

AN UNEXPECTED GOD

Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children

Ephesians 5:1

I. We walk with an unexpected God.

A. Is your walk with God different than you expected it would be?

B. Young believers need structure. Older believers need a fresh baptism of a vision of our unexpected God.

II. God the servant (Luke 12:37; Luke 22:27)

[Luk 12:37 NIV] ³⁷ *It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. Truly I tell you, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them.*

[Luk 22:27 NIV] ²⁷ *For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.*

* The image of a master putting on the servant's clothes and serving is a shocking one!

* A slave was always a social inferior, powerless and without social status compared to the master!

III. God the loudest singer (Zephaniah 3:17)

¹⁷ *The LORD your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.*"

* A poem of personal love. That Almighty God should derive delight from his own creation is significant in itself. But that the Holy one should experience ecstasy over the sinner is incomprehensible.

* God and his people mutually rejoice in their love for one another.

IV. God the shameless peacemaker (Luke 15:20)

²⁰ *So he got up and went to his father. "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.*

- * A distinguished Middle Eastern patriarch in robes never runs but walks slow in a dignified manner.
- * There is no qualified acceptance or cautionary reception.
- * The Father freely abandons his position of dignity and station!

V. The “self-conflicted” God! (Hosea 11:8,9)

⁸ *“How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I treat you like Admah? How can I make you like Zeboyim? My heart is changed within me; all my compassion is aroused. ⁹ I will not carry out my fierce anger, nor will I devastate Ephraim again. For I am God, and not a man-- the Holy One among you. I will not come against their cities.*

- * God transcends his own deserved justice and redeems.

VI. God the companion of the lowly (Isaiah 57:15)

¹⁵ *For this is what the high and exalted One says-- he who lives forever, whose name is holy: “I live in a high and holy place, but also with the one who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.*

- * This is God’s paradox. The place of glory and power belongs not to the proud, ambitious and strong of humankind, but to the contrite, meek and lowly of spirit.

VII. God the meek (Matthew 11:29)

²⁹ *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.*

- A. Greek aristocrats disdained humility as a virtue. Jesus, however, identifies with those of low social status.
- B. Human convention finds it hard to see as “meek and lowly” one who can claim that everything has been entrusted to him by God!

VIII. God who grieves (Ephesians 4:30; Psalm 78:40)

[Eph 4:30 NIV] ³⁰ *And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.*

[Psa 78:40 NIV] ⁴⁰ *How often they rebelled against him in the wilderness and grieved him in the wasteland!*

* This glimpse into the heart of God is in harmony with the most compassionate depictions of Christ in the New Testament.

IX. God the seeker not waiting to be sought (Luke 19:10; 2 Samuel 14:14)

[Luk 19:10 NIV] ¹⁰ *For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.*”

[2Sa 14:14 NIV] ¹⁴ *Like water spilled on the ground, which cannot be recovered, so we must die. But that is not what God desires; rather, he devises ways so that a banished person does not remain banished from him.*

- A. Such irony, God established the world system that requires death, but then works to contravene his own system by creating ways to spare life.
- B. The Lord makes harsh judgments against sinners and then establishes mechanisms for reconciliation. This same principle should characterize all of his people. We should seek, not waiting to be sought.

X. God’s supernatural and “contrarian” strategies

A. Winning through death (Colossians 2:14)

¹⁴ *having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross.*

* The very instrument of disgrace and death by which the hostile forces thought they had him in their grasp and had conquered him forever was turned by him into the instrument of their defeat and disablement.

B. Rulers from peasants (Luke 22:30; 1 Corinthians 6:3)

[Luk 22:30 NIV] ³⁰ *so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*

[1Co 6:3 NIV] ³ *Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life!*

* God’s unlikely choices confound and disarm the proud.

C. Power through weakness (II Corinthians 12:9)

⁹ *But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.*

* Paul has learned that the presence of the crucified Christ is mediated more perfectly through suffering and weakness than through human glory and strength.

- * Paul's ministry assumes a cruciform character, which rejects the path of status, position, power and prestige and embraces the folly and humiliation of the cross as God's deepest wisdom.

XI. God the reverser of status (Psalm 113:5-8)

⁵ Who is like the LORD our God, the One who sits enthroned on high, ⁶ who stoops down to look on the heavens and the earth? ⁷ He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; ⁸ he seats them with princes, with the princes of his people.

- A. The poor hover near the refuse heap outside the city for warmth from the perpetual burning and for food from the garbage but God exalts them, the lowest of society, to an equal portion with the highest (with princes).
- B. God is filled with compassion for those who have been humbled by life's circumstances.
- C. The one "who is enthroned on high" is at the same time the one who "stoops to look".