

1 Peter 1:22 – 2:3  
People of Expectation

There are 1,000 words to describe the people who follow Jesus Christ, but today I want us to focus our attention on one phrase that we as His followers carry with us – expectation. What is expectation? Expectation is the hope that carries us all through life and assures us that even the best it can be is nothing compared to what it will be when Christ returns. These high hopes that we have for a future determine a pattern for our lives. We live a certain way based on the hope that we have. For any dreamers out there like me, you have probably experienced a time when you had high expectations that were not met. We have probably experienced a great distance between reality and expectation and the feeling that we have faced is disappointment. No one likes disappointment and as a preacher of the gospel I have a message for you today – God never disappoints!

You know the feelings I am talking about when I mention the expectations that we carry with us, right? For example, when you are at a wedding there are many things you expect. When the back doors of the church open and hear *The Wedding March*, what do you expect everyone to do? Stand and look towards the back. What a beautiful moment. Or, if you are in a concert hall and the choir and orchestra starts playing Handel's *Hallelujah Chorus* what do you expect everyone in the audience to do? Stand. Or when you went to your Granny's house for breakfast you expected biscuits and were disappointed to arrive and find Granny's on a diet. Now, why do we expect such things? Because we significant things when they come to us. A beautiful bride adorned in white walking an aisle to meet her groom; regal church music that has stirred the affections of worshipers since 1741; or something so simple as the comfort that a granny's homemade biscuits bring; all are significant.

We are continuing our celebration of the Protestant Reformation here at Oxford and are seeing through Peter that the good news of God's saving us through the sending of the Son to be crucified, raised, and ascended has bearings for every portion of our lives. Today I want to talk to you about how this good news affects our expectations when we come together to worship.

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All of us have expectations when we come to a Church service. As we study the Bible today we are going to see that God wants to center our expectations to ensure that his Word is guiding our expectations instead of preferences that are developed without his Word. Hopefully your preference is a posture of surrender. Hopefully your preference and expectations are aligned with His Word, but we have to work real hard to ensure that our preference is His Word.

A church who expects the good of the gospel is a church that has the highest expectations. A church that expects the highest good will never be disappointed. The opposite is also true. A church guided by the preferences of people will always be disappointed.

Thom Rainer, executive of LifeWay, on his blog in 2015 put together a list of the top 25 silly things that church members fight over. Let me read a few of them to you and you tell me if you think the people have high expectations:

- 1 – Argument over the appropriate length of the worship pastor’s beard
- 2 – Fight over whether to build a children’s playground or to use the land for a cemetery.
- 5 – A church argument and vote to decide if a clock in the worship center should be removed
- 10 – A big church argument over the discovery that the church budget was off by \$0.10. Someone finally gave a dime to settle the issue.
- 16 – An argument on whether the church should allow deviled eggs at the church meal
- 22 – An argument over whether to have gluten-free communion bread or not
- 24 – A fight over whether or not to sing “Happy Birthday” each week.<sup>1</sup>

Silly and absurd, right? I am glad we can laugh a little about those things. We are able to laugh because we know that those things aren’t worth anything. So today, as we think specifically about our expectations as a church, not just when we come to church, but as a church, I want to give you 5 expectations we should have as Christ followers. All of these expectations arise from Peter and are centered on the Gospel of Grace.

#### 1. We Expect to Gather

The Church is not this building, this building is the place the Church gathers. This building has a purpose – to be the gathering place for a community to come to center themselves on Christ. I arrive with such expectation on Sundays to a place like this. I’m giddy even the night before because when I look out from this vantage point I see a miracle, I see God’s transforming power of grace all over the place. Some here today, maybe for the first time, we don’t know you, you don’t know us, but I even see you as a potential miracle of Grace. The fact that we would come here today and worship the invisible God who has made himself known through the Incarnation of the Son – what we are experiencing right now - our gathering to worship Him, is a display of the glory of God.

