



Reckless Expectations

Shall the Clay Say, "What the Hey?!"

August 31, 2025

Today we're talking about unrealistic, unrighteous, and downright reckless expectations!



So, **when was the last time the Lord disappointed you?** Because, let's face it, He has to sign off on our most *devastating disappointments*. Like at the *Last Supper*, when He said to Simon-Peter:



"Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail." – Luke 22:31-32 NIV



"Wait, he got permission?!" Didn't expect that! When Jesus went home:

They **[who knew Him and loved Him]** took offense at Him. – Mark 6:3 NIV



[So much so, that on His second visit] [They] took Him to the brow of the hill ... to throw Him down the cliff. – Luke 4:29 NIV



Why? Because He was such an *offensive disappointment*. Why? Because **Jesus failed ... to meet their expectations**. They thought He was the *One* to come to conquer the Romans. They couldn't imagine that He came to conquer sin and death! But **His execution will always exceed our expectation**, for the simple reason, that:

[He] can **[and does]** do infinitely more than all we can ask or imagine – Ephesians 3:20 ISV

Which is why **Jesus disappoints so many, so deeply, so often**. Because He refuses to stoop to our subtle assumptions that He'll bless and protect and serve us in certain predetermined ways. But it's never that He's not doing enough. **He's always doing too much ... for us to comprehend**. Because we settle for far too little. And that's a big problem. **"Forget eternity – can you just let it be sunny on Saturday? I'm in a parade."** As Noah wrapped up our Atomic Faith series last Sunday, he said that **expectations shape satisfaction**. And therefore, **joy is relative to developing the right expectations** – or should I say: *righteous expectations*. Because:

The **[rock-solid] hope** of the *righteous* brings **[deep and lasting] joy**, but the **[unrealistic and reckless] expectation** of the *wicked* will perish. – Proverbs 10:28 ESV

Surely you have things *turned around*! Shall the potter be esteemed as the clay ... or shall the thing formed say of Him who formed it, "He has no understanding"? – Isaiah 29:16 NKJ

Woe to him who *strives* with his Maker! **[Because the deadliest expectations are those we place on our Creator]** ... Shall the clay say to him who forms it, "What are you making?" ... **[Well]** Woe to him who says to his Father, "What are you begetting?" – Isaiah 45:9-10 NKJ

Expectations kill all kinds of relationships. Countlessly so. But there's no greater danger than *resting our faith on the fate of reckless expectations* that'll collapse in a *crisis*; whether **death**, or **divorce**, or **addiction**, or **illness**, or **bankruptcy**, or **prison**. Like John the Baptist. He'd been left in the dark in Herod's prison for a couple of years, after proclaiming, that:



After me will come One who is more powerful than I [referring to Malachi 3:1-2 wherein God says He'll send a messenger to prepare the way (that's John), and then the Lord will come like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap!] ... He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. – Matthew 3:7-11 NIV



John had no idea how the Lord would look or act when He came. But I imagine *he* imagined this "god" more than this lamb – even though he was told he'd only know Him when a dove landed on Him. Which is why, when his cousin Jesus came to be baptized, he tried to talk Him out of it. (Mt 3:13-15) Because **He excels in appearing in ways we least expect**. Like normal, everyday life – only, shrewd as a serpent and gentle as a dove. (Mt 10:16) And so, after the dove lands, John starts calling his cousin the *Lamb* of God, and says:



This is the One I meant when I said, "A Man who comes after me has surpassed me because He was before me." [But] I *myself* did not know Him – John 1:30-31 NIV



"I mean, I knew Him – He's my cousin! – but I didn't expect Him to be the One to come!" He *knew Him intimately*, but he didn't even *suspect* Him. *Why?* For one very *profound* reason: **his cousin didn't look or act like God**. Instead, **God looked and acted like his cousin**. And *no one* saw that *One* coming!



[And two years later] John's disciples told him about all these things. [That the One to come was doing – that didn't mesh with what they thought He should and shouldn't be doing] **When John heard in prison what Christ was doing, he sent [two of] them to the Lord to ask, "Are You the One who was to come, or should we expect someone else?"** – Mt 11:2-3; Lk 7:18-19 NIV



Now, **the only time He'll let us down is when we expect Him to be what He isn't or do what He won't**. Have you ever waited for someone to show up, who didn't? How'd you feel? But then you realize you had the wrong day, time, or place? How'd you feel? Well, how often do you think we do this with Jesus? Here's how to tell: **every time He disappoints you, you're doing it**.



I've told you about my UCLA film instructor, James Blakeley (a bigwig at 20th Century Fox) who promised me a VIP pass at the gate to just walk around and study his closed-to-the-public studio. Which led me to the set of MASH, and standing beside the cameraman, and sharing my faith with David Ogden Stiers. But I left out the soul-crushing part. When I drove through the main gate, to the security booth, my name wasn't on their list. And I fumbled to explain. And they said Mr. Blakeley wouldn't allow a student free reign.



And I was holding up traffic. And I needed to make a U-turn and leave. Imagine if that was the *Pearly Gates*! So, I called Mr. Blakeley that evening. He didn't expect me so early. And he apologized and said my name would be at the gate the next morning. And he told me what to say.

A much humbler Wersen went through *that* time! That devastation momentarily knocked the teenage arrogance out of me. Which I needed. And it increased my faith ... when I found out that MASH only filmed one day a week at the studio. So, if I'd had *my* way, I would've missed my dream-come-true without even knowing it. So, in hindsight, I'm so happy I was so disappointed!



