

Expectations Reached - January 11, 2026

God is beginning to unfold a process of change, both within each of us and here at the church as well. I'm really looking forward to what God is doing. And as you were driving up this morning, you probably noticed a really big change on this south wing of the building here.

I had several requests to know what the color was, and I don't know how to describe that color, but there you go. That's the color. And so, really excited about what's going on, and I think it looks different.

But I think it looks good, too. It's gonna be, I was sharing with someone, I was like, imagine six months from now, someone who's never been here, never seen the building, and they just see a building, and they walk in, and you're gonna have this beautiful log-textured church. It's gonna be a really exciting thing.

But really excited about what God is doing here, and I think that there's several things that are gonna happen this year. At least that's what I feel like God has in my spirit. And my last sermon that I shared in 2025 talked about reflecting on the year and where God has brought us from and what he's brought us through.

And I shared out of the book of Isaiah where the prophet says, my ways are not your ways, and my thoughts are not your thoughts, and they're higher than ours. And, you know, we often expect God, the creator, who just has to speak things, and they come into existence. We often expect God to manifest instantaneous in our lives the things that we ask for.

In other words, when we're praying for something, we just hope that God will drop it in our laps, amen? And while miracles do happen, that's not the only way that God works, and it's a small part of the way God works. And Isaiah chapter 58 gives us a picture of how God sends his word to accomplish his will. And it's described by the process that God gives us both seed and bread.

So it starts with rain coming down, wetting the soil, which starts the germination process, which causes the grain to sprout, and then it grows and produces fruit by which we can have seed and also bread to eat. And last week for communion, as I was sharing with communion, I shared about how we often mark the new year by resolutions. And to me, this is my definition of a resolution.

I understand it's probably not the Webster's Dictionary, but that's okay. My name's Will, not Webster. But I often look at resolutions, especially New Year's resolutions specifically, as something that we look back and desire to fix what went wrong or mistakes that we made in this next year.

And so you don't have to agree with that. Maybe your definition is different, but I don't really care for New Year's resolutions because, well, I just don't stick to them. So why make something that I'm not gonna stick to? But what I have done in the past couple years is I begin every year with expectations.

And if they sound the same to you, that's fine. If you wanna become a pastor, you can preach and you can give your own definitions. This is my definition, okay? They feel different to me, if you will.

An expectation and a resolution is two different things. And this is my thought process. As we make resolutions, we are looking back to what we didn't accomplish.

But when we have an expectation, I feel like you're looking forward. And so that's my definition of it. And as we come into this new year, I would ask what expectations do you have? And I don't necessarily mean resolutions because I don't wanna change the negative, but I wanna talk about goals or dreams that we expect to reach this year.

And here's a thought that I put together to help you give some structure to my definition because I feel like there's plenty of opportunities to have regret and shame about choices we made in the past. But looking forward, we should have goals and dreams that we're expecting to realize. So resolutions come from looking back and making choices tomorrow for results we wanted today.

That's how I view new year's resolutions. I wanted to lose 10 pounds last year and I can't do that. So I'm gonna start tomorrow because I wish I had it today.

But an expectation, I find I feel like I'm looking forward to where I want to be and I make choices today that will influence my arrival at that expectation. So as we jump into our sermon this morning, I need to understand those definitions and how I am phrasing what I'm saying this morning. So I wanna read a passage out of Psalm chapter 37.

It's gonna be verse three. Very simple passage of scripture. It says, trust in the Lord and do good.

Dwell in the land and feed on his faithfulness. Let's pray this morning. Father, we thank you for your word.

This morning, we thank you for the opportunity to be in your house, to hear all that you're doing, to see all that you're doing in each of our lives and to be able to share that and to encourage one another, to be encouraged and to be able to just take our focus and put it upon you. So Father, as we begin this new year, Lord, as we launch into this new year, I pray that you would give us expectations this year that you would have us realize in our lives, Father, that we would understand that God, you're a God of going forward, not a God of going back. And so Father, I pray that you would help us to understand that about you.

Lord, I pray that you would give us ears to hear your word this morning. Lord, may we be sensitive to the Holy Spirit. Father, may I speak words that would bring life.

And we thank you for this in Jesus' name, amen, amen. A couple weeks ago, we had Tuesday night prayer for the new year on New Year's Eve, Eve. And as I was praying, I really felt that God dropped a word in my heart.

I'm not one of those people that do words for the year. I know there are quite a few people who will spend time fasting and praying and seeking God for a word for the year. I'm not one of them.

