



Luke 22:47-53
The Path of Jesus' Life
Unexpected

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Technically, this morning draws to a conclusion the series we've been in the last several weeks, where we've been looking at the path of Jesus' life focusing on his mission and vision for his life and ministry. I say that this series is *technically* coming to a close because beginning next Sunday we *will* begin a new series called Cross Words. In it, we will look at the last seven statements (traditionally called "the last seven words of Christ") Jesus made – which were all made as he was nailed to the cross. So we'll actually continue to look at the life of Jesus, but significantly slowing down the pace of things as we do so, focusing on the last few hours of his life over 6 or 7 weeks, as opposed to three years of ministry in the last couple months.

But today we see that unexpected conclusion to his life begin with a number of unexpected things that happen here. **The "unexpected" is a part of life that most people learn to expect.** If you've been alive for any length of time, you know that life does not go as you plan it. This can be both for the good and for the bad.

The owner of a meat store tells the story of how a customer came in and informed him she had gotten some unexpected money and wanted to fill her freezer. She picked out about \$200 worth of meat and handed him her credit card. Laughing, the owner said, "I thought you got some unexpected money." "I did," she replied. "They raised the limit on my credit card."¹

So maybe that's unexpected. The unexpected happens to us in a variety of ways: when the doctor says it's cancer, when the pink slip is on the desk, when the ultrasound shows it's twins, when your oldest starts High School, and of course the biggest surprise for us here in Seattle: when the Mariners make the playoffs.

In the life of Jesus, the unexpected happens quite regularly. His birth, death, and resurrection are all unexpected; his baptism is unexpected, his mission is unexpected; the healings he performs are unexpected; many of his teachings are unexpected – like "love your enemies," "blessed are the poor,"

most of his parables have an element of the unexpected; the values that he articulates about the Kingdom of heaven are unexpected; his welcoming of people on the margins of society is unexpected; his critique of the Jewish religious leaders is unexpected...And in today's passage there is the unexpected again.

Now, for those of us who have followed Jesus for any length of time, the events aren't unexpected, in the sense that we know about the arrest of Jesus and what it ultimately leads to. But if you didn't know anything about Jesus and were reading one of the gospel accounts of his life for the first time, or if we just read the gospel accounts of the life of Jesus with fresh eyes, then several aspects of the events described in this passage might be fairly unexpected.

First, it's unexpected that one of his disciples would betray him. Now, if you were to have read all of chapter 22, it wouldn't come as a full surprise, as Luke tells us earlier in chapter 22, "Judas went to the chief priests and officers of the temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus" (Luke 22:4). And shortly later, when Jesus ate his last meal, the Passover dinner, he talked openly about one who would betray him. And yet, in spite of these windows into the future, there is still this element of "the unexpected" in Judas' betrayal of Jesus. How could someone so close to Jesus, who had been with him for the previous three years, do such a thing?

We talked a little about Judas a few weeks ago when we looked at Jesus choosing the 12 Disciples as his closest teammates in ministry out of the much larger crowd of disciples. And we asked, how was Judas an answer to Jesus' prayer about who his 12 closest companions in ministry should be? How could Judas be chosen for this group? How are difficult people, difficult situations, even tragedy...how can they be a part of God's plan in our lives? Well, sometimes God uses these kinds of situations to bring about His purposes. In this case, there was a larger plan about sacrifice and forgiveness, and redemption...a larger plan about reconciliation between people and God....a larger plan about death and resurrection that God was carrying out and working out through Jesus...and that plan is carried out through Judas' betrayal. It's the first domino that falls in a series of falling dominoes that

lead to Jesus' death. And that leads also to his resurrection, this great and glorious event that gives significance to his death unlike the significance of any death that has ever happened, and which gives us hope. Nonetheless, Judas' betrayal is unexpected. (Though we should also keep in mind that for Jesus it wasn't unexpected. Not only did he speak about someone betraying him, but he also said (John 10:18) that he would lay his life down for those who follow him – no one takes his life from him.)

