

Be expectant of Jesus

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[0 : 00] Three things that come out of this passage. Three words that I want us to think about. Expectation, surprise, and amazement.

Expectation, surprise, and amazement. Expectation is a really helpful word for thinking about what faith is. Surprise is different to expectation, isn't it?

If you're surprised, it indicates that you didn't expect something to happen. It's the opposite. If you're surprised at something, it suggests that something has happened that you didn't expect.

Whereas if you expect something, you don't get surprised. I want to share an example with you from my life. I've told you this before. You'll hear me say I'm really terrible at DIY.

I'm just, me and DIY don't go together. If you look at my past efforts, it's just a catalogue of mishaps. And it's quite embarrassing. It's not something that I like to admit.

[1 : 04] Because for blokes, it's kind of one of the things that you want to be good at. Like fixing your house and sorting it out. And not having to ask somebody else. It's embarrassing feeling like you have to ask someone who can do that sort of thing.

So when it comes to DIY, I don't, I'm not expecting in my own DIY skills. I don't have faith in myself that I'm going to be able to do a good job.

But nevertheless, I still want to. So I keep trying. And last week, I bought two blinds to put up for the kids' windows.

Two blinds. As I bought them, I expected it as normal. Something to go wrong. Me to get really stressed. Hot and bothered. And it to take far longer than it should have done.

But I went slowly. Took my time. And to my surprise, everything went well. Now the test of my DIY skills is if they're still there in six months.

[2 : 02] But the reason I'm surprised that they went, you know, nothing, no miss-ups at all. And they're still there. The reason I was surprised is because I didn't expect it to go well.

I lacked faith in myself with good reason. Because I've got a check in history when it comes to DIY. Expectant people don't get surprised.

You can still be amazed. Will and my father-in-law, Duncan, I know, are good at DIY. So when they do it, I kind of have a bit of expectation.

So, you know, when we come and see your new kitchen, Will, you know, it's all for grabs. Because we kind of expect success. It's the opposite. I'm still amazed at the end.

It doesn't mean I'm not amazed by what can be done. In fact, it's the opposite. I'm more surprised if it doesn't go well because they've got that skill. So what is expectation?

[3 : 03] Expectation requires knowledge of a person. It requires a knowledge of actually the identity of that person. Or it requires knowledge of at least of their history of what they've done in the past.

You expect based on what they've done and what they can do and who they are. That's why I didn't have expectation on myself to do DIY.

But I have expectation on Will. It requires a knowledge of his history of who he is. The history that I know about them. What do we say? This is what it means to have faith, expectation in God.

We have expectation because we look at the God of history of what he's done. And then when he does and continues to do what he's done in history, we're still amazed.

But we're not surprised. We expect. There is surprise in this passage. There is surprise in this passage.

[4 : 03] But I don't think it's actually a surprise of Jesus. The surprise, it comes when we see the disciples. I just want to remind ourselves of everything that's been going on in Mark.

You remember a few weeks ago, if you skip back to verse 6 of the same chapter, Jesus calls his 12, he'd called his 12 apostles to go out to be his, we said, his extension in the world.

They were going from village to village doing Jesus' work. And we know when they went out that they did what Jesus had been doing. They healed people. They preached repentance. And they cast out demons.

So you would expect. This is what you expect of the disciples. You almost kind of expect them to come back from their exploits and be full of faith, full of understanding of who Jesus is.

But the surprise comes after Jesus walks on water. Look at verse 50. Just look at near the end. Verse 52. I think it's 51, 52.

[5 : 04] We read, they were completely amazed. We would be amazed by that. But verse 52. They were amazed completely.

For they had not understood about the loves. Their hearts were hardened. That is a surprise. These 12, the last people, they're the last people.

You would expect to have hard hearts. These are the guys who've just done Jesus' ministry. These are the guys who are an extension of Jesus in the world.

And the passage we're kind of left hanging. It's like a cliffhanger. And that very verse leaves you with questions. What do they understand about the loves? Why are their hearts hardened?

