

Date: April 1-2, 2023

Title: *Shattered Expectations*

Scripture: Luke 19:28-44

Speaker: Brady Randall

Well, good morning. I know a lot of us come to this point in the service with some different affirmations. For some, it's like, hey, it's getting time for lunch so make it snappy, preacher. We just heard the best part of the service with the music, so let's get on with it. Others of us are excited to dive into God's Word, and some of us are unsure if this really is the word of God.

But let me encourage you this morning. If this really is the word of God, would you ask that God would speak to where you are today? And I also ask that you would pray for me this morning, that God would give me the words that you need to hear this morning. And would you pray for yourself, that literally this spirit of God would speak to you, change you, and give you eyes to see the beauty of Jesus this morning?

So, would you join me in a word of prayer as we jump into the teaching this morning? Father God, I know that many of us are coming from different places this morning with distractions and hurts. Father, I pray that even in these moments you would remind us that you are a good God, that you are for us, and that you are with us.

Father God, I pray that you would fill me with your Holy Spirit. Help me to speak what you want to be said today in the way that you want it to be said. Father, I pray that every person here this morning would see, receive, respond, and cling to Jesus Christ. God, we invite you, to shatter our expectations for who you are. Be present even in these moments. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.

You probably all heard the words "expect the unexpected" because life is rarely what you expect. It's hard to predict this time of year. Many people who aren't basketball fans become basketball fans, college basketball, and even people who've never heard of basketball players or teams. They fill out a bracket around this time of year.

And what's amazing about these brackets is you can have a diehard fan fill out a bracket, and you can have a grandmother who's never watched a lick of college basketball. And by the time it's all said and done, often time is the grandmother who wins the bracket polls. Well, this last year, this current year, there were over 20 million ESPN ballots cast online for a bracket. And out of 63 games, by the time they got to

game 25, every single bracket was busted. That's it. 20-some million people. No one could predict all the games, not even halfway through the games. And life is a lot like that. It's not what we anticipate or expect, that happens in every walk of life.

I was thinking about several years ago when I had a reservation at a downtown restaurant in Pittsburgh. This was a fancy and expensive restaurant, a five-course meal. And I had high expectations like I was going to get my money's worth, this was going to be awesome. And then I go, the atmosphere was pretty cool. And then I get my salad and it was just some leafy greens and it was okay, the ranch dressing was okay. And then we get to the first course and that wasn't too bad.

By the third course, I got to my chicken. You never can go wrong with chicken so you think. And then it was kind of underwhelming. The night went on, and it was a fine evening. And I thought, wow, that wasn't quite what I expected until it got later that evening. I spent that evening in the emergency room with food poisoning because life is not always what you expect.

I think about this in other walks of life and maybe more serious things like a love that you thought would last a lifetime. It doesn't last. Or you predict that you've got the best job of your dreams, you're sailing along, and it doesn't turn out the way that you hope. Or for those of us with children, we have hopes and plans and dreams of what they'll be like and what they'll do. And then they become teenagers, they get a job, and they do their own thing. And it's not what you anticipated. Life has a way of doing that. It has a way of shattering our expectations.

I was thinking of a man who just retired. He was a close friend of my family. He just retired last year. He and his wife went to Florida just about a month ago. They were going to enjoy the season, and he didn't make it home from Florida. He died right after retirement. You never know. And life has a way of shattering our expectations. And I think sometimes we have similar expectations of God. At least I do.

When I was growing up, I thought God was this kind, in-control benevolent grandfather figure. Like he was really good. He was powerful. But I thought that if I did good things or I kept the commands of God and I read my Bible, God should generally bless me and that my life should go well because I'm doing what God called me to do.

I thought that if I was sinning or I was doing things outside of the commands of God, then generally if things weren't going well, sometimes I thought there was a direct correlation because I wasn't doing what God wanted me to do. Not that God would zap me, but that God would reward me for good behavior and punish me for bad.