Second, the Disciples drawing swords is unexpected. One of them, at least, pulls out a sword and cut off the ear of one of the people in the crowd who's come to arrest Jesus. This is completely contrary to everything that Jesus teaches on how to handle interpersonal conflict. Jesus never resorts to violence and never encourages it. The closest he ever comes is just shortly before this when he says, "if you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one." But then when the disciples reply by saying, "see Lord, here are two swords" Jesus immediately says, "That is enough." It's not a statement of affirmation that they're now armed appropriately...it's a statement of exasperation that they don't understand the metaphor. He's talking about arming themselves spiritually...being ready for the tough road ahead.

When did Jesus ever, in any of his teachings in the three years he was with the disciples, suggest that they should defend themselves with a literal sword, or worse: go on the offensive with a literal sword. He never did...and for them to think that at this moment, after they just celebrated the Passover meal together, that he's going to contradict himself and everything he's taught and start advocating violence...well, Jesus has had enough of their swords that they pull out. And so when one of them actually does pull out a sword and attacks one of the people in the crowd that's come to arrest Jesus, it's really quite unexpected. No one would anticipate a disciple of Jesus Christ acting in such a violent way, because it's not His way.

Third, Jesus' arrest is unexpected. You just don't see this coming here. Even Jesus raises the point with those who came to arrest him, "Every day I was with you in the temple courts, and you did not lay a hand on me" (Luke 22:53). In other words, they had plenty of opportunities before to nab him if he was doing something wrong, but they never did, because he never did

anything wrong. It's like they've mistaken him for someone else.

This reminds me of a story I've shared with you once before but it bears re-telling. A man was being tailgated by a stressed-out woman. He comes to an intersection and the light turns yellow. Of course, we all know what culture dictates we do when the light turns yellow (step on the gas)... Well, the man stops, and the woman behind him goes completely ballistic. She's honking her horn, yelling at him and waving at him and in mid-rant someone taps on the window of her car. It's a police officer. He takes her to the station where she is fingerprinted and photographed and locked up in a cell. After a couple hours, they let her out and the arresting officer gives her back her personal belongings.

This is what he says to her, "I'm sorry for the mistake. Here's how it happened: I pulled up behind your car while you were blowing the horn and using bad gestures and speaking bad language and then I noticed the "What Would Jesus Do?" bumper sticker on your car and the "Choose Life" license plate holder and the "follow me to Sunday School" window sign and the Christian fish emblem on your trunk. Naturally, I assumed you had stolen the car."

It's as if Jesus is a victim of mistaken identity like that woman was. Because to our ears, he's never done anything to deserve the arrest, and it comes unexpectedly. For them, his claims to being God in the flesh, his talk of destroying the temple and rebuilding it in three days, and other teachings that were considered blasphemous were a threat to the religious establishment, compounded by the huge crowds of people that followed him, compounded by his continual talk about a new Kingdom – the Kingdom of God – which some interpreted as a new political regime he was seeking to establish....all of that led to people perceiving him as a threat to the status quo – political some, and more-so, religious. But to us, and even to many of them in their own day, his arrest was completely unexpected (see the Disciples' reaction).

In the midst of all this unexpectedness, there is something going on that really should not catch us by surprise, and that we can learn from. Notice that throughout this event, **Jesus remains completely calm, cool, and collected.**

It's not that he was without his concerns. During his time of prayer just before this, Luke tells us that his sweat was like drops of blood. But that didn't affect how he treated others – even his adversaries. When Judas approaches him to greet him with a kiss, Jesus confidently asks, “Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?” (Luke 22:48). When the disciples get violent, Jesus sticks by what he's taught, and encourages them to lay their weapons down. When one of the men who have come to arrest him has his ear sliced off by that sword, Jesus lives out his own teaching about loving our enemies and heals the man right there on the spot. Jesus maintains his composure throughout, which if you aren't all that familiar with Jesus that would really be pretty unexpected.

The contrast between Jesus and his disciples is stark. He is calm, and living out everything he's ever taught...while the disciples are freaking out. How are they so different?

The answer is found in the verses prior to today's passage. Jesus was in the garden of Gethsemane, where this arrest happens. He went there during the night to pray. Luke tells us that he regularly did this, which is how Judas knew to bring the arresting crowd. He asked his disciples to stay up praying with him. **Specifically, he said to them to times, “pray that you do not fall into temptation” (Luke 22:40, 46).** What happened? They fell asleep!