Is it wrong that they're completely amazed? I mean, we know. We read that passage. I'm pretty amazed that Jesus walks on water. Is it wrong to be amazed by that?

[6 : 06] What's going on with these 12? And so what we're looking at this morning is actually, it's the biggest story that's behind the miracles.

The biggest story that's behind these two amazing events, famous of what Jesus did. Because what is Jesus really teaching us here?

It might not seem obvious at first, but what he's teaching us here is that he's more than just a miracle worker. He's much more than just a miracle worker. What he's teaching us through the feeding of the 5,000, the walking on water, his identity is front and center.

First miracle, feeding the 5,000. What is it Jesus is saying? He's revealing who he is to the crowd and to his disciples.

As we know, I mentioned Jesus has chosen the 12. It should remind us, obviously, of the 12 tribes of Israel. When Jesus did that, he's saying that the 12 are the reconstituted people of God.

[7 : 12] It's Israel continued as what will become the church. Everything in this scene, when Jesus feeds the 5,000, is an echo back to the redemption and rescue that God secured through Moses.

But someone greater than Moses is here to do it. Everything in the passage. Verse 31, Jesus is heading with the 12 to a solitary place after they've reported all that's going on in their travels.

Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest, he says. Verse 32, so they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. That word for solitary is the exact same word for wilderness.

Exactly. Where Moses leads the people into the wilderness. Not the same wilderness, but into a wilderness out of Egypt.

Where does he lead them? What happens with Jesus? A crowd see him leading the 12, Israel, the new Israel, out into the wilderness to a solitary place.

[8 : 18] The crowd see in verse 33, and they go ahead of him to meet him there. The people of God run into the wilderness to meet with Jesus. Verse 34, when Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd.

Moses himself was a shepherd, called to shepherd the people of God. He was their leader, yet Jesus says, these people are shepherd-less. They are leader-less. They have no shepherd.

The 12 complain about their lack of food. What is it pointing to? So it's reminiscent of the people of God grumbling for bread and water. And then Jesus feeds them fish and bread.

All 5,000 men, we know in other recollections of this, it's 5,000 men plus women and children. So it's more than 5,000. And everyone has everything they need, and more, 12 baskets left over, everyone satisfied.

When the living God fed the Israelites manna and quail, each one had everything they needed.

Everyone is looking to Jesus, who's at the center teaching, in the same way that Moses looked to God on the mountaintop.

[9 : 37] Jesus is more than a miracle worker. This is God himself. And he knows, he knows, he knows, that amongst those 5,000 and the 12, that each one of them would have known their Jewish history.

He knows that they would have been told the story of their redemption since the day they were born, of how Moses, under God, rescued them, rescued them out of Israel, the Passover, through the Red Sea, into the wilderness, fed them for 80 years, and then they entered the promised land. He knew that. He knew that they knew it. And he certainly expects from this moment that the 12 are going to see it and get it. They've been with him every day.

He's saying, without saying it with words, can't you see what I'm saying? I'm the same God that rescued you. The plagues on Egypt, that was me.

The God at the top of Mount Sinai, that was me. I'm the one who made Moses' face shine like the sun. I'm the fire and the wind that led them through the wilderness. I was the one who wrote the tablets of stone, the Ten Commandments.

[10:54] The God who did that is the one who stands before you. And he expects them, from the scene, to understand that. It is the same God we pray to.

This is the same God that we pray to. And I think it's, I think up there, one of the most important things that we do as Christians, is to, and we might sometimes think that we don't need to do this, because we understand it, we get it, is reflect, as often as you can, on who our God is.

Because we can say all the right words, we can have all the right adjectives, and descriptions of who God is, but the place of expectation comes from looking back at the acts of God in history.

You think, you place yourself in this situation, you think about if you were stood on the banks of the Red Sea, and you saw the waves parted. You visualize that.

The God who did that is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the one who parted the waves. It is the Son, the Triumph God.

[12:08] The same God who parted the waves is the God that you pray to. Do we expect God to answer when we speak to him? Look at what God has done in the real moments, in real lives, in the acts of history, in the Bible.