Just last week I ran into a guy that was telling me a little about his story. He used a phrase that church people use. He said, “The Good Lord is looking after me.” I looked at him and said, you’re a believer? He said, Oh yes. My first question back to him: Where do you go to church. His response: I don’t go to church, but that doesn’t mean I ain’t a believer.” Why would my first question be, “Where do you go to church?” Am I right to have such an expectation? Maybe I need to rethink my question, even the demons believe. I should have said, “Are you a follower of Christ?”

Look at verse 22. Notice the shift from the personal to the corporate. There is a place that you and I express our love for one another – each time we gather. Did you know that church attendance is a witness for Christ – not just to the world but to others in the church. What if a major reason that you came to church was for the sake of that person sitting next to you, look at them. What about that person on the back row, or that person on the other side of the church. I

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<sup>1</sup> <http://thomrainer.com/2015/11/twenty-five-silly-things-church-members-fight-over/>

know you know that I come from a large church. I have heard some of you say that you don't want a large church, but how much do you know about the people who sit on the other side of our little church?

If we all came to church for the sake of others then the entire culture of our church would shift. What is the greatest commandment? What is the second that is like it? Where do you fit into the equation? Are you a giver or a receiver? When you don't gather when the church gathers you are not only hindering yourself, you are hindering others. People who are motivated by the gospel think this way. They think upward and outward. People who are motivated by anything else are self-serving hypocrites. Don't be self-serving hypocrites, be gospel-centered lovers of God who love all people, especially the household of faith.

Which is leads in perfectly to what the verse tells us next.

## 2. We Expect to Love

Listen to verse 22 again. Notice the shift from individual aspects of repentance to the affect it has on others, and then look at how it is spelled out – *for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart*. Of course, this type of affection grows from deep roots of grace. The love of God compels us, controls us. But look closer at the verse. This verse has revolutionary implications. Verse 22 tells us that one of the purposes of God saving us is so that we can love fellow believers. Think about that for a minute. Let it sink in. This is far removed from the way that we often think about salvation as an event that ensures heaven when you die. Salvation does ensure being with the Lord forever and all the splendors of reigning with him forever, but one thing that salvation ensures is an earnest affection for fellow followers of Jesus.

The Bible is clear on this issue that it says that if you don't love the Church you don't love God. 1 John 4:20-21 says, *If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother*. Jesus taught, *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.*" (John 13:34–35) And Cyprian summed up these teaching in a marvelous way by saying, *No one can have God for his Father who does not have the Church for his Mother*. (Cyprian, c. 249) Even though Martin Luther and others led protest against Roman Catholicism he agreed and even taught what Cyprian said.

Let me ask you a question. I want you to think. Who are the initial recipients of Peter's letter? Peter tells us they are *Elect exiles*. They are persecuted and suffering, the Master's minority. In the midst of a swirling sea of chaos Peter says the way of endurance is the way of love. Doesn't this make sense? How could we who are the recipients of divine grace, who's hearts now beat because of the warmth of God's love, how could we not love one another? We expect to love and be loved because we are loved! Say that, "I am loved." Now look at someone near you and say, "Because of Jesus, I love you."

## 3. We Expect No Disappointment

I want to skip 23 for just a minute and have us look at verse 24-25. In my Bible, the ESV, verses 24-25 look like a poem. It is a quotation from Isaiah 40:6-8. Whenever the New Testament calls us back to the Old Testament it expects us to know the message the original passage is conveying. In this case, Isaiah 40 begins the “Book of Comfort.” Who wouldn’t want to read something in the Bible known as the “Book of Comfort?” It is called this because Isaiah 40 starts with *Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received for the LORD’S hand double for all her sins.* This section stretches from Isaiah 40 – 55. If you have never read it, read it.

Peter quotes it and gives his own commentary on it. When an Apostle gives commentary on the Old Testament they never get it wrong. Look at the way that he interprets the Book of Comfort for us, look at verse 25. *This word is the good news that was preached to you.* Here is where expectations reach a peak for us. Even while in exile, even if we suffer, even if we are a persecuted minority, we are the privileged people of God who are the recipients of a salvation that God has been bringing to the world since before its foundation.

