



Our entire lives are framed by expectations. For example, if you expect this sermon to be 10 minutes long, you will be highly annoyed when I go 35 minutes.

However, if you expect this sermon to be 1 hour you will have a completely different experience when I cut it short at the 35-minute mark. The exact same experience can feel completely different depending on our expectations. That's why it's said that expectations frame our experiences.

Sometimes we're tempted to take the approach of English poet Alexander Pope who said, "Blessed is he who expects nothing, for he shall never be disappointed."

But to get to a place of expecting nothing means we have to deaden our desires and dreams. That's a high price to pay in an attempt to avoid disappointment. And I think it's near impossible to remove expectations from your life.

In John 6 we're going to read about a crowd, a very large crowd, that is having their expectations challenged.

A Buffet

Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias), and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the signs he had performed by healing the sick (verses 1–2).

At this point Jesus' popularity is soaring. He's like a rock star, with a huge entourage following him. Everyone is trying to get near him. Jesus is performing amazing miracles and signs and the people love it! There's nothing that's been so exciting in the Galilean countryside. Each day is filled with new possibilities. Expectations are high for something new and something worth talking about.

Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples. The Jewish Passover Festival was near (verses 3–4).

The setting here is a gentle slope, covered with grass, with the Sea of Galilee spread out before them.

When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do (verses 5–6).

Jesus sees a teachable moment.

In our passage today there are four glimpses into Jesus' supernatural/heavenly viewpoint of everything. The first one is that Jesus can easily feed this crowd. It's nothing to him. A near-impossible task for a human is performed with no perceived effort. Everything that was impossible is now possible. Limitations are now removed. We understand impossible situations and limited possibilities because that's the natural world.

Philip answered him, "It would take more than half a year's wages to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!" (v. 7).

Two details that are important here. Half a year's wages. On the peninsula let's just say that's \$50,000. Think of the most amazing party you've ever been to. Did it cost \$50,000? This amount of money would only provide one bite per person. Instead of a banquet of plenty, this would be scandalously sparse!

Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?" (verses 8–9).

As we read the Bible, it's shocking to see that the disciples are so slow to comprehend, isn't it? They've seen Jesus turn water to wine; heal the official's son; heal the invalid at the pool; heal a man with leprosy; raise the widow from Nain's son Luke from the dead; calm a squall on the sea; restore a demon-possessed man from the Gerasenes; raise Jarius' daughter from the dead; heal people all the time. Yet here are the disciples looking at this situation from a natural viewpoint, not a supernatural one.

Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." There was plenty of grass in that place, and they sat down (about five thousand men were there). Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish (verses 10–11).

Notice that Jesus provided "as much as they wanted." Jesus provided an all-you-can-eat buffet! Jesus is not stingy. Jesus is happy to meet the physical needs of this huge crowd of people.

When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted." So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten. After the people saw the sign Jesus performed, they began to say, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world" (verses 12–14).

Meaning that they knew enough Old Testament history to know that the Messiah would perform miraculous signs. They'd been taught this from childhood. Stories of the glorious era of King David were retold in every Jewish home. Every Jew knew that the Messiah would be even greater than King David. And they expected their Messiah to deliver them from the oppression of the Romans, as their King. They were supposed to rule over the entire world with their Messiah King. But their expectations aren't going to develop like they anticipated.

Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself (v. 15).

Jesus doesn't want to be an earthly king. This is the second glimpse into the supernatural/heavenly viewpoint that Jesus has. While a mere human would naturally use his or her miracle-working power to rule a nation and potentially even the world, Jesus is completely uninterested. I can imagine Jesus thinking, "Why would I ever want to be an earthly king when I'm a heavenly king? There's not much glory in being an earthly king."

It's comparable to living your entire life 3-D high-definition full color and stepping into a reality that only had 2-dimensional black and white. It would be profoundly disappointing.

So Jesus slips away, all alone. To do what? What do you suppose Jesus was going to do? We're not specifically told. However, in other situations when Jesus slipped away to be alone, what did he do? He talked to his Father. He prayed. In this we learn a strategy to shift our viewpoint from a natural one to a supernatural one.

Teleportation

When evening came, his disciples went down to the lake, where they got into a boat and set off across the lake for Capernaum. By now it was dark, and Jesus had not yet joined them. A strong wind was blowing and the waters grew rough. When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water; and they were frightened. But he said to them, "It is I; don't be afraid." Then they were willing to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading (verses 16–21).