He's the same God today as he was but then, exactly the same. He hasn't changed one big. And he wants you, he wants us, to know who we're really praying to.

And he wants the 12 to understand how much more does he want us to be expected in light, not just of the acts of history, but in light of the resurrection.

Yes, he's parted the waters. Yes, he fed the, he provided manna on the food every morning. Yes, he wrote the Ten Commandments. Yes, he sent ten plagues.

Yes, he raised up David to fight a giant. He did all of this. But more than that, he raised his son from death to life.

[13:12] Be sin, be death, and all evil. And the same power that did all of those things is behind the God whom we pray to. Be expectant of Jesus Christ because he's able.

He's really able. The reason we're expectant is because he's the same God. He's the same God. Okay.

So we move on to our second miracle. We move on to the second miracle. Jesus walks on the water. I don't know what this looks like to you, but this looks like a bit of a set-up from Jesus.

Jesus sets the whole things up. We see that. Verse 45, Jesus, this is a set-up. Verse 45, immediately, Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go ahead of him in Bethsaida.

Well, he dismisses the crowd. He's hurrying them along onto the boat. So you go along. I'll sort it out all here. You go along. It's like a cell.

[14:20] Now this is, partly this is speculative, but is it because he knows that they haven't got it, that they haven't understood? Verse 46, we get more echoes of Exodus.

He leaves them, goes up a mountain to pray, echoing Moses going up a mountain, a mountain, to be with, to be, this time with his own father. The night progresses, the boats on the lake, and they're clearly struggling because of their wind, which, as a side note, which I remind you, the wind is controlled by Jesus, who is in control of all things, even when it's blowing, not just when it's calm.

It's shortly before dawn, between, you reckon, between three and six, because of the language that's used. He goes out to meet walking on the lake. He's about to pass that Bible, which we read to me, and he's going to walk straight to the other side.

But they see him, and they think he's a ghost. You'll remember from last week, that's exactly what Herod thinks about Jesus, that he's the ghost of John the Baptist. But this incident, I've got to say, I struggle with what's going on with the disciples here.

You remember, they've been hanging out with Jesus for a long time. They're his closest friends, they spend night and day together. When it says they don't recognize him, I find that a little bit hard to believe.

[15:52] Okay, they might not see his face, but you've got to think, if you know someone well, they're free, they're still awake, they would recognize what that was.

When it says they don't know him, I wonder if it means that they know who it is, but because he's doing something that they don't expect, they don't know him.

They know who it is, but there's a deeper knowing that they don't know. Who is this? It's a very similar sort of intimation that they have when he calms the storm the first time and they say, who is this man?

And they're afraid. I think that's what's going on here. They don't recognize who he is on a deeper level. Because they're full of fear, they're shaking.

And could it not be any clearer that in the middle of the wilderness he does another miracle connected to a big expanse of water, alarm bells ringing.

[17:06] I'm the God who is in control of the waters. I can walk on it as easy as I can part it. He's showing them the redemption of my people Israel.

Wasn't he? The great I am is here. Immediately he speaks to them and says, take courage, it's I, don't be afraid. Then he climbs into the boat and the wind dies down.

The Israelites are afraid. The Israelites in the Old Testament were afraid of Pharaoh until God parted the waters. And here the 12 are afraid until the living God speaks.

And then we come back to what we remember from as I started off. They were completely amazed, they're surprised, astounded, perplexed, confused at what Jesus did.

Why? Because they don't quite understand who he is. He did what they didn't expect. It's out of character to them. It's a surprise. It's like me with the DIY. It's right out of character that it went well.

[18:14] But if you didn't know my history, if you didn't know what I just told you, and you just saw that it's actually not a, it's okay, it's the history that gives the true picture.

If you only saw what I'd done that went well, you'd have a false picture of what I could actually do. You might have expectation where you shouldn't. They have a false picture because they can't connect Jesus with God of history.