We don’t have time to do this today but think with me. All the promises of salvation from the distant pages of history stretching back to Adam and Eve in the Garden are now being realized through Christ and his Church. All of history has been leading to where we are right now. If we are holding tightly to the truth of verse 25 then how could we ever be disappointed? The greatest thing that could ever happen to you has begun to happen to you already. You want to be disappointed, put your hope in anything else. You want to never be disappointed, live your life loving to tell the story. I think that Kate Hankey was right to teach the world when America was just out of a brutal Civil War to focus on the story that transcends and centers all stories when she wrote:

*I love to tell the story  
of unseen things above,  
of Jesus and his glory,  
of Jesus and his love.  
I love to tell the story,  
because I know 'tis true;  
it satisfies my longings  
as nothing else could do.*

*I love to tell the story;  
'tis pleasant to repeat  
what seems, each time I tell it,  
more wonderfully sweet.  
I love to tell the story,  
for some have never heard  
the message of salvation  
from God’s own holy Word.*

*I love to tell the story,  
for those who know it best  
seem hungering and thirsting  
to hear it, like the rest.  
And when, in scenes of glory,  
I sing the new, new song,  
'twill be the old, old story  
that I have loved so long.*

*I love to tell the story;  
'twill be my theme in glory  
to tell the old, old story  
of Jesus and his love.*

#### 4. We Expect to Be Comforted

Look at 2:1. I won't spend much time here but I want to mention again that the good news of God's salvation causes us to *put away* things that are unloving. *Put away* anything that would stifle the fires of our affection for one another. Nothing is more disheartening than going to church and feeling unloved by someone who says they are a lover of God. *Put it away!* I think Tom Schreiner is right when he says, "The sins listed tear at the social fabric of the church, ripping away the threads of love that keep them together."<sup>2</sup> Put them away. How? 2:2

#### 5. We Expect to be Nourished

The central command in this paragraph is a positive one – *long for pure spiritual milk as newborn infants*. What a vivid image. What an image of dependence. This image reminds us that we are begotten by God (1:3,23). This doesn't describe new Christians; this verse describes all Christians. All Christians, no matter how new or mature, should have the strong desire for God's Word. Here is my promise to you, as long as God gives us time together, I will always deliver what nourishes you. I will always proclaim "Thus says the Lord." My prayer is that it is always clear, and always straight from God and just what your hungry soul needs. Don't be satisfied with a church service, from singing, to preaching, to praying, that doesn't nourish your soul by the Word of God. And here is the other side of this. Make sure that you have an expectancy to be nourished by the Word. Cry to the Worship Leader to give you the Word. Cry to the Preacher to give you the Word. Don't be satisfied until you get it.

Finally, this morning I want you to look at the last word of this paragraph in 2:3. I don't believe Peter writes this to make us question who we are. I think Peter says this to make us think about who we are so that our expectation will be nothing short of encountering God.

#### 6. We Expect Nothing Short of Encountering God

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<sup>2</sup> Schreiner, NAC, 98.

How do we encounter God on a daily basis? There are many ways. Some might argue that we encounter God in every circumstance, they are probably right. But how can you know? Scripture. If you are not confronted with the Word of God then you are not encountering God.

Look at 2:3. This is like the tip of the spear of the message that Peter is telling us. And, believe it or not, he chooses to confront us by alluding to Scripture. Psalm 34. This isn't by accident. Read Psalm 34 and you'll see a strong emphasis on standing in awe of the Lord, of tasting and seeing that he is good. A sure mark of a believer is one who loves to hear the Gospel. If you can get over the message of the Cross then you've never been under the message of the Cross. Christians love to hear the gospel. Why? Because we love Jesus more than we love ourselves. We are always wanting our lives to conform to our love.

There is an encounter in John while Jesus is on his way to the Cross where some outsiders. Those who didn't belong came to worship Him. They found Philip and said, *Sir we wish to see Jesus. Philip went and Andrew; Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus.* That is who we are, we are people who are marked all through this life with expectation. We don't want Philip, we don't want Andrew, we don't want ourselves, we want only the one who satisfies our longings as nothing else can do.