And to be sure, there's something of that in the Scriptures. The Bible says that we reap what we sow and that God disciplines those that he loves. And so, there is an element to that, but there's more than that. That's quite below the bar of what God has in his expectations for us. And we have all kinds of expectations and assumptions about God. Like, you know, spiritual life should not be hard. If you really love Jesus and you're on fire for God, then spiritual life should be easy.

And so, the first thing you want to do before you get your cup of coffee is get out of bed, roll onto your knees and say, Lord, I'm waiting to hear from you. I want to read your word. I want to pray for you. And this is going to be awesome. And sometimes maybe it happens like that, but other times spiritual life is hard work.

I think sometimes we have the assumption that if you're a good follower of Jesus Christ and you follow him, then bad things shouldn't happen to you, at least the way they do to other people. I didn't realize that God doesn't always answer prayers the way that I want or think, or in the manner and time that I think he should.

I didn't realize that God doesn't treat everybody the same. He doesn't treat everybody equally. I remember Mike Tomlin several years ago. He was criticized for being a player's coach and he let some people seemingly get away with stuff. One such player was Antonio Brown, who seemed to kind of go off the rails after he went to Pittsburgh. Maybe you said he was off the rails in Pittsburgh, but he was criticized.

He let him get away with certain things and they said, why do you do that? And Mike Tomlin had a line that's always stuck with me. He said, I treat all of my players fairly, but not all of them equally. I think sometimes that's true with God as well.

And I wonder as you're here this morning, are you more or less cynical of God today than you were last year or when you were a child? Because our expectations often shape our experiences, especially as it relates to God and as it relates to Jesus Christ. The way that we think God should be, the way that we think he should act is often different than the way he does.

And this morning in our text, we read about what's called Palm Sunday, where Jesus is entering Jerusalem in the last week of his life, and he knows that he's getting ready to give up his life. And he enters the pomp and circumstance. There are palm branches that are waving. There are people throwing their cloaks to the ground, and they are ready to embrace Jesus as the king to set up his kingdom. And that'll be it.

And like many of us, the crowd and even the disciples were more interested at that time and what Jesus could do for them, rather than what Jesus wanted to do in them, in you and me. And so, I think what happened at that moment is that Jesus shattered our expectations because one of the reasons why you and I sometimes become frustrated with God is because our expectations don't match.

Sometimes in the back of my mind, I think God, isn't the best life, the happiest fulfilling life the most pleasure, and the least amount of pain, which means that's the good life. And yet many of us know that's not the way it often or always works out, and that causes angst and frustration.

And so, this morning in our text, what I want to look at is the five expectations that we have. I think that the crowd has of God and of Jesus and how he reverses those and I would say how he shatters our expectations. I want to invite you, whatever your preconceived notion is of God, that you would let Jesus in this text shatter your expectation of who he is and embrace him for who he is. Because I believe that in so doing that he literally can and will change your life.

And so, here's the first expectation that we see, and that is that people expect a limited knowledge of Jesus rather than someone who was all-knowing. And we read this in verses 30 to 32, Jesus said to his disciples, "Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' say, 'The Lord needs it.'" Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them."

Now Jesus' disciples were blown away at times by what Jesus knew, that there's no way just an ordinary man could know this. For example, he knew that one of his disciples, when he first called his disciples, was under a fig tree before he was even physically present there. Jesus, when he encountered the Samaritan woman at the well, he knew without having met her, without her having met him, that she had five husbands. And the man that she was currently with is not her husband.

Jesus knew what was in people's hearts and their thoughts. Jesus knew what people were thinking before they even said it. He knew who was going to betray him, Judas Iscariot, before he did. Jesus even knew the manner and the timing of his impending death before it happened.

And that begs the question for you and for me. What is your view of Jesus? Do you see Jesus as simply reactionary, he's wherever he is, he's on high, but he's just sort of reacting to day-to-day events that happen in your life and mine, or do you see him as someone who knows everything, including everything about you and me? The good, the bad, and the ugly. Sometimes we don't want to go there. You know, I think sometimes we're upset and we think, man, if you're out there, what are you doing? Do you realize what's going on across the world and in the wars and rumors of wars? And God, you know what's going on with my health and my own life?

