



'Great Expectations'



with Lann Pydar Benefice & Atlantic Coast Cluster



Time for Prayer (based on Proverb 23)

Merciful God

Give us the awareness of what is before us.

**That we may not wear ourselves out,
living up to the expectations of this this world.**

**That we may not be let down by others,
expecting from them, more than we ourselves are willing to give.**

**Surely there is a future,
and our hope will not be cut off.**

**As children of God, we give our hearts to God,
And follow God's ways.**

**Who exceeded all expectations,
In his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.**

Amen.

Week I – Expectations

Introduction

We all have them, of ourselves, of others, of God. Great, small and some so intrinsic to our life we do not notice them.

As we journey through Lent, we are going to explore our own expectations, and how they might affect our journey of faith. Our relationship with God and others and how they can be at times be barriers to our spiritual journey as well as sure foundations of faith.

We will think about what we expect of ourselves. Are there certain areas of our lives where we have unduly high expectations, and others where they may too low? What creates our expectations?

At one level they are required for us to function as an ordered society. We have expectations about how we live and what we can do. We expect people to wear clothes, these days, wear masks, wash our hands. So, expectations have their place, but problems arise when we fail to give the right significance to expectation, such as expecting more or less from others or ourselves. Or expect others to understand rules that they have no knowledge and understanding of. This can lead to dissatisfaction, disappointment, and discord.

Expectations are part of life, we grew up with expectations of ourselves, because of school, parents, and our peers. We are encouraged to have expectations of people and things in our lives, the quality of a purchase promised in the advert, the level of service from another human being, there is no getting away from expectations, the question is How do we respond?

Bible text – Numbers 11:4-6

The rabble among them had a strong craving; and the Israelites also wept again, and said, “If only we had meat to eat! We remember the fish we used to eat in Egypt for nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; but now our strength is dried up, and there is nothing at all but this manna to look at.”

Questions

- When can expectations be problematic?
- When can expectations be helpful?
- Think of when an expectation has been exceeded?
- Think of when an expectation has fallen short?

Time for Prayer

Text for the week – Luke 6:41-42

Why do you see the speck in your neighbour’s eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? Or how can you say to your neighbor, ‘Friend, let me take out the speck in your eye,’ when you yourself do not see the log in your own eye? You hypocrite first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbour’s eye.

Week 2 – Expectations of Self

Opening prayer – Based on Luke 6:41-42

God of love and hope,
Help us to look honestly at ourselves,
To acknowledge our own faults before you,
our maker and redeemer.
Give us the integrity and clear vision,
To remove the log from our own eye,
So, we may be generous to others in their faults.
Amen

“I’m not in this world to live up to your expectations and you’re not in this world to live up to mine.”
Bruce Lee

Reflection

I wonder what expectations you place on yourself, do you set yourself up to fail? Even something as simple as a New Year Resolution can put a high expectation on oneself. And what happens if we don't live up to those high expectations, what happens to our self-esteem or our self-confidence? On the other hand, low self-esteem or self-confidence could lead a person to not expecting very much from themselves at all!

Self-expectations can be realistic or unrealistic, helpful or hurtful. ... Our “shoulds” of ourselves reflect expectations that we feel we are not meeting. When we tell ourselves that we “should” be doing something, we are reinforcing the idea that we are not doing it.

Having expectations of ourselves is normal, but not if we set ourselves up to fail. When little things throw you off course. When you feel you often let others down, and guilt takes over. When the ‘checklists’ for your future have little or no wriggle room. Maybe it's time to take a step back and reassess your expectations on yourself.

Bible text | Peter 1:13-16

Therefore, prepare your minds for action; discipline yourselves; set all your hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring you when he is revealed. Like obedient children, do not be conformed to the desires that you formerly had in ignorance. Instead, as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; for it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”

Questions

- What are your expectations of yourself, are they realistic?
- Did you set yourself any New Year resolutions this year?
- How would you measure your self-confidence and your self-esteem?

Time for Prayer



Text for week – I Peter 2:9

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Week 3 – Expectations of Others

Opening prayer based on - I Peter 2:9

Loving God

As we your people come together,

Help us to listen with care,

To speak with wisdom,

And to follow your ways,

With open hearts and minds.

Amen .

“When you stop expecting people to be perfect, you can like them for who they are.” Donald Miller

Reflection

We all have expectations of others and that is fine, as long as we know that, and acknowledge that there is a very good chance those expectations will not be fulfilled either in part or in full. Serious problems occur when we entwine the fulfillment of these expectations of others with our own success and happiness. It can lead to stress and strain in relationships, and feelings of being let down. It is also important to be consistent in our expectations of others in relation to ourselves. Do we expect more of some people? Do we expect more of others than ourselves?

