

Merry Christmas

Part Two: Where are you? Where are you when expectations go awry? John 21:1-25 (vss. 4-6)



WEST SOUND COMMUNITY CHURCH

Winter 2021

Frustration is almost always the result of unmet expectations. In fact, some writers refer to unmet expectations as “premeditated resentment.” In the New Testament Letter of James, we read, *“What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions”* (4:1-3). James had more to say on this, but this alone drives home the point. There is an entire psycho/socio dynamic at play when we suddenly find ourselves facing a question like this, “What do I do now that my expectations have been crushed?” It’s a universal reality. We all experience these moments, these days, these weeks, even these seasons. It started in Genesis 3 and won’t end until heaven.

Regarding the followers of Jesus, he saw it coming in their lives. He knew full well the wandering that follows on the heels of unmet expectations. And he made sure his people knew about it. As we take up John 21 again, we can see vividly the Savior wants us to understand how to meet a basic question: Where are you when expectations go awry?

Before we unpack verses four through six, in which that question will be addressed, let’s briefly review what we’ve covered so far...

Review

Part One: John 21:1-3 Where are you when everything seems unbalanced?

You should recall from Part One in this series, that following the grand three year ministry of Jesus and his disciples, and very shortly after his up-close and personal conversation and prayer with them preceding the crucifixion, and even more shortly after the resurrection, the disciples went home...and took up their nets for a night of fishing. They were to cast a good news net over the entire world, but they went home, hung around, and tried to catch some fish. Predictably, they were out of balance. After fishing all night their nets and boat were empty. No fish. They answered the question, “Where are you when everything seems unbalanced,” by returning to their old habits. They diminished the high call to which the Savior had given invitation.

Preview

Beginning next week we’ll tackle verses seven through twenty-five in Parts Three, Four, and Five. Similar questions will be answered. It looks like this:

Part Three: John 21:7-14

Where are you when the Lord begins to poke and prod?

Part Four: John 21:15-19

Where are you when the Lord closes in on your personal stuff?

Part Five: John 21:20-25

Where are you when the Lord reveals to you that you are part of an eternal team?



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Merry Christmas: Where are you, Part Two

Part Two

John 21:4-6 Where are you when expectations go awry?

Jesus showed up early in the morning after their long night of unproductive fishing. Here is how the Holy Spirit inspired John to record their meeting at the shore.

“Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, ‘Children, do you have any fish?’ They answered him, ‘No.’ He said to them, ‘Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some.’ So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish.”

He wasn't upset. He wasn't angry. He didn't meet them there to pound some more sense into them. However, he did want their attention...because they were missing the boat (please forgive my humble pun). They had so much offered to them: salvation, eternal life, the presence of God, fellowship with God, membership in the Trinity's family, a partnership for delivering the life-saving message of the ages, and so very much more. The Savior gave them life, love, and liberty, mission, ministry, and miracles, family, friendship, and fellowship, destiny, design, and decisions, security, significance, and spirit, teamwork, training, and transformation. In this third post resurrection appearance, Jesus wanted to remind them of not only their responsibility, but their authority, not only their duty, but their possibilities.

Remember, he had called them to be fishermen of people (Matthew 4:18-22),

“While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And he said to them, ‘Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.’ Immediately they left their nets and followed him. And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.”

When he found them, they were in a boat fishing for a livelihood. At first, they did not recognize him (vs. 4). Likewise, rather than identifying himself, he asked a common question, “do you have any fish” (vs. 5). One might wonder why he did not ask, “Ah come on, what are you doing out there? Is this what you plan to do? Okay, your original expectations appear to have gone awry, but have they? Have you learned nothing?” He certainly could have. It would definitely have been justifiable. Instead, he asked them if their night of fishing had met with any success. They answered “No” (vs. 5). He replied, “throw your net to the right side of the boat. You'll catch a net full” (vs. 6). They did as he said and they reaped as he promised (vs. 6). Amazing!

Now notice two things...two things we must take to heart every bit as much as those first disciples.

First, what a beautiful way to ask of his closest followers, “Where are you? Right here, right now, where are you? Specifically, **Where are you when expectations go awry?** He understood. God always does. He knows we're prone to back-tracking. He knew what they would do. He knows what we tend to do. He also knew they did not have to do so...we do not need to do so. He also knows how debilitating it is for us. So, he will ever ask this question of us. **Where are you when your expectations go awry?** Will you lose your joy...perhaps even your grip? Or will you stay the course...the expected pursuit of your destiny and the Lord's glory?

Second, what a beautiful way to remind them to trust the Trinity and the promises of the Trinity (read John, chapters 11 through 19). When one receives the Lord for salvation (John 1:12), he or she receives not only everlasting life but abundant life (John 10:10). The real time benefits of salvation do not await heaven to kick into action. They belong to the here and now.

Christmas can remind you that some things are not meeting your expectations. However, it can, and it should, remind you more so that all great expectations are anchored in the Lord.

