

27th March 2021

Expectations

“I am giddy, expectation whirls me round ...”

William Shakespeare, Troilus and Cressida

I told a story a couple of days ago of an adult who came to a children's trip dressed as a chicken – because he hadn't realised that “fancy-dress” was for only part of the day and not for the whole time. We had expectations of him that he didn't know about. He had expectations of us that he'd got completely wrong.

Tomorrow, Palm Sunday, brings us to the beginning of Holy Week for 2021. As we explore the accounts of the final days of Jesus' life, I want to consider Jesus' disciples. Whatever expectations they had of Jesus, it's clear that he had expectations of them. Some of these were explicit in his teaching, and some were implicit in the way he lived and the example he set. But either they didn't understand the expectations, or they knew them well enough and failed to live up to them. Jesus expected them to follow, and they ran away. He expected them to pray with him, and they fell asleep. He expected them to stand up for him, but Peter – and others too, I suspect – denied him. So many expectations that remained unfulfilled.

And what of us as we approach Holy Week? Two thousand years on we know Christ's expectations of us well enough. They might even make us feel giddy from being whirled around, just as Troilus felt when he expressed the effect of passions on his life. But, sadly, so often these expectations are unfulfilled. We back off; we fail to pray; we deny rather than affirm. Expectations? Unfulfilled again.

But here's the thing ... despite failing to fulfil the expectations on them, the disciples of old were not rejected. Peter, despite his denials, was given a commission to feed the lambs and sheep of the world. Thomas the doubter was accepted even in his lack of belief. And all the disciples took the Gospel into the world, the Gospel we are now able to share.

Expectations aren't easy to fulfil. We are flawed human beings, after all. But right there we have the assurance of God's acceptance and forgiveness, and our expectations of *that* will always be fulfilled.

A prayer for today

*Lord, I'm sorry I haven't fulfilled your expectations of me.
But I'm grateful that you always fulfil my expectations of you. Amen.*

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