

Pastor Daryl Diddle

Sermon Series: *Looking Up*, No. 7

More Than Expected

February 20, 2022

**Acts 3:1-10 (NIV)**

*One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer – at three in the afternoon. <sup>2</sup> Now a man who was lame from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts. <sup>3</sup> When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. <sup>4</sup> Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, “Look at us!” <sup>5</sup> So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them. <sup>6</sup> Then Peter said, “Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.” <sup>7</sup> Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man’s feet and ankles became strong. <sup>8</sup> He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God. <sup>9</sup> When all the people saw him walking and praising God, <sup>10</sup> they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.*

---

Would you take a Bible and turn with me back to the book of Acts, Chapter 3? Our text is the first ten verses there; Acts, Chapter 3.

What are your expectations?

I know you have them. Everybody has them.

And I mean your big ones – not the little day to day ones. We all have those little ones, lots of them.

Like, well, just for today, we probably all expect:

To eat lunch later on.

To see and chat with a friend or two here this morning.

To hear me say the words, “in conclusion” in 30 minutes or less.

Over the next few days:

Some expect to go to work tomorrow morning.

Others to go to school – but not you in public school, right? Because you expect to be off tomorrow for President’s Day, so you expect to do something more fun than going to school.

Over the next few weeks:

We expect to deal with our tax returns.

We expect the temperatures to warm up.

We expect to see dandelions in our yards before long.

We all have day-to-day expectations like those; those aren’t what I’m talking about.

I’m talking about big, outside-the-box, dream-sized expectations.

Great expectations – like:

I’m going to find my dream job.

I’m going to make millions of dollars before I’m 30 or 40 or 50 or dead.

I’m going to make a video that goes viral.

I’m going to find the perfect guy/girl, have a roomy but fuel efficient SUV-load of kids and live happily ever after.

I’m going to leave a bigger-than-life spiritual legacy.

I’m going to be a gentleman – that was Pip’s “great expectation” in Charles Dickens’ book.

In my lifetime, I’m going to watch Cincinnati actually win a super bowl.

I’m talking about those kinds of expectations. Do you have some? Do you have – one?

Or, has the weight of the world, especially these past couple years, beaten your expectations out of you?

That can happen, you know?

We dare to dream “the impossible dream,” but then the drone of the everyday douses that dream.

And what the daily drone doesn’t douse withers under the weight of our whacked world.

When was the last time you had a great expectation that was met, let alone exceeded?

If it’s been a while – well, sometimes that happens in our broken world.

That’s what happened here in Acts, Chapter 3.

Years before this moment, there was a young Jewish couple who were so excited to be having a baby – and maybe even a son! That’s what the ultrasound looked like there at Central Hebrew Hospital – or maybe they went to St. Jew East; I’m not sure.

I know they weren’t at Good Samaritan.

Either way, the thought of having a little boy was... Not to be sexist or anything, but sons back then were warmly welcomed because, well, they were good for the parent’s retirement years, because sons were the earners; they could take over the family farm or property or business.

So, this couple was so happy and hopeful – filled with great expectations!

Everything and everyone was looking up!

But then...disappointment! They would have a son, yes, but the son they would have could not walk!

A great expectation shattered.

That sounds cruel to us, but it was simple economics in those days of no prosthetics, no wheelchairs, and no office jobs for those who couldn’t walk and lift and carry.

So, a parent’s expectation of a secure life resting on the birth of a healthy son...

And a son’s expectation of a good life of work and friends and a wife and children...

All that dashed by being born with legs that wouldn’t work.

So, a major shift in expectation occurs: a severe downgrade to an existence as a beggar, trusting in his fellow Jews’ willingness to follow the third of the three legs of their faith: worship, Scripture study, and alms giving – helping the poor – helping those who were truly

unable to work to provide for themselves; helping people like...him.<sup>1</sup>

He placed himself—or rather he was placed—near one of the temple gates: a location where conventional wisdom would say the odds of receiving help were good.

Sort of like being just outside Chick-fil-A, right? If you're depending on the generosity of other people, you're smart to station yourself where you'd think some nice, kind people would be.

To collect enough alms to buy food for the day: that had become this man's **great expectation**.

But God thought differently about this man.

The fellow didn't know it, but God had expectations for him that were greater than he could have ever imagined.

He had no expectation of being healed—even in Jesus' day. Jesus healed quite a lot of people, but there were still many more—many, many more—who never saw Jesus, never heard of Jesus, and so were not healed by Jesus.

Besides, even if this fellow had heard of Jesus, Jesus was no longer around.

He had no expectation of being healed.

So, when he realized he'd caught the attention of Peter and John as they were walking into the temple, his greatest expectation—his only expectation—was for a contribution.

It seems to me that most people today expect too much from other people and too little from God.

That's why people today are so often at each other's throats. We expect quite a lot of people to be and do for us this or that or the other because we're broken and hurting and need their help.

What we forget is that they are broken and hurting too, and so when they don't meet our expectations, we get upset with them.

Our culture expects too much from other people, and we expect too little from God.

That's why God is increasingly pushed out of our cultural reality: we no longer believe He can make a difference, so He's no longer a consideration in many people's lives.

Moving us down these roads: this is the strategy of our enemy in achieving his own great expectation of destroying this world.

We have an enemy who wants everybody to think like that: to expect too much from people and too little from God, because how better to destroy the world than to turn people against each other and to put God out to pasture?

