

Not What I Expected

If you told me a month ago that everything would be shut down, schools cancelled for the year, etc. I would never have believed you. Everything that has gone on the past few weeks is just completely outside any of our norms and expectations. And as you have probably heard before, the difference between expectations and reality, is disappointment. Hearing that school was out the rest of the year may have been the first time you were really disappointed not to have school. It is just sad.

Today, we are reading the final words that the Gospel of John records from John the Baptist. Those who were following John the Baptist had great expectations for his life; however, those hopes, dreams, and expectations were all about to come crashing down. But instead of being disappointed, John the Baptist had this hope looking forward to eternity. Remember, John the Apostle's whole point in writing this book is so that we, the readers, would believe and have eternal life (John 20:30-31). It is that truth that this interaction between John the Baptist and his followers points us to today.

Before we look at God's Word, take a few minutes to reflect on the following:

- 1) What are some of the disappointments and unmet expectations you have had to deal with this past week?

- 2) Where do you think God is in these situations? Does He have a plan? Does He care? Is He ignoring you?

Before we look at God's Word, **pray** and ask God to help you see Him as greater than any of your unmet expectations and desires. This is a hard prayer, but I believe God wants to reshape us in this time.

John 3:22-26 ²² After this Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, and he remained there with them and was baptizing. ²³ John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because water was plentiful there, and people were coming and being baptized ²⁴ (for John had not yet been put in prison).

²⁵ Now a discussion arose between some of John's disciples and a Jew over purification. ²⁶ And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, he who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you bore witness—look, he is baptizing, and all are going to him."

- 3) From verse 26, why are some of John the Baptist's disciples complaining to him?

- 4) What expectations do you think John's disciples had when they started following John? How were these not getting met?

John 3:27-30 *²⁷ John answered, "A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven. ²⁸ You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.' ²⁹ The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete. ³⁰ He must increase, but I must decrease."*

- 5) What truth does John point his disciples to in verse 28? What does this tell us about their expectations?

- 6) A wedding is obviously a celebration of the bride and groom. What would you think of a bridesmaid or groomsman trying to make the wedding all about themselves not about the bride and groom? How does that apply to John's point?

- 7) From these verses, what does John see as his role or mission? How is this counter to so much of our culture?

- 8) How does our culture promote being selfish and self-centered? How is this selfishness being stripped away from us right now?
- 9) What do you think it practically looks like in this time for us to decrease and Jesus to increase?

John 3:31-36 ³¹ He who comes from above is above all. He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way. He who comes from heaven is above all. ³² He bears witness to what he has seen and heard, yet no one receives his testimony. ³³ Whoever receives his testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true. ³⁴ For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure. ³⁵ The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand. ³⁶ Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

- 10) From verses 31 and 32, who is the one from above? Who is the one that belongs to the earth? What does this tell us about the importance of God's Word?
- 11) What does God give in verse 34? How does He give it? What do you think that practically looks like?
- 12) How might that gift help us as we are dealing with disappointment and unmet expectations?

13) Remember verse 36 is the last message we have from John the Baptist. What is the core of the message he is telling his disciples? What is he trying to get them to focus on?

14) How is our current situation affecting your view of eternity? How do you need to keep remembering eternity as you face disappointments?

Regardless of all the positive spins people are putting the COVID-19 shutdown (e.g., more family time, time to relax), there will be disappointments and sadness along the way. It is okay to grieve lost sports seasons, times with friends, graduations, etc. But we need to remember, like John, God has a mission and purpose. In these times, He must increase. Further, the sufferings of this present world should make us all the more excited about the eternity that awaits those who believe in Christ. For the “sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed (Romans 8:18) in an eternity with no more death, mourning, crying, or pain” (Revelation 21:4).

To close your time today, some songs to consider worshiping the Lord are below. These are great prayers to refocus on the Lord in the middle of disappointment.

Blessed by Your Name (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=du0il6d-DAk>)

10,000 Reasons (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DXDGE_IRI0E)

I Will Look Up (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rZIO_WUIt3g)