Why, verse 52, had they not, for they had not understood about the loaves, it hadn't clicked. It hadn't clicked that he was the God of the most famous moment in Israelite history. They wouldn't, if they had, they wouldn't have been surprised when he walked on water because they knew that it was the same God who parted the waves.

that's the subtext. Surprised, perplexed, amazed, astounded because they don't yet understand that the God who made the waters is in front of them.

Their hearts are hardened. The, the further, isn't that, isn't it a strange result that the, the two miracles, these two amazing miracles, profound, don't produce more expectation, more faith, but less because it hardens them to who he is.

[19:35] They understand less about who he is because they haven't got it. The question for us this morning, where do we expect to see God?

Where do you expect to see God? Where do we want to be expectant of God? Where are we surprised by him? Where do we need to hear in our fears when we can't seem to see Jesus? Take courage. It's I, it's me, I'm here for you. Be expectant. But there's another message going on. But even when you're not, he's still there.

Be expectant. But even when you're not, he's still there anyway. He will walk on water for you. He will walk on water for you, for us.

On top of the chaos that light springs, he will walk on water for you. Last thing I want to turn to, much more briefly, is the response of the crowd when he reaches the shoals.

[20:45] Verse 54, we read, as soon as they got out of the boat, people recognised him. They ran throughout the whole region, people on the mats, just to see him, just to be healed by him. They beg just to touch his clothes in the hope that they're healed.

The crowd teach the disciples a lesson. They're not afraid of him. Now, we don't know why they come to him. Is it because they've heard he's a miracle worker? On some level, probably, yes. Or is it because they do believe he's God? We're left to question that, but it certainly doesn't rule it out. But the point is, being there, is that they come with expectant hearts and they come with

expectant faith.

They certainly, they certainly think that Jesus is going to come and heal, or else why would they come? He gives them what they seek from him. There's no element of surprise or confusion even mentioned when people are healed.

And so as we come in for landing, this is what I really want us to think through. Expectation comes from knowing who someone is. Their identity, their history.

[21 : 57] Jesus' history traces itself, or what he's done, traces itself back to creation. And his history goes back further than that.

There is no beginning for him. He's the God who has always existed. Jesus himself, the Son of God, alongside God the Father and the Spirit, the Triangle of God, was there.

And every moment in the Bible, Jesus Christ is there. Every moment since the Bible has been written, Jesus is there. When your great-granny turned to faith, when the Christians who've gone before us have seen him move in power, it wasn't a different God, is the same God.

The God who has rescued and shepherded every believer, who's overseen every growth of the people in the church worldwide, is the same God who we come to, who we've been worshipping this morning, who we've prayed to.

This church plan is governed and guided and strengthened and led by Jesus Christ who parted the waters, who led the people in the wilderness, and who died and was raised.

[23 : 12] And each of you could say the same about your own life. You look at what God has done. Meditate on his history. Be expectant.

Don't be surprised. It's a surprising thing. This is a surprising thing to say. Don't be surprised when he answers prayers because that's what he does. Don't be surprised when people turn to him because that's what he does.

He turns hearts back to him. Don't be surprised when he comforts the grieving and strengthens the weary because that is what he does. He's in the business of bringing people to faith.

That is what he does. We look at the history as evidence that that is what he does. This is the Lord's work.

This is the Lord's work. Let me pray. Almighty God, I thank you for who you are.

[24 : 15] You are the God who's done all these things. This is who we pray to. And we're expecting because we know what you've done in the past.

We know what you've done in the past in the lives of the saints, in the scriptures. We know what you've done in our lives. We've seen you many times act miraculously in amazing ways.

We know that you answer prayers. You've saved people. You've saved us. You grow. We've seen the church grow. This is what you do. And so give us expectant hearts.

We're still amazed by you. We're still amazed in great delight and joy and profound things that you've done. But we're not perplexed or confused by you.

When we see you move in power, whilst we celebrate and are full of joys, we're reminded that this is what you do. So fill us with expectation.

[25 : 17] Fill us with joy in Christ. Move our hearts. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.