The third and fourth glimpse in Jesus' diving viewpoint is in these verses. Jesus walks three or four miles on the water in big waves. When Jesus got into the boat, he teleported them to their destination, which was the other side of the lake.

Impossible acts to us, yet effortless for Jesus. Think of the benefits of being near Jesus. You'll always have food. Physical limitations

like waves, mountains, congested traffic mean nothing to him. And if it's real bad, just teleport to your destination. You'd never be stressed about being late. Even as I describe this, don't get mad but I'm setting you up. This is exactly how this huge crowd was thinking. That's why they were following him. Jesus, you offer us everything in this world.

And there lies the divide between Jesus' thinking and the crowd's. Jesus didn't come to earth to give people everything the world has to offer. He came to offer everything heaven has to offer. In this next section of scripture, Jesus explains this to the crowd.

The next day the crowd that had stayed on the opposite shore of the lake realized that only one boat had been there, and that Jesus had not entered it with his disciples, but that they had gone away alone. Then some boats from Tiberias landed near the place where the people had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. Once the crowd realized that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum in search of Jesus.

When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?" (verses 22–25).

The next day, the crowd was trying to figure out where Jesus went and they piece together that by some miraculous act he arrived on the other side of the lake. They traveled over there and asked him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?" You did some crazy miracle to get here, didn't you!"

Notice how the crowd is enamored with Jesus for the wrong reasons. They love the buffet Jesus, the miracle-working Jesus, the teleportation Jesus. They love being around him. They love the spectacle he provides.

More and more I fear that American Christians are subsiding on a faith that involves the buffet and teleportation Jesus and a disinterest in the suffering Jesus, the servant Jesus, the crucified Jesus. Think of all the wrong expectations people have today about Jesus:

- » Jesus should love and fully accept everyone, regardless of their behaviors.
- » Jesus should love but shouldn't judge.
- » Jesus should let everyone into heaven, even a very popular Christian pastor, leader and author who has bought into this one in a book entitled *Love Wins*.
- » Jesus can't really love people because he hasn't eradicated suffering in the world.

In this next section of verses, Jesus uncovers their misplaced expectations and when he's done teaching, many of his disciples quit following him.

Wrong Expectations Uncovered

Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill.

Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe ... For I have come down from heaven ... (verses 26, 35–38).

When Jesus says he is the bread of life, he's obviously speaking figuratively. Bread was a good object to use for a teachable moment. He'd just fed the huge crowd with bread. The crowd was just asking for a miraculous sign, like heavenly manna, when the Israelites were wandering in the wilderness. So Jesus uses the most natural object on everyone's mind—bread. He's telling them: your belief in me will bring you spiritual life and your sustenance will come from me, just like you'd eat bread.

Take a bite of a piece of bread. Talk about the taste, the experience of chewing it and the infusion of the bread into your body. This is what Jesus is saying to us when he says, "I am the bread of life." And he's claiming the authority to say such supernatural statements because he came down from heaven. He was with God the Father in heaven, so he should know.

At this the Jews there began to grumble about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." They said, "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I came down from heaven'?" (verses 41–42).

Notice how the crowd is stuck in a rut, seemingly unable to stop thinking according to the natural world. This is not the moment for Jesus to slow down so their thinking to catch up. Instead, he presses on by saying:

"I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" (verses 51–52).

The poor crowd. The more Jesus talks, the further he moves away from their expectations of making him their earthly King. In hindsight as we look at these verses, it's pretty clear that when Jesus says he will give his flesh for the life of the world that he's predicting how he'll give his body—his flesh—on the cross in order that people can have eternal life. But this is almost completely missed by the crowd. Because they are unable to change their expectations, the crowd is headed down a path of missing the glory and wonder of Jesus. They are missing the eternal life that Jesus is offering them and they are disappointed, let down and confused.

So what do we learn from all this?

- » Surrender our expectations to Jesus. Let him mold them. Let him change them.
- » Expect that Jesus will bring a supernatural/heavenly viewpoint to your life. You could describe Jesus in this way—he had both feet firmly planted on earth but his mind and heart were set in heaven. He's inviting everyone to live this way.
- » If you've never experienced Jesus as the Bread of Life, invite him into your life today.

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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