But *this* is where our *faith* so often gets *derailed*. Because, **in our disappointment, we feel abandoned**. Cuz we're *confused*. Which is *okay*. Cuz we're only *human*. But, *instead* of *trusting*, and *asking* and *seeking* to *realign* our *narrow mind*, **we all too often abandon Him**. Which *isn't* okay. Cuz it's *only* human. **Faith doesn't trust God to meet our expectations**. That's *Aladdin*. And that's setting our hope way too low. **Faith expects God to do what's right despite our expectations**. And to guide us through it. When my daughter was young, she wanted to go to the Hillcrest Haunted Forest. But once there it was too scary, even if I held her hand. So, she had me to go through while she waited at the exit, so I could tell her about it. But **a secondhand report can't compare to a handheld experience**. And that's what it's like down here. A haunted forest with our Father. And we're like: **"You go through it without me, and we'll meet up at the end?"** Cuz it's distressing and disturbing and confusing. And when people disappoint us, we turn to God. But **where do you go when God lets you down?** *His Word*. Because, as He said through Hosea:

My people are **[needlessly]** *destroyed* **[simply]** *for lack of knowledge*. – Hosea 4:6 NKJ

So, John isn't *accusing* Jesus, he's simply *asking* for *clarity*. Cuz he's *about to be headed* to his *execution*. And he isn't *quitting*, he's *recalibrating* by *asking* about Malachi 3:1-3. Which says:

"I **[the Lord]** will send My messenger, **[John the Baptist]** who will prepare the way before Me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to His temple; **[See? It sounds like there might be more than one who comes. And He doesn't say He then comes "soon", just "suddenly". Like when He suddenly comes to His disciples after His resurrection and scares the wits out of 'em – cuz they didn't expect Him to rise from the dead as He'd said; nor were they aware that we're the temple! (Lk 24:36-37; 2 Cor 6:16)]** the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the Lord Almighty. – Malachi 3:1 NIV

[And] At that very time **[when John's boys came for clarification]** He *cured* many people of *diseases and afflictions and evil spirits*; and He gave *sight* to many who were *blind*. And He answered and said to them, "Go and report to John **what you hear and see**: **[here and now; and]** **what you have seen and heard**: **[in God's Word, in Isaiah 35:3-6, where it confirms]** the *blind receive sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have the Gospel preached to them*. **[And throw in a bit of Isaiah 8, because]** Blessed is *he* who does *not* take *offense at Me*." – Mt 11:4; Lk 7:20-23 NAS

[Because] He *will* be ... a *Stone of stumbling* and a *Rock of offense* – Isaiah 8:14 NKJ

When He *fails to meet* our expectations. So, expect it. **So you're not tripped up by thinking of Him only as Mary's gentle little Lamb**; or His Word only as a love letter. Because, blessed is the one who *doesn't* take offense at what He's actually like. Based on the prophet Malachi's commentary that immediately follows the passage we just read, we need to expand our expectation. Because **Malachi compares the Lord to caustic lye and a blast furnace!**

But who can *endure* the day of His coming? Who can *stand* when He *appears*? [Not the guards at the tomb; they shook and became like dead men. (Mt 28:4) And not Paul on the road to Damascus; he fell to the ground and went blind! (Acts 9:3-9) Because ... *talk about unexpected!* Because, He'll not only be like a lamb] He will be like a *refiner's fire* or a *launderer's* [caustic] *soap*. – Malachi 3:2 NIV

Know why? Well, in part it's because:

He makes ... His *ministers* a *flaming fire*. – Psalm 104:4 ESV

Cleansing [the church] with the *washing* of water by the Word – Ephesians 5:26 NRS

"Does not My Word *burn* like *fire*?" asks the Lord. – Jeremiah 23:29 NLT

[Well] "I have come to bring [My] *fire* on the *earth*" – Luke 12:49 NIV

[So] "Do not *suppose* that I have come to bring *peace* to the *earth*. [That's a *false hope* and a *reckless expectation!*] I did not come to bring *peace*, but a *sword*." – Matthew 10:34 NIV

For the Word of God is ... *sharper* than any double-edged sword, [because] it [stabs and cuts and] penetrates ... [as] it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. – Hebrews 4:12 NIV

"And a Sword [from the Lord] will pierce your very soul." – Luke 2:35 NLT

If you'll allow it to scour and burn away any and all *unrealistic, unrighteous, and downright reckless expectations* hiding in your heart. Because, **so many angrily resist for so long, simply because He fails to meet their expectation, and they fail to seek His explanation.** And they condemn our Creator's actions – or lack thereof – without ever *hearing Him out or attempting to see His side*.

But you know "who *can* stand when He appears" as He actually is, does as only He knows for our eternal best? Those who *lean not* on their own expectations, but unapologetically *trust* in the Lord, come what may! Like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego who faced death and said:



Our God whom we serve is *able to deliver* us from the furnace of *blazing fire*; and He *will deliver* us out of your hand, O king. But *even* if He does not, [deliver us from the furnace] let it be *known* to you, O king, that we are *not* going to serve your [imaginary] gods – Daniel 3:17-18 NAS

Or like Job, who suffered unspeakable pain and loss that made no sense; and yet was able to say:

Though He *slay* me, yet will I *hope* in Him – Job 13:15 NIV

Because **our hope goes way beyond the grave.** Which was, *undoubtedly*, the conclusion of John.