

Palm Sunday
Great Expectations

April 17th, 2011

Text - Matthew 21:10

Scripture Reading - Matthew 21:1-11

Have you ever noticed how your expectations of how something will be can cloud your ability to see it clearly, especially if your expectations are high?

- This happens to me *all the time*
 - o Basketball and golf
 - o Going out to eat
 - o Fix it projects
- My mom tells me should lower my expectations ☺

Sometimes your expectations of how something will be can so cloud your vision that you can't see the something at all.

- My winter jacket

Both of these were the case with Jesus when He entered Jerusalem on what we now call Palm Sunday, 2000 years ago.

The Jewish people had been looking for a Messiah or Savior for hundreds of years, a God-appointed leader and ruler like King David before Him who would restore the nation of Israel to its former glory.

- **Isaiah 9:1-7 (ESV)**

¹ But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. ² The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined...⁶ For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷ Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this

time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

- **Isaiah 11:1-12 (ESV)**

¹There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. ²And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. ³And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, ⁴but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. ⁵Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins. ⁶The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them. ⁷The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. ⁸The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. ⁹They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. ¹⁰In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious. ¹¹In that day the Lord will extend his hand yet a second time to recover the remnant that remains of his people, from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Cush, from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the coastlands of the sea. ¹²He will raise a signal for the nations and will assemble the banished of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

The Jewish people were hopeful that Jesus might be the Messiah they'd been longing for, and rightly so.

- You can both see and hear their hope in the “Triumphal Entry” passage we read earlier in Matthew 21.

- o Jesus very deliberately rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, the recognized mount of a king in times of peace, fulfilling the messianic prophecy found in Zechariah 9:9.
 - **Zechariah 9:9 (ESV)**
 - 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.
 - o Most threw their cloaks on the road, which was a symbol of submission to Jesus as king
 - o Others cut branches or palms, which were symbols of Jewish nationalism and victory, and spread them on the ground
 - o They shouted “Hosanna” which means “O save,” and they shouted it “to the Son of David” showing their hope that Jesus was the promised Davidic Messiah.
 - o And finally, the whole city was stirred up, wondering if Jesus might be the Messiah and the crowds recognized Jesus the prophet from Galilee just as it talked about in Isaiah 9:1.
- But the Jewish people’s hope in Jesus went far beyond His riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, being of the bloodline of Judah, Jesse, and David, or having been born in Galilee. Jesus was a prophet, unlike any that had ever been seen before.
 - o His teaching had unprecedented wisdom and authority
 - o His righteousness was unquestionable and His life was blameless
 - o He loved and cared for the hungry, alienated, poor, and oppressed in a way that no one ever had before Him
 - o Massive crowds followed him everywhere He went and were eager to obey Him
 - o And the number and magnitude of the miracles and acts of healing that He performed far outstripped even the great prophets Elijah and Elisha who had come before Him

- Jesus seemed to have everything that the Messiah would need to bring the victory and peace to Israel that they had been promised by God and had so long been hoping for.

But the Jewish people's expectations of their Messiah were so high and so linked to immediate, physical salvation that when Jesus was arrested, tried, and killed on the cross their hopes were dashed, *even though this is exactly what they should have been expecting.*

- **Isaiah 53:3-11 (ESV)**

³ He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. ⁴ Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. ⁵ But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. ⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. ⁷ He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. ⁸ By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? ⁹ And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. ¹⁰ Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. ¹¹ Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.

- **Matthew 20:17-19 (ESV) - Jesus predicts His death for the *third time***

¹⁷ And as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside, and on the way he said to them, ¹⁸ "See, we are going up to Jerusalem. And the Son of Man will be

delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death ¹⁹ and deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day."

Even after His resurrection, many Jews were never able to recover. Their expectations of who they thought the Messiah was supposed to be and what they thought His salvation was supposed to be like so clouded their vision, that they looked right past Jesus and were unable to recognize Him at all.

Unfortunately, the same thing happens all too often today.

- Some people expect Jesus to be only loving and completely tolerant, and so when they find out that He hates sin and refuses to tolerate it, they look right past Him.
- Others expect Jesus to immediately take all their problems away and to make life easy for them, and so when they try following Jesus and all their problems don't go away and their life actually gets even harder, they look right past Him.
- Still others expect that if Jesus really exists He would reveal Himself to them in a way that is absolutely undeniable like a lightning bolt from Heaven or their name written on the clouds, and so when Jesus asks instead that they seek Him with all their heart in things like nature, prayer, and His Word, they look right past Him

But thankfully, this doesn't have to be the case. If, by the grace of God, we are able to adjust our expectations, like Jesus first disciples did, and see Jesus for who He truly is, *He will abundantly exceed even our greatest expectations.*

- Peter, James, John, and the rest had the same expectations of Jesus that all the rest of the Jews did.
 - o They all walked away at the cross
 - o They were slow to believe in His resurrection
 - o They still didn't get the coming of the Kingdom of God *even after spending 40 days with the Risen Lord*

- **Acts 1:1-8 (ESV)**

- ¹In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, ²until the day when he was taken up, after he had given

commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. ³To them he presented himself alive after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. ⁴And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; ⁵for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." ⁶So when they had come together, they asked him, "*Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?*" ⁷He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. ⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

- o It wasn't until receiving the H.S. that they finally got it and flourished
 - The kingdom of God had both come and was coming
- The same can be true of us
 - o If we will adjust our expectations of Jesus and align them with His Word, instead of looking past Him, we will see Him for the treasure that He truly is.
 - o **Ephesians 3:20-21 (ESV)**
²⁰Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, ²¹to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.
 - o **Augustine Quote**