We have to recognize that's his strategy and we have to push back on it. That's what followers of Christ are called to do: we're called to proclaim the opposite of what the enemy says.

As followers of Jesus, we recognize that people are broken and hurting, and because of that they're going to let us down from time to time. People are limited; people

are finite; and so, as God shows mercy and forgiveness to us, we are called to show mercy and forgiveness to people.

At the same time, we understand God to be unlimited and infinite and powerful—all-powerful, actually, so we rest our hopes and dreams upon Him. We invest our great expectations in Him.

We reverse the perspective of exalting people and diminishing God that the enemy is trying to establish in our world, and in doing that, we not only reveal reality, we expand people's expectations. We broaden each other's conceptions of what's really possible.

We break people out of their little boxes of pre-conceived notions, and we help people. We give those around us reason to look up and to see God and to see what's possible with Him.

That's what faith exercised does, and that's what Peter and John did here for this man—and for everybody around there that day.

This poor fellow's greatest expectation was for some little bit of money.

But Peter and John offer far more than he expected.

They say to him, "Hey, you need to adjust your expectations! Why? Because God is here! God is alive and well and powerful, and He is compassionate and merciful, and He's able to heal you right here, today. So, tell us: can you—will you—adjust your expectations? Will you dare to believe that with God far more than what you're expecting is possible?"

And the man's answer was "yes," and he was raised to stand. And then he took a step or two, and then he walked, and then he ran, and then he jumped—none of which he'd ever done before.

And everybody saw and were amazed!

Some have defined true miracles by these three criteria:

- deliverance from a grave organic condition;
- occurring in response to a direct command in the name of Jesus;
- and indisputable public acknowledgement.

So, this was, undoubtedly, a true miracle.

This fellow became the living embodiment of the messianic age. He was a personal fulfillment of Isaiah 35:6, that promises when Messiah comes, "The lame will leap like a deer."

Wasn't he glad that Peter and John went to worship that day!

Now, Christendom through the ages has said and written much toward systematizing how, precisely, this fellow was healed—so we might have a prescription for recreating it.

Some say it was Peter and John's faith that did it.

Some say it was the fellow's faith.

Some say it was the combination of everyone's faith.

Some say it was simply the name of Jesus.

Some say it was a unique situation, a moment not to be repeated.

<sup>1</sup> Deuteronomy 24:10-22

Some say it's entirely God's choice of when, how and who, so there's no need to even try to comprehend, much less expect to replicate.

So—how do we understand this?

Well, let's start with what we know.

We know this: you can't make God fit into some formula. God doesn't work according to our prescriptions and equations. If history proves anything, it proves that just when we think we have Him figured out, He'll do something different.

So just because we might do A and then B and then C doesn't mean that God is bound to give us the "D."

At the same time, we also know that if we live our lives with tiny expectations of God and His work, we are drastically underestimating Him and we will never see Him act in substantial ways.

Although it's never ours to demand of God to act, the fact is, Jesus says far too much about God's willingness to act in response to faith to ever believe He won't.

Ours is a God who, as a Heavenly Father, loves to do more than is expected when His children will look up to Him in trust and faith—when they let him set His agenda and have His way, yet always approaching Him in a posture of hope and confident expectation.

And that is God's invitation and call to every follower of Jesus: never to demand of Him, but to live a life of great expectation—to live as Peter and John were living here:

Turning people's attention from the mere material to the spiritual.

Expanding people's expectations of what's possible with God.

Living in humble, but confident faith before a doubting, hurting world.

Helping people see that Jesus is alive and well—and saving in all sorts of ways.

And inviting all around us to expect less of people and more of Jesus.

That's how Peter and John and the Apostles lived, day to day.

That's how Jesus wants His followers to live.

Am I living like that? Are you—living like that?

In our conversations with people, are we content just talking about a little money for today, or do our words turn people's attention to God and to the greater realities than just the here and now?

Are we increasing people's expectations of people, or are we increasing people's expectations of God?

Are we, like Peter and John here, helping those around us to look up and consider what God is capable of?

Because that's where the hope is!

That's where the power is!

That's where we—and all the hurting people around us—will find fulfilled expectations: real healing for both body and soul.

Do you have a big, outside-the-box, dream-sized expectation that only God can fulfill today?

Take it to Him and give Him the room to answer in His perfect time and way. Exactly what He'll do no one can really predict, but He always responds in ways that are more and better and higher and deeper than we expect.

Prayer:

Father, help us be people who are always looking toward, and pointing others toward, You—who You are and what You're capable of. Help us to trust you with our days and to lead others into that same trust: a trust that involves patience and humility, but also confidence and expectation that Your great love and great glory might be revealed in us and through us.

Closing Song: *My Hope Is In The Lord*

Benediction:

Here is an interesting thing. This business of having great expectations of God: this is an ability that comes with the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Before Pentecost, the disciples were interested in acquiring glory for themselves. They were interested in themselves having the place of honor—in knowing which of them was the greatest.

Now, after Jesus' ascension and the coming of the Spirit, you see them not seeking their own glory but deflecting it to Christ. Here in verse 12, Peter wants to make very clear that this man's healing wasn't because of him. He says, "Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we made this man walk?"

Before, you see, it was all about them.

Now, after the Spirit comes, they want to make sure everyone knows that it's all about Jesus.

All the healing, all the hope, all the expectations of any and every good thing: they're all about Jesus.