

July 9, 2023 - Pentecost 6

Prayer of the Day

You are great, O God, and greatly to be praised. You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you. Grant that we may believe in you, call upon you, know you, and serve you, through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord. Amen.

Gospel Reading - Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

"To what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another, 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.' For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon'; the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds."

At that time Jesus said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Sermon

Expectations
Assumptions
Presumptions
Presuppositions

We all have them
We all impose them
We all inflict them, on ourselves, on others, on life

Others have them
Others impose them
Others inflict them, on us, on others, on life

It's no surprise
It's not shocking
It's not going to make the headlines that people have expectations

The only time it ***might*** make the headlines is when expectations are not ***met***
When assumptions prove to be false
When presumptions are shown to be flawed
When presuppositions are more a function of desire than reality

You know
When a politician promises one thing but does something else

When an airline says a seat will only cost \$60, but then charges an additional \$300 in “fees”

When a church proclaims compassion for the helpless and the stranger, but then brutally runs residential schools

There are all kinds of examples

The fact that we have these expectations is not news

They only grab our attention, for whatever reason, when someone fails to live up to them

But here’s the thing about expectations

They are really **not** about the ones who are living up to them or **failing** to live up to them

Expectations are about the ones who **have** the expectations

Assumptions are about those who are **doing** the assuming

Presumptions are about the people **presuming** them

Presuppositions are about those who think or act regardless of what the facts are

If you are disappointed because someone has not measured up to **your** expectations, that’s about **you**

If **others** express frustration that you didn’t do things the way **they** wanted, or make the same assumptions **they** made, or agree with **their** perspective or thought process, that’s telling you about **them**

Which is a hard thing to remember when someone is dumping a load of expectations on you

Because what they **want** is for you to change **your** behaviour, or your actions, or your priorities, so that **they** will feel more comfortable, so that **their** anxiety will be less, so that **their** expectations and assumptions and presumptions and presuppositions won’t be challenged anymore

Which is what Jesus is addressing in today’s story from Matthew

Matthew portrays Jesus talking about the reaction of some (**Note** - Not **all**); the reaction of **some** of the religious and political leaders to himself and to John the Baptist

Both John and Jesus proclaimed the appearance of the Reign of God

And **some** of the leaders in their audiences obviously had very particular expectations of what the Reign of God would look like

But since neither John nor Jesus met those expectations, those leaders complained about both of them

As Matthew describes it, they complained that John was harsh, and that Jesus was soft

They complained that John was a prude, and that Jesus was a party animal

They complained that John didn't drink, and they complained that Jesus did

Obviously, the point was **not** what they said it was

The issue was **not** about whether John or Jesus **drank** or not

The issue was that neither John nor Jesus met **their** expectations about what the Reign of God was going to look like and what it would really mean for **them**

They had fallen into the trap of believing that the Reign of God would pat **them** on the back and put everyone else in their place

John did not play that game

Jesus did not play that game

Both John and Jesus demonstrated, by what they said, by what they did, and most especially by who they **were**, that the expectations and assumptions, the presumptions and presuppositions of those religious and political leaders missed the mark

But instead of recognizing that fact and stepping back to reflect on it and admitting to themselves that they just might not have the ear of God the way they **wanted** to, they attacked them both, using whatever excuse they could find at the time

To which Jesus responded, "Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds"

Then Jesus says to the crowds who are **not** offended, who are **not** threatened, who **can** hear what he is saying "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest."

Jesus invites the rest of the crowd, Jesus invites his friends and disciples, Jesus invites **us**, to recognize that we **too** have expectations, **and** assumptions **and** presumptions **and** presuppositions

Jesus is inviting us to **admit** them, and examine them, and explore what they mean, using the lens of God's unconditional love, which is **always** Jesus' starting point **and** ending point

He never assumed that everyone would agree with him

But he also never let that fact distract him from proclaiming the appearance of the Reign of God

God's love is given to us right where we are

This does not mean we will be free from expectations, or that our assumptions will always align with Jesus, or that the presumptions or presuppositions of the people around us will fade away into stardust so we can all live happily ever after

But it **does** mean that we can look in the mirror with honesty

We can be challenged without being threatened

We can allow others to have their own perspectives and journeys

We can explore what our expectations are
We can look into where they came from
Why they might have worked in the past and why they might need to change for the sake of the present and the future
Knowing that we are loved and accepted and welcomed in that struggle

And we can grow, one baby step at a time, to refine our sight and self-understanding as we more and more see life through the lens of the unconditional love of Jesus whose yoke is easy and whose burden is light
Amen

Prayers of the People

A - Trusting the presence of God with all creation, we offer our prayers for the world God loves, the church God calls, and for all people according to their needs.

[Short pause]

A - Holy One, you come to us, knowing better that we *ourselves*, the expectations and assumptions we carry. Help us see ourselves more honestly, that we may look to you to guide us forward.
God who calls us,

C - Hear our prayer.

A - Holy One, you come to us in the people around us, who bring their *own* expectations and assumptions with them. Enable us to trust your unconditional love, that we might not be threatened by their difference. God who calls us,

C - Hear our prayer.

A - Holy One, you come to us in the middle of challenges and difficulties, opening our eyes to our self-centredness and fear. Comfort us with the knowledge of your love, that we might continue growing into the people you call us to be. God who calls us,

C - Hear our prayer.

A - Holy One, you come to your church in our brokenness, forming us into a broken community, and sending us to your broken world. Give us faith, even when we are challenged, to trust your presence. God who calls us,

C - Hear our prayer.

A - Holy One, you come to all who are hurting - the sick, the lonely, the cut-off, the lost, the wandering. May we expect to see you with those we name before you.

[Long pause]

God who calls us,

C - Hear our prayer.

A - Holy One, fill our expectations and assumptions with your unconditional love. that we may extend your unconditional welcome to all we encounter. God who calls us,

C - Hear our prayer.

P - Into your hands we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C - Amen.