But I feel like God gave a word to me as I was sitting there during that time of prayer. And this May will be our third year of pastoring here at the church. And over the past six years, there have been a lot of changes to the church.

Can you say amen? Amen. You know, six years ago, I'm just bringing up mean stuff today, but you're just gonna have to bear with me. Six years ago, we were just learning about COVID.

Boy, can you imagine, huh? What a wild time that was. My family, my wife and my five children had just moved here to the church, or we would be moving in April anyway, six years ago. Had been a part of that church for 15 years, working there, and Pastor Jeff met with me in January.

I think it was this week, in January of 2020, and asked me if I would pray about coming to the church. And I said yes, but really in my heart, I said no. Anyway, long story, you've probably heard it before.

And Pastor Jeff was looking to step down and retire from pastoring. And if you remember at the church at that time, I know COVID shut a lot of this stuff down, but Faith Kids was still active, and a lot of other beloved ministries in the church were still going. And things began to change after that.

COVID really changed a lot of things in a lot of our lives. And I remember praying in this church, walking in the pews, I think it was in 21, and just really seeking God. And to be honest with you, I was wrestling with God.

How many of us have ever wrestled with God about something? And I was really wrestling with God with several things in the church as I was staring down, becoming the pastor here at the church. It's not an easy calling, if you will, and it's not something that I just haphazardly walked into. I did spend a considerable amount of time praying and asking for God's guidance.

Specifically, my dad had transitioned into five churches, so I understood a transitioning pastor. And it's not easy sometimes because you have a lot of beloved ministries that aren't always going to continue. And of course, if you've been here through the last past six years, you've known that some of those have stopped in those past six years.

But I was really praying that God would give me direction and guidance on some of these things. During that time, and God gave me a word as I was walking here in the church and had me look to it, which was interesting enough. I had just gotten this Bible that week.

I had just purchased this Bible, and it's a Charles Spurgeon study Bible. I love this Bible, but it's written in the Christian standard version. It's a different version, but I enjoy it.

But he gave me a scripture out of Psalm 46, verse 10. You probably know the scripture. Be still and know that I'm God.

But this version here is a little bit different wording. And I just happened to be walking with this Bible and reading, and I felt God lead me to this passage of scripture. Do you know what it says in the Christian standard version? It says, stop wrestling.

And I was wrestling. I mean, deep in my spirit, really tugging on some of these things. And the word says, stop wrestling and know that I'm God.

I mean, what a word for me in the moment that I was in. And so from that point, I really settled down. And I remember to Pastor MJ Chagrin, she was not happy when I got that word for a few things, but don't mean to call you on the carpet there, sorry.

We wrestled too a little bit back in those days. But I really began to stop wrestling with certain things, and I just gave it over to God and said, you know what, Lord, I'm gonna commit this to you, and I'm gonna trust that you're gonna take care of things that I don't understand. Because as again, I had just joined this church.

Many people have been here for many, many years, longer than I have. But those memories came back to me this week as I thought on the word expectation. Because there's been a lot that's

happened over the last six years to bring myself to the place where I am in this church, to the place where we are.

And as I was reading this scripture, this passage in Psalm chapter 37 jumped out at me, talking about expectation. And this is the message I feel that God gave me that I was to pass to you through this scripture. We are to do three things if we want to see or realize the expectations God has for us.

Psalm 37, three lines it out for us. We must first trust God. Second, we must do good.

And the third, we must be at peace. We must learn to dwell in the land that he's given us and to feast upon his faithfulness. So it all begins with trusting God, right? Amen.

That's the easy part. Not really, huh? But it is in a way, because I can trust God because listen to this passage in Isaiah chapter 43. It says this.

It says, thus said the Lord who created you, O Jacob, and who formed you, O Israel, fear not, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by your name. You are mine.

I understand that he's talking about the nation of Israel, but these scriptures also speak to us because God has redeemed us. God has called us by name. And we are his.

So how many of us are redeemed this morning? You have no reason to fear according to this passage of scripture. We have been called by his name. If God knows your name, can you say amen? All right.

We belong to God. We are his. And because of that, I can trust him.

That's the basis of trust that I can have with God because he gives me this promise that the creator God in heaven knows me personally. He's called me by my name, and he has called me his. So nothing will ever go wrong.

Hmm, yeah. If all of that is true, which it is, why is it so hard to trust God completely, wholeheartedly all of the time? Well, the answer actually is found in verse two of Isaiah 43. And it says, Thus, when you pass through the waters, I will be with you.