But if this text is true, what this means is that God knows every single detail about you and me. And that means that God knows every hair on your head and mine. It means that God knows every single star by name. And not only is he intimately aware of every detail of your life, but he's with you right there in the midst of it.

I want to tell you, that's extremely encouraging, if that's true, that God knows everything about us. But that leads to the second expectation that the people had. And I would say that you and I had of this moment, and that is that we think that Jesus will come in power rather than in humility, to defeat his enemies. And we see this in verses 35 to 38.

You see the Jewish people of that day thought that Jesus was going to come in and he was going to destroy their political enemy. Who are the Romans? The Romans may have been modern-day, like the Russians invading Ukraine, and the Ukrainians are waiting for the day when the leader will come in and wipe out the evil people.

And so, the people thought Jesus was going to come in, in power, destroy the Romans, set up his kingdom, and that would be it. This is pomp and circumstance. They take their palm branches and begin waving them at Jesus. And a palm branch was symbolic of victory and Messiahship. And so, here are the people, they're praising him at the top of their lungs, waving the palm branches, and they are thinking, this is going to be awesome because here comes King Jesus.

It's a good thing that I'm not God and it's a good thing that I'm not Jesus. But if I was coming in, I would've ridden in on a white stallion. But here's how Jesus comes, on a colt, on the foal of a donkey, one of the most humble animals that you can think of. Here comes Jesus riding in on a donkey. And I think that what this shows is that when Jesus comes, he doesn't come first with power, but in humility. That the way of victory is through humility and sacrifice.

Here comes Jesus riding lowly on the donkey. And that is one of those things that say that God operates on his own timeline, and you read in Zachariah 9:9 that this is the way that the prophets predicted Jesus would come, saying that your king comes to you righteous and victorious on the foal of a donkey.

There was a professor named Sian Draycott at Biola University, and he was wondering about Palm Sunday, in the way of God, and he came across this photo of the back of a donkey. What he saw on it was almost the shape of a cross. Now, I don't know if that's intentional. I don't know if that's making too much of what's actually there. But what he said is it showed him the upside-down kingdom of God.

He said that in God's kingdom, the humble are lifted up and the foolish are made wise, and beauty is seen in the eyes of the beholder. When he saw the marking on his back, he said, how majestic, how beautiful is the way of Jesus? So, thinking that God's going to come into power, but in reality, he first comes in humility.

And that leads to the third expectation that the crowd had. And that maybe you and I have as well. The expectation was to praise Jesus for his power and miracles rather than his real mission of conquering sin and death. And we see this in verses 37 and 38, "When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen."

Notice that line, here comes the King, and they begin to praise him. Why? For all the miraculous powers that they had seen. Think about what they had seen just several weeks ago. Jesus had literally taken a dead man and raised him to life. And so, it's like, praise God for that person. Jesus had literally turned water into wine. And many of us say, praise God for that. That's amazing. The people had literally seen Jesus take people who couldn't hear and make them hear. So, praise God for that. Jesus literally took people who were blind and couldn't see and gave them sight.

The people had seen Jesus on a boat. The winds, rain, and waves were rocking the boat, and Jesus only had to speak the words, and the storm was stilled. They had seen Jesus take a hungry crowd of thousands of people with only a few fishes and loaves and feed them miraculously. And so here is Jesus in their midst, this miracle worker. And they're saying, praise God for his power, for what he's about to do.

And I wonder if you and I do something similar in that we often praise God for what he's done, the good things that he's done. Maybe you're here today and you say I was praying for so-and-so to be healed in my family and God healed them either miraculously or through the doctor or through medication. So, I'm praising God for that. Maybe some of you had a cancer diagnosis and you've defeated cancer and you say praise God for that.

Maybe some of you have welcomed new life into your family's life. A newborn child and you're looking at that child, you say, how miraculous. Praise God for that. Maybe some of you are here and you're thanking God for the marriage and the relationships in your life. And you say, thank you, God, where would I be but by the grace of God, so praise God for that.

