unrest descended around his soul like Hagar the Horrible. What was the false expectation....

Most Jews at this time, John the Baptist likely included, had developed an unbiblical expectation of the Messiah. They believed that he would become a powerful, political king and restore the nation of Israel to its former glory by defeating Rome and re-establishing Israel's global influence and dominance like King David. They were wrong. It was a false expectation. But not completely. They had part of it right. Jesus would be king over Israel, but this Israel would be identified by faith in Jesus of Nazareth and not by being a Jew (Romans 9:6-8). And, while it was true his kingdom had been inaugurated with his arrival, it would not be fulfilled until he comes again to judge the living and the dead forever. **What was not part of their current expectation was for the Messiah to be a servant king who would suffer and be crucified. They expected life to get better when the Messiah arrived.** This was the false expectation. How does suffering and struggle fit in with your expectations of being a Christian?

John the Baptist's question to Jesus asking if he was the one they are to expect or should they expect another is telling. It shows that when our experiences do not match up with our expectations, a cloud of doubt descends. I (pastor Chuck) grew up with an unbiblical expectation that God was like a police office who followed me around all day looking to bust me when I did something wrong. This was usually in the form of having a bad game in sports, bad grade in class or someone being mad at me. My expectation of God was that for every sin I committed, an equal or worse punishment would follow in the next 24 hours. Many times, I could match this expectation with the experiences of my life but sometimes I could not. Not surprisingly, this led to a lot of unnecessary doubts, frustrations, anxiety and anger about me as a disciple and about God himself. Take some time to talk about unbiblical expectations that people (including people who call themselves Christian) might have of God, Jesus and Christianity in general and how they conflict with experiences in life.

Maybe you came up with a few of these.... Some people may think of God like Santa Clause; if they are good, God will reward them with the things and experiences they want in life (and keep them from experiencing the things they do not want). Some may think of God like a boss in which they work to earn a wage – Do your job and you will be rewarded. Or, others may think of him like a handyman and expect him to fix things in your life or maybe like an employee who will serve and do what you want him to do or be who you want him to be. Like Hagar the Horrible we may get angry or like John the Baptist, doubtful when our life experiences don't end up matching these unbiblical expectations. What happens when things do not get fixed but get worse? What happens when I don't get the things in my life that I want? What happens when I work hard to obey but never get the fattened calf cooked up at a party for me (think elder brother here)? What happens when I am "good" and I get cancer, or my children don't follow Jesus or I get fired or friends turn their back on me? (all rhetorical questions – this next one is not). How have your experiences of God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) lined up with your expectations of him?

Jesus reassures John the Baptist that he is the one they are to expect by quoting Isaiah 61:1-2. The authoritative demonstration of Jesus as the Messiah King of Israel was through serving others by healing, raising the dead and proclaiming the good news ... just like the Old Testament declared. It was not through a political power grab for re-establishing the nation Israel and overthrowing other empires



through violence like King David did. It's important to recognize that Jesus used scripture to reassure and remind John the Baptist of what the Messiah was to be like. How important is it to read our Bibles so that we might know God and what we can realistically expect from him now and when he comes again? Include the wisdom of Romans 12:2 in your discussion.

Romans 12:2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

When false expectations are experientially challenged or negated, they will inevitably create a crisis of conflict. Something will have to give. Either the false expectation or the belief in the one the expectation rests will need to be changed. John the Baptist could choose to either re-adjust his expectations of the Messiah to include his imprisonment and a physically worse life or continue to doubt and possibly reject Jesus as the Messiah. Unfortunately, many change their view of God to an unbiblical one instead of being transformed by the renewal of their mind with the truth of God's Word. The choice was his then and the choice is ours today. Notice what John the Baptist does. He asks Jesus himself (or rather sends some people to ask for him since he is in prison). There is a principle here.

When our expectations of God and the Christian life are confronted by our life experiences, we are to go back to God and his Word to set us straight – either by reassuring us or by correcting us.

Sometimes both. How did John the Baptist need both?

Jesus then turns to the crowds and questions their expectations of John the Baptist. Did the people go out to the desert to see a swaying reed or a man dressed in soft clothing (a reference to someone who is weak or wealthy respectively)? No, they did not. They went out and expected to see a prophet. And Jesus says yes, that is right! But there is more. John the Baptist was not just any prophet, but the greatest because he is the last of the Old Testament prophets and the one the prophets had spoken of as the forerunner to the Messiah. He literally was fulfilled prophecy! Figuratively, he is the prophet Elijah (Malachi 4:5)! Yet, he is least because he only gets to be at the beginning of God's good work through Jesus. Jesus knows John the Baptist will be killed not too long from now by Herod and not witness his death, resurrection, ascension and the sending of the Holy Spirit. Those after John the Baptist are greater than him because they get to be a part of God's creation-altering, life-changing and Holy Spirit empowered Church that becomes the body of Christ on earth today!

Jesus next judges the expectations of his generation as childish kids who get mad when others don't do what they expect them to do. His generation sings and Jesus and John don't dance. They play a dirge and they don't mourn. Jesus and John the Baptist don't act the way they wanted or expected. In fact, John the Baptist came fasting and he is called a demon while Jesus came eating and drinking alcohol and they call him a glutton, a drunkard and a friend of tax collectors and sinners! There was no pleasing them for they were all on the pendulum of lostness that Jesus and John refused to get on. This is our generation too. The gospel confronts both sides and as such is an equal opportunity offender to both! That is why Jesus said earlier, "blessed is the one who is not offended by me." Why? Because the blessed have graciously been removed from the pendulum of lostness and see Jesus for who he is and not how the Jews or the Gentiles thought he ought to be. They have adjusted their earthly expectations to God's kingdom expectations in and through Jesus Christ by the person and power of the Holy Spirit. What side of the pendulum are you rescued from?

