

life groups discussion guides

Jesus, the king: making an entrance



LIFE GROUPS

doing life together

*"Don't blame people for disappointing you,
blame yourself for expecting too much from them."*

-- Anonymous

The Unmet Expectations of Humility

When we look at the story of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem at the beginning of the Passion week, we gaze upon an event of great joy – but also one of profound sadness. Jesus is greeted and welcomed into the city as a conquering king, and is soon executed just outside its gates as a common criminal. How could people so utterly and wholeheartedly sold out for Jesus be, likely, some of the very same ones calling for his death just a few days later? What went wrong?

With the benefit of hindsight, we understand that the people were looking for a very different kind of messiah than the one God planned on giving them. There were preconceived notions and resolute expectations of the "anointed one". An adoring throng turns into an angry mob as the man who had the love of thousands one day found himself standing before Pilate with no one coming to his defense.

Q :: Was it wrong for the people to have expectations of Jesus? What would have went into forming those expectations?

Q :: Lest we be unfairly harsh on the crowds of onlookers and folks were followers of Jesus, perhaps, from a distance, let's remember that Jesus' closest friends and followers all ran out on him as well. What, do imagine, were the kinds of things racing through *their* minds?

I think you'll agree that this seismic shift was at least exacerbated (if not totally caused) by Jesus not meeting expectations. When you boil it down to its roots, isn't that the cause of most of the disagreements we have with people? And do we handle it any better? Think of the sad, current state of our public and political discourse? Think of the number of divorces that happen simply because, we are told, "my spouse doesn't make me happy anymore." One of the biggest causes of anger is when we have such high hopes, and then we come crashing down into reality. We're disappointed because we don't get what we wanted, the way we wanted.

Even as believer's we remind ourselves that God's ways are not ours. Still, disappointment from others is tough, and can bring out our worst. I've heard two schools of thought on expectations. One goes something like "always set your expectations so low that you're never disappointed, and pleasantly surprised if things go well." The other is along the lines of "expect the best – but prepare for the worst."

Q :: How do YOU manage your own expectations? From God? From others? Maybe even more telling...of *yourself*?

Q :: I've heard it said that we judge others based on their actions, and ourselves based on our intentions. Do you agree with that? Do we set expectations differently depending on if the expectations are of God, others, or myself?

Q :: My daughter and I were talking recently after a mistake she made and she revealed that all of her friends have this expectation that she is perfect and has it all together. Do we need to be mindful of the expectations others have of us, and should we attempt to help those be set at realistic levels? What might be some consequences of failing to do that?

Q :: Perhaps the best notion about expectations when it comes to walking with Jesus might be "Expect the unexpected". Do you agree with this? Explain.

Scott talked about how the Bible paints many different pictures of Jesus. The one painted at the triumphal entry is one soaked in anticipation and expectation. The people are beside themselves. They know the word of God enough, perhaps, to recognize that Jesus riding into town on a foal of a donkey is a fulfillment of messianic prophecy from Zechariah 9. However, like all of us are capable of doing, they miss something in the passage that is crucial, yet easily overlooked.

Rejoice, O people of Zion! Shout in triumph, O people of Jerusalem! Look, your king is coming to you. He is righteous and victorious, yet he is humble, riding on a donkey—riding on a donkey's colt.

The word they must have looked right past – or maybe misunderstood – is the word “humble”. In the context, it can appear that the word is present to describe the act of riding into town on the donkey instead of a magnificent steed, like some conquering king. But is that really what’s being communicated by this word?

Q :: Have you ever misunderstood, misquoted or misapplied some passage of Scripture, only to find out later that you had it made the mistake? Share that story.

Q :: In researching this lesson, I found MANY quotes about humility. As I read through them I got the impression that maybe people were talking about something completely different than what I understood to be humility. How would you define humility – better yet, what does it look like in action?

Q :: The characteristic of humility was not something foreign to Jesus’ earthly ministry – nor to the word of God that the people of Jesus’ day would have had (the Old Testament). What are some things Jesus did that modeled humility?

Q :: In Scripture, we are often told to “humble ourselves”. Why do you think this is something we are told to do ourselves, instead of asking God to make us humble?

Q :: Why do you think humility is stressed in the Word – and in Jesus’ ministry – but is not esteemed as highly as other virtues or godly character traits.

Conclusion:

As I was writing this lesson, the lyrics to Amy Grant’s song *El Shaddai* came to mind:

*Through the years,
You made it clear,
That the time of Christ
Was near,
Though the people
Couldn't see
What Messiah ought to be.
Though Your Word
Contained the plan,
They just could not understand,
Your most awesome work was done
Though the frailty of Your son.*

God’s Word contains not only “the plan” as it relates to the first advent of the Messiah – but so much more.

I see this as a call to get into God’s Word like never before.
I pray you join me!