And if that's been your story and you've seen the power of God or the miraculous of God or the grace of God in your life, that is an awesome time to praise God. And yet what we see in this text and what sometimes happens for us is that their praise was a little bit superficial because they were praising him not so much for who he is, but for what he had done and what he could do for them rather than what he wanted to do in them.

What they didn't realize is that the real reason Jesus came was to conquer sin and death. And you think about all the problems that you and I have, whether it's at work or in our family situations, or whether it's the effects of the coronavirus or the wars or rumors of wars or its school shootings in Nashville or school shootings closer to home, we've got a lot of problems.

But I think what God wants to remind you and me today is that the biggest problem that you and I have is an internal problem. It's a social sickness called sin that's literally decaying and eating us from the inside out. The Bible says that the result and the consequence of sin, yours and mine, is death, physical death, and spiritual death.

You see, the Bible says that God sits in heaven, and he does whatever he pleases, and that God is this holy, powerful God who will not ultimately be in the presence of sin, yours or mine, a little bit or a lot. And that's a major issue because if God is holy and you and I are not, then there's a wide gap and chasm that no one could cross over. And you see, Jesus knew and knows that about you and me.

I'm sure you've heard about the school shooting in Nashville this past week. I don't know if you've seen the body cam video of the police officers. When I watched that, I was blown away because here you got the sirens blowing in the background, there are groups of a couple of different three or four officers, the officers get into the building, and they begin to hear shots fired.

These officers, some of them without shields, some of them without anything to protect them, hear the sound of shots and they began racing up the stairs to the sound of bullets. They don't know what they're going to find when they get up there. They don't know if they're going to kiss their children goodnight anymore. But they begin to race towards the killer, towards the bullets, not knowing what could happen. And when I saw that, I was humbled. I thought, what a hero.

But I want you to think of Jesus who saw the millions of bullets that were going to be fired upon us, upon him. Jesus saw the burning inferno that you and I were headed in, and he raced in, in your place and mine. Jesus' very mission before anything else was that he came to set you and me free from sin and from death.

Jesus willingly and resolutely made His way to the cross. And on the cross of Jesus Christ, what had Jesus sweating drops of blood was not just the physical pain, which I can't even imagine what that would be like, but that he would be nailed to a cross and experience the very wrath of God that was to be poured out on sin, the wrath of the whole world full of sin. That's what Jesus came to do, that he was crucified in your place and mine.

Jesus' promise to you and me, is that if you put your faith and hope in Jesus Christ and you're willing to acknowledge your own sin, believe that Jesus not only defeated sin but rose from the dead, he says, you can have eternal life. Life starts right now, life starts today, in life that never ends. But you see, that was Jesus' ultimate mission, to save you and me from sin and death.

And, you know, it's easy to praise God when everything's going right when the sun is shining. But if the winds are coming like yesterday in the midst of the storm and things aren't going well, it's harder to praise God. I heard a worship leader say this once and it's always stuck out to me. She said there are two times to praise God when you feel like it and when you don't. And that's because God is always worthy of praise, because of who he is, because of what he's done on the cross, and what he promises to one day do in Jesus Christ.

And that leads to our fourth expectation, and that is that people expected Jesus to be mere human when in fact he actually claims to be God. Verse 39, "Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!" Because what they knew was that praise was reserved for God alone. And here is this whole crowd of people. They're bowing down, they're throwing their coats down. They're saying long live the king. And the Pharisees, the religious leaders said rebuke your disciples. Don't you know what these people are doing? And yet they were praising him and they saw this as blasphemous.

I think that many people even today have a misconception of who Jesus is, that he was a good man, he was a good moral teacher, and he did good things, but he wasn't God. I don't know what your view of Jesus is today, and think about all the world religions and how they view Jesus. Hindus revere Jesus as a good man, a holy man, and even a God, but not uniquely God. Buddhists view Jesus as an enlightened man, a good man, and a good moral teacher, but not uniquely God.

Muslims believe that Jesus is to be revered and respected and that he was a wise prophet, but he was not uniquely God. Jewish people believe that he was Mary's son, that he was a carpenter, and that he claimed to be the Messiah, but he was not actually the Messiah and the Son of God. And they're still waiting for him.