Jesus then addresses his comments towards a few cities that many of these people were from: Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum – Jesus' hometown for the three years of his ministry. He makes a



shocking claim that these cities are more blameworthy and guilty than three of the most blameworthy and guilty cities in the Old Testament: Tyre, Sidon (See Isaiah 23 or Ezekiel 28) and Sodom (see Genesis 19 and Ezekiel 16:50). Why? Because the kingdom of heaven was demonstrated by the Son of God in their midst and they shrugged their shoulders and even tried to kill him. Whether they too were expecting a political king to overthrow Caesar is unknown but Jesus is about to drop a bombshell on their expectations of the Messiah and why some people reject him while others receive him.

In verse 25 Jesus declares that God the Father hides his revelation of himself from the wise and understanding but gives it to little children (think: those who have childlike faith, not childish faith). This, Jesus says is the sovereign Father's gracious will and this is something Jesus is thankful for. Jesus then declares that no one knows God the Father but him and those whom he chooses to reveal the Father to. He can reveal the Father to whom he chooses because "all things have been handed over to him" by God the Father and this was his sovereign prerogative to give. Now it is Jesus'. This is divine election and God's gracious will toward his sinful creation. And this massive, mysterious truth is Jesus' set up for one of the greatest expectations we can have of Jesus Christ:

Come to me all who are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly of heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

Is this your expectation and experience of Jesus? Grounded on his sovereignty, Jesus declares that he is gentle and not going to arrogantly interact with them (he will offer healing, grace, mercy and love). He is not the police officer or boss or teacher for whom they or we must work to earn God's favor because we already have it in Christ Jesus. He is the one we are to expect rest in when we are connected with him by grace through faith and not money, not success, not the comforts of this life. Because his gracious, revealing love is the sovereign yoke that unites us with him (a yoke was a wooden object that linked two oxen together to plow a field), there is rest. Why? Because our salvation in Christ is received as a gift, as grace and not earned like a wage, as works. We receive rest in Christ. We receive comfort in Christ. We receive strength in Christ. We receive mercy in Christ. We receive forgiveness in Christ. We receive courage in Christ. We receive our giftedness in Christ. Receiving is far easier than striving to try to produce all this by ourselves; a striving that the Bible says is at best temporary and at worst a lie. May our expectations be grounded in Jesus of Nazareth. May we rest securely in the comfort of his grace, mercy and love so that we might respond in faith. And may we align our expectations of life with the biblical expectations revealed to us in God's eternal Word – both the Bible and Jesus himself.

Bottom Line: When our expectations of God are grounded in the truth of God's holy, inspired Word, only then will our experiences in life match our expectations and we will find the rest our souls crave in Christ.... even when in prison and when the ax falls. (John's death- he isn't saved from prison)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we confess that we too often get our expectations of you not from you or your Word, but from the world and its word. We confess that these expectations are false and not who you are or how you engage with us or the world. You are not Santa Claus, a police officer, a boss, a democrat or a republican. We confess in order to not conform to the false idols of this world but to conform more to the image and likeness of Jesus Christ in whom we find rest for our souls. Amen.

Communion Meditation

Professing: (Apostles Creed)

We believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.



**We believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary,
Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose and ascended to heaven
Where he is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come to judge the living and the dead.
We believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church,
The communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,
The resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.**

Proclaiming (1 Corinthians 11:23b-25) – Paraphrased

On the night of his betrayal, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it saying, "this is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." After the meal he took the cup of wine and pouring it out said, "this wine is my blood, a new covenant of grace poured out for the forgiveness of sins."

How did the crucifixion of Jesus rock the expectations of the Jews?

In whatever life experiences that rock our world today, may we always turn our eyes to Jesus and find our security, our comfort, our hope, our joy, our rest in him.

Song: We Turn Our Eyes -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cfnhy7sT2Wc>

O soul, are you weary and troubled? No light in the darkness you see.

There is light for a look at the Savior and life more abundant and free.

We turn our eyes, we turn our eyes; see the darkness bow to light.

And we will rise, and we will rise; Love has overcome the night.

Through death into life everlasting He passed and we follow Him there.

And over us, sin no more has dominion for more than conquerors we are.

We turn our eyes, we turn our eyes; see the darkness bow to light.

And we will rise, and we will rise; Love has overcome the night!

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.

In the light of His glory and grace!

We turn our eyes, we turn our eyes; see the darkness bow to light.

And we will rise, and we will rise; Love has overcome the night.

His Word shall not fail you, He promised. Believe Him and all will be well.

Then go to a world that is dying; His perfect salvation to tell.

Sending as Disciples of Jesus: Matthew 28:18-20 (Paraphrased)

Jesus of Nazareth grounds our expectations of being a disciple in him and his Word.

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Jesus. Therefore, as we are sent into the world by him, let us make disciples of all, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that Jesus has commanded us. And let us remember and treasure that Jesus is with us always, even to the end of the age. Amen!