So when the men came for him, he was ready, and they weren't. He was prepared, and he didn't fall into the temptation to respond with violence and anger, and instead stayed on course even in the most difficult of circumstances. Jesus had done the hard work of prayer, which strengthened him for the task at hand when challenge came his way.

There are three things we learn from this. **First, Jesus demonstrates that he's a leader worth following.** He stands out from the crowd as truly different. For instance, he's a person who lives what he teaches. There's no hypocrisy...there's no “saying one thing and doing another” in him. From his first public teaching in his hometown synagogue to this point and right through to his death on the cross as we'll see the next several weeks, the path of Jesus' life was steady and true. And that's the kind of person that we need

to influence our lives, to lead us in our own living. Throw in on top of it the empty tomb and his resurrection, and that seals the deal that Jesus is Lord of lords and King of kings and worthy of our worship. And quite frankly, that may be unexpected for some of us. I mean, there are a lot of people who want followers – that’s what Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and other social media avenues are all about: gaining followers and influencing others. But eventually, they all fall short. There’s a stumble, a mis-step, a break of form, a skeleton in the closet, or a simple realization that they aren’t all that different from us. And that causes us to question whether the people who we’re following and who influence us are actually worth following and worth influencing us. Not so with Jesus. He is worth following and worshipping with every ounce of energy you’ve got – and it’s demonstrated from his birth to his death to his resurrection, including right here, in the most stressful and tension-filled of moments.

Second, we learn that the key to living like this is to spend time with our Heavenly Father preparing for what may come our way. Jesus’ specific command to his disciples was to spend time in prayer so that they would not fall into temptation. And look what happened when they didn’t do that, and the temptation to resort to violence came their way: They were unprepared. If our lives are going to authentically and accurately represent and reflect Jesus Christ to the world around us, we’d better spend some time connecting with God, getting ourselves fully dependent on him, going over in our heads how we might respond in certain situations, and so forth. You can’t anticipate every specific stressful or challenging situation that’s going to come our way, so we have to do this in a general sense, and ask God to give us the ability to live with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. But oftentimes we know when crucial conversations are going to happen, when challenging relationships are coming to a tipping point, when a tense conversation needs to take place. Jesus knew this was coming. He said as much at the dinner table when Judas was there with him just a few hours earlier. And so he prepared himself specifically for that, through his time in prayer, and we can do the same.

And lastly, just as Jesus demonstrates that he is worthy of leading us through life: **We who follow Jesus are also to be examples and imitators of him, to**

help others follow him as well. We want to help people see that he is worthy of following, worthy of worshipping. We want to influence people toward Jesus. And that flows right out of spending that time in prayer...it flows out of living as Jesus lived...it flows out of handling ourselves in the tense moments as Jesus did here as his arresters came, and not handling ourselves in the way that the disciples did. Do you think in that moment the Disciples were good representatives of what it meant to follow Jesus? I don't. **We're called to be good representatives of Jesus and live as he did. And that means "living unexpected."** It's Jesus' unexpected life – from his birth to his resurrection and everything in between that is so captivating and attractive. Jesus stands out from the crowd. He's different. And he's not different in a weird or distracting way...he's different in a captivating, inspiring kind of way. By his grace and his Spirit, we can live like that. We can live in unexpected ways. We can live in ways that cut against the grain of society. When the world says, "draw your swords" we can put them down. When the world says, "live for yourself" we can start living for others. When the world says, "Get as much as you can" we can start giving as much as we can. When the world says, "Repay evil with evil" we can repay evil with good. When the world says, "Christianity is dead" we can show them that "Christianity is alive" – because Jesus is alive. He is alive and living in us through faith by the power of his Spirit. The same spirit that made it possible for Jesus to live unexpectedly is in you and me when we live by faith in Jesus Christ. And we can live unexpected lives, that stand out from the crowd, that point people to Jesus.

That's living in an unexpected way. That's walking the same path of life as Jesus walked. That's living as Jesus lived, and it's unexpected. But in the end it's attractive, it points people to Jesus, and it's the way that Jesus invites us to live and find abundant life in Him. Let's pray....Amen.

ⁱ From sermoncentral.com.