And maybe many of us view Jesus similarly that he was a good teacher that had some really good teaching, like "obey the golden rule," but he wasn't. He is not uniquely God. But after the disciples told Jesus, they said, stop your disciples. I love what Jesus says. He looks at them and says, you can tell the people to stop praising me, but if you do that, even the rocks will cry out in praise to me.

And what Jesus was saying is, look, you can shut up people. You can take the praise out of places. But I want to tell you today that you can't stop my praise because that's

the point of the whole universe. That's why the rocks were created. That's why God gave everything breath so that they would praise the Lord.

That's why God uniquely designed you and knit you together in your mother's womb and brought you to this place. That's why you're here in 2023 in western Pennsylvania so that you might, with all of your life, reflect back and praise and respond to all that God is. That's the point of all creation. Other texts and scriptures talk about inanimate objects, praising God like the storms in the wind.

In fact, I read a crazy article this week that said plants actually make a noise. Do any of my botanists know that? I know some of you talk to plants. It's actually a good thing, evidently, because plants make inaudible noise to humans, but they put their sensors and they could hear plants. They think sometimes when they're thirsty or when they want more water, plants make a noise.

But when I read that, I said plants are just praising God. And what that means is that the smallest grain of sand in the deepest part of the ocean, the Mariana Trench, seven miles below sea level or six miles, whatever it is, the reason that's there is to praise God. And that means that the most remote galaxy just at the edge of the known universe is there. Why? To praise God. That's why you're here. That's why we're here. In fact, that's why Orchard Hill exists, to proclaim the mission so that more and more people will come to know how good and awesome this God is so that more and more people will come to praise God. Because that's the point of the whole universe and the Pharisees missed that.

But Jesus undoubtedly claimed Himself to be God. I don't know what your view of Jesus is but C.S. Lewis, who was an atheist and an agnostic before he came to faith, wrote *The Chronicles of Narnia* and *Mere Christianity*. Whatever you think Jesus is, he says you can only make a couple of claims about him.

And this is what he wrote in an essay. He said, "The only person who can say that sort of thing is a megalomaniac if you think that you're God. That you're either God or a complete lunatic suffering from a form of delusion which undermines the whole mind of man. If you think you're a poached egg when you're looking for a piece of toast to sue you, you may be sane, but if you think you are God, there is no chance for you. We may note in passing that he was never regarded as a mere moral teacher. He did not produce that effect on any of the people who actually met him. He produced

mainly three effects hatred, terror, or adoration. There was no trace of people expressing mild approval of Jesus.”

And that leads to the last expectation that the people had of Jesus and what you and I may have as well. They expected words of joy and instead, Jesus brought words of sorrow in verses 41 to 44.

Now I know I'm not Jesus, and that's a really good thing. But if I were Jesus and I were coming into town and the people were singing my praises, I would have thought, that's awesome, and I would have run up to people. I would have got off my donkey, like, see, wasn't this kind of a cool ride? You thought it was something else? Look at my donkey. I would have been high-fiving people like this is awesome. And I would have sat there, and I would have kind of taken it all in.

But you know what Jesus does instead? He weeps. This is a joyous occasion. They were saying, long live the king. In verse 41 he approached Jerusalem, he saw the city, and he wept over it. The word wept there is the strongest term that you can use for heaving and sobbing, and what he's weeping for is their coming judgment. What he's weeping for is the superficiality of their praise, their hypocrisy, their rejection of him.

Verse 42, he says, “If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes.” What had Jesus sobbing is, here he is, he said, I am the one who's come to bring you peace with God, the father, the one who you're longing for. I was right there in your midst. I did everything necessary so that you could have peace with the father. I offered you this gift and you rejected it. I came to bring you salvation, and instead, you're going to receive condemnation. He said I'm in your very midst. So, he began weeping for them.

And I want you to know that if you're here today and you don't yet know Jesus or you're here today, and you have loved ones who don't yet know Jesus, I want you to know that Jesus weeps for you as well. You need to know that it does not delight God that any should perish.

