

Hosannah in the highest, be here, be heard, through these words humbly offered and our hearts opened to you. Amen

There are some high expectations being revealed today.

Jesus expects there will be a colt, never ridden, tied up and waiting to be brought to him.

The two disciples expect that the people questioning them about the donkey, will believe their rather odd request.

And conversely, the people who question the disciples expect that they are telling the truth. ... although I have no blessed understanding of why!

And most importantly, the crowd of followers have expectations that have been building for a couple of years now, as they watch, listen and engage in Jesus' ministry. It all climaxes in today's story and a communal expectation that Jesus is the long-awaited king, come to save them – Hosannah! Hosannah! Save us! Save us!

They expect this to be the King's triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the Holy City. Even the disciples have been waiting for this moment, expecting to take their place in the King's court. Their cries of joy say it all. "Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!"

Indeed, THIS is the long-awaited king! Perhaps they expect him to finally do more than talk. Perhaps they expect him to call down plagues, flood the land, send lightning bolts to destroy those who oppose him.

What they don't expect, however, is what comes next, after the parade, after the Passover, after the garden.

“But Jesus knows. [He knows] that his unbridled approach to human wholeness has proven too disruptive and offensive for those wielding power.”ⁱ

The crowd expects new life for all who have been following Jesus. But “Jesus chooses death because toning down God’s healing love – to avoid death – is not an option for the Messiah. Jesus can only love at full speed. And Jesus knows that this same love will overcome death itself. This is not your normal power-wielding, arms-raising king.”ⁱⁱ

All the crowd’s expectations are soon to be shattered.

That’s the thing, right? We all have expectations for our life, our family, our community - usually pretty good ones!

We expect to be treated with kindness and respect.

We expect to have a loving relationship with our partner.

We expect to have employment that will sustain us - a roof over our heads and food on our tables.

We expect to have the freedom to walk our streets and visit with family and friends and travel the world when we want.

But sometimes, expectations fall flat, sometimes they are shattered. How many times in your life have you said “well I never expected that to happen!”? probably more than you can count!

People disrespect us; the marriage breaks down, or we never find a life-partner at all; we lose our job and struggle to pay the bills, maybe because of Covid, maybe for some other reason. Or a pandemic pulls the rug out from under our feet leaving us struggling to find a balance between safety, health, family, and friends. And don't even think about traveling beyond our own fair city! ... I never expected that to happen!!

We are in the midst of a quickly changing world where it's almost essential for expectations to become more fluid, changing and shifting with each day, each covid report, each vaccine, each congregational vote.

It makes me wonder, how our own expectations shifted?

What expectations do we have to let go of?

What new expectations are forming in our minds: for ourselves, our family, the community, the church.

There was a time when I expected to be one of those Freedom 55 folks, living the early retirement life of golf, travel and family. As you can see, THAT didn't work out!!

I spoke with someone this week that said they had expected in retirement, that they would be able to let go of the management organization work they had been doing and focus their time and energy on some feet on the ground, hand-to-hand, personal interaction type of volunteerism. Instead, they find themselves constantly being called back to that managerial organization work, but in a volunteer role, of course!!

At what point do we let go of our expectations and open ourselves to something else something unexpected, perhaps something more challenging, but in the end, something even more life-giving than we could ever imagine?

The people parading into Jerusalem had expectations of Jesus being the mighty and powerful king who is going to save them and preserve their traditions. But "Mark tells the story of Jesus on a mission not to conquer people and land, but to restore broken humanity to its divinely created wholeness."

It is a vision far beyond anything the revelers or even we could expect or comprehend, and that's okay, 'cause God's like that, right?! Seeing beyond our expectations, to what is really needed; leading us where we never expected to go.

Which means we have to be ready to make adjustments or even let go of our expectations altogether.

Now there's a radical concept! Letting go of expectations and allowing things to unfold at God's will. That's when stones are rolled away, life is renewed, God's work gets done in and through us, without struggle, without pre-conceived notions, without expectations holding us back.

The possibilities, my friends, are endless! And so we cry Hosannah, Hosannah! Save us! Save us! Save us from ourselves, from our own limiting beliefs and expectations. Lead us through the dark and into the light of a new day, a new way, a new kingdom - one that only you can see. May it be so. Amen

ⁱ Driggers, Ira Brent. <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/sunday-of-the-passion-palm-sunday-2/commentary-on-mark-151-47>. March 27, 2021

ⁱⁱ ibid