Bible text – 2 Corinthians 10:7-11

Look at what is before your eyes. If you are confident that you belong to Christ, remind yourself of this, that just as you belong to Christ, so also do we. Now, even if I boast a little too much of our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for tearing you down, I will not be ashamed of it. I do not want to seem as though I am trying to frighten you with my letters. For they say, “His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.” Let such people understand that what we say by letter when absent, we will also do when present.

Questions

- Can you remember when someone surpassed your expectations, and how did you feel about both your expectations and the person concerned?
- Can you remember when someone failed to meet your expectations, how did you feel both for yourself and the person concerned?
- Can you think of groups of people that you hold higher expectations of and how do you feel if they fail to live up to these?

Time for Prayer 

Text for the week – I Corinthians 12:12

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.

Week 4 – Expectations of leaders

Opening prayer based on - I Corinthians 12:12

Creator God

We give thanks that we are part of the body of Christ,

That when we are weak, others are strong,

Where we can offer gifts and skills,

Others may receive.

Help us to value all the different parts,

So, we may be one with each other,

In Jesus Christ.

Amen

“Blessed is he who expects nothing, for he shall never be disappointed.” Alexander Pope

Reflection

I wonder if you were asked to name a leader you value, or even aspire to be like, who would you name? and what would be the characteristics you would be looking for in that leader? In our western culture, we are drawn to leaders who exhibit power and strength. We often put leaders on pedestals, expecting them to be all things to all people, and to be perfect! Human beings are not perfect; even the best leaders make mistakes, get it wrong, and cannot please all the people all the time. There is only one perfect person pedestal, and that is occupied by Jesus.

So why do we feel so let down when a leader’s personal life is flawed, or they do not do something we want them to do? How quickly can our expectations of a leader change?

Bible text – Mark 10:42- 45

So, Jesus called them and said to them, “You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

I Timothy 3:1-4
I Timothy 6:11-12

Questions

- What expectations do you have from those in leadership position?
- Choose a leader you admire – what makes them stand out for you?
- When has a leader exceeded your expectations?
- When has a leader let you down?

Time of Prayer



Text for the week – Micah 6:8

He has told you, O mortal, what is good;
and what does the LORD require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?

Week 5 – Expectations of God

Opening prayer based on Micah 6:8

Caring God,
help us to actively seek justice throughout our world;
to act kindly to all we meet,
and learn to walk humbly on your earth,
and in your way.
Amen.

Reflection

What are your expectations of God? For me as a child, if I considered it at all, God, sat on a throne and look rather ‘Peter Ustinovesque’ with a long white flowing beard and flowing white robes, and was more the judge and ruler. However, we view God we all have some expectation. Be they as judge, teacher, leader, saviour, healer, listener to name a few. The Jewish leaders had a fixed expectation of the Messiah and did not see Jesus as possibility fitting their expectations. Even Nathanael who became a disciple, did not think anything of any good could come from Nazareth. We can if we are not careful, miss what God is doing, because it does not fit with our expectation of the way things should be.

Bible text – Luke 8:43-48

Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years; and though she had spent all she had on physicians, no one could cure her. She came up behind him and touched the fringe of his clothes, and immediately her hemorrhage stopped. Then Jesus asked, “Who touched me?” When all denied it, Peter said, “Master, the crowds surround you and press in on you.” But Jesus said, “Someone touched me; for I noticed that power had gone out from me.” When the woman saw that she could not remain hidden, she came trembling; and falling down before him, she declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed. He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace.”

Deuteronomy 28:1

Questions

- Do you have any fixed expectations of God, if so, what are they?
- How can expectations help or hinder in seeing God at work in the world around us?
- When has God, exceeded your expectations or let you down and how do you react?

Time of Prayer



Hymn – Great is Thy Faithfulness (Lamentations 3:23)

Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father;
there is no shadow of turning with thee;
thou changest not, thy compassions, they fail not;
as thou hast been thou forever wilt be.

Refrain:

Great is thy faithfulness!
Great is thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see:
all I have needed thy hand hath provided--
Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!

Summer and winter and springtime and harvest,
sun, moon, and stars in their courses above
join with all nature in manifold witness
to thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love. (*Refrain*)

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide,
strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
blessings all mine with ten thousand beside (*Refrain*)