And so here is Jesus in this pomp and circumstance, and he begins to sob and weep because he says now it's hidden from their eyes. Basically, there's a self-imposed blindness that they can't see. The treasure, the one they're looking for is here and they missed him. Then he predicts in verses 43 or 44 the destruction that will happen.

Most commentators believe that this was fulfilled several decades later in 1870 when the Romans came in and destroyed Jerusalem and destroyed the temple. In fact, this is what we read in 43, that the enemies built an embankment, encircled him on every side, and it said they will dash you to the ground. Verse 44, "you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another."

Some people think this is also a reference to the stone that Jesus said that the rocks will cry out. The stones, literally, of the temple have been placed to the ground, and they're crying out in judgment for the people. And why? The end of verse 44, "Because they did not recognize God's coming to you." To me, that's the scariest verse in this passage, because they missed Jesus.

And what that says to me and what it says to you is that you can go to church and you can still miss Jesus. That means that you can serve God and you can still miss Jesus. That means you can even be reading this book and you can still miss Jesus. That means you can give an offering to God and talk about God, but you can still miss Jesus.

And what Jesus wants you and I to know is just like He came 2000 years ago, that Jesus Christ by his Holy Spirit is present even now. And that the same offer is on the table. That Jesus has come to bring you life, not just a ticket to heaven, not just eternal life one day and that day is coming, and by the way, Jesus came first in humility, but he promises He's coming back next time in power and all the world will know and see him.

In fact, the Bible says on that day, every single knee will bow and every tongue will confess in heaven and on earth. That Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God, the Father. And on that day, God's coming back, he's going to right every wrong. He's going to wipe away every tear from your eyes and mine. He's going to make all sad things untrue. And I can't wait for that day. But in the meantime, God says, hold on, but I'm in your midst even now, life or death, salvation or condemnation.

And you see, these promises are not true for everybody, but they can be true for anybody who ever would humble themselves, admit their need for a savior, repent of their sin, and trust in Jesus Christ, that you can know today where you will spend eternity. So, I would encourage you, don't miss Jesus because sometimes he comes in the ways that we least expect. He comes in humility, suffering, and death. But his death was actually the death of death.

And I want to close with the words of David Mathis, who wrote on Palm Sunday. He was a writer and author. And I love the way that he captures this moment in this day. He said, "The glory of Palm Sunday is not that the long-awaited king comes into town amid pomp and flair of natural human expectation. This is not a king of unchallenged pedigree born in a palace surrounded by accomplished generals. No, here is a Nazarene, a common laborer by trade, riding not on a noble steed, but on the colt of an ass. He comes not to brandish his sword and demonstrate his quality for popular expectation, but to give his own neck for the knife and display his meekness and uncompromised sacrifice. He comes not to kill, but to be killed. He comes not in human glory, but in the glory and strength and weakness, glory of the Lion of Judah, who gives himself as the LAMB of God."

And so, will you respond to the one, the king who's in our midst, the one who shatters and defies all expectations who has come to you today? Would you receive him for the first time, or would you cling to him again in a life of praise and response and adoration? And would you and I do it so that the rocks don't do it in our place?

Let's pray. Father God, I thank you so much for your word today. God, I don't know what all of our expectations are of you and were of you and who you are and if you are. But I pray right now in the name of Jesus Christ, that every person would see you for who you are. Not our own misconceptions, but that we would embrace you as the humble, triumphant king that you are. Father, I pray that our hearts would break for what breaks your heart in the world and in the sinfulness of our own hearts.

And Father, I pray that you remind us today that if we receive you as our king and Savior, that you have removed our sin as far as the East is from the West, every skeleton in our closet. You have washed us white as snow. Thank you, God, for that promise.

God, for those of us who are here today and are doubting you or were unsure of you, I pray in your gentle humility you might be patient with us. You might invite us on to this next journey of investigation of who you are. And God, I pray that for all of us, we would live all of our lives in response to you, in praise and adoration, so that the rocks don't do it in our place. And I ask and pray all this in Jesus' name. Amen.