And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. And when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flames scorch you. Life is full of challenges.

You can leave that up there for just one second. I underline two parts of that because they point out a truth that we have to understand when we face life's challenges. Because there will be rising waters, there will be rivers, there will be fire, there will be scorching flames, there will be times of pain, times of trial, times we want to give up, times we feel like we're going to be overwhelmed.

But God says, I have called you by name, I have redeemed you, and you will pass through these things. So what does it mean to pass through the waters? I wanna break down these three things here, the waters, the rivers, and the fire. The waters, I believe in this passage, it's those feelings that seek to drown us and overwhelm us, sapping our strength until we give up.

They're things like fear, anxiety, stress, or apathy. See, each of these in their own way moves us into ourselves. It causes us to pull away from other people and other things and kind of hunker into our little shell.

But what ultimately happens is we begin to move away from God and those we love. And if not dealt with, they produce a suffocating, drowning, overwhelming shell of who we once were. And if you're feeling any of these things, that's okay.

That you're still called by God, you're still redeemed by God, because this passage says that you will experience these things, as it says, when you pass through them. You're going to pass through seasons of difficulty, depression, stress, anxiety. These are all things that we deal with almost on a daily basis.

It doesn't mean that you're less of God's child. It just means that God is with you. There's things you have to do.

And we're gonna see why here in just a little bit. See, we're all gonna deal with these times, but we must learn to pass through them and not to settle into them and live in them. Next, the writer says that we will face rivers.

If you're new here, or if you've not heard me speak much, I love medieval history. I just enjoy knights in shining armor. I don't like horses, but I wish they had one with armor on it, that would be fun.

But I just enjoy reading about those times. I enjoy the history of it. And one of the greatest obstacles for any invading army to overcome in the new land was a river.

They weren't familiar with the land, and most rivers were impassable because you had the baggage train and you had all the stuff that comes with the armies. And they would block what would seem to be an easy march to whatever the target was. And when they would come to a river, they would have to send out search parties looking for a fjord to pass, and they would go miles sometimes in the directions of the rivers to find a place where they could get the carts and the people in the army across with relative safety.

So when we face rivers, I believe it's talking about obstacles in our life. So what are some obstacles we might encounter in life? Well, they can be people. Probably the biggest obstacle we'll face in life is people.

But they can also be money, could be health, could be addictions, could be your job. There are lots of obstacles in life. But yet here again, we are told to pass through the rivers.

So in passing through them, we are given the promise that they will not overflow us. But if we choose to stop in the midst of them, they will sweep us away. They will keep us from realizing what God is leading us to.

They will keep us from understanding or living in the expectations that God is giving us. And then of course, last in Isaiah 43 says, there will be fire and scorching flames. These are the destructive things in life.

These often come in the form of attacks or trials that seek to destroy our faith. This is a favorite tactic of the enemy. He loves fiery darts.

He likes to throw them and get us in our weak points. And my mind went immediately to Job. See, Satan sought to destroy, not Job himself, he wanted to destroy his faith in God.

Satan goes to God and says, if I take all this stuff away, he's gonna curse you. See, it wasn't about hurting Job. It was about his faith in God.

And Satan will often send the fiery darts. And it's not so much just to hurt you. It's to cause you to doubt your faith in God and just to walk away.

That's his ultimate goal for us. So everything that hit Job, the consuming fires that seemed to destroy everything in his life had one purpose, was to make him walk away from his faith in God. And when we face these things, trusting God can be very challenging because it doesn't feel like God is there in the midst of them.

It feels like we've been abandoned. It feels like we've been left to our own. And God is just up there saying, well, hope you make it through.

At least that's how it feels sometimes. See, the trick is to keep our focus on Jesus and not the obstacles, not the waters, not the fire. Peter demonstrated this for us when he stepped out of the boat.

As long as his focus was on Jesus, he was passing through the waves that were hitting him. He was walking over his problems. He was succeeding.

But the trick is to keep our focus on Jesus. That's how we're able to pass through these things. So as you set your expectations, remember it all begins with trusting God.

Despite the trials that come. Because most of the time, it is through these trials that God is trying to prepare us to be able to actually realize.

Realize the expectation that we have. Charles Stanley said this, he says, when we walk through trials, remember that God is not only with us, but he is also working on us, preparing us for greater things. So as you begin to lay out the expectations you have, we must start by trusting that God is with us, and that we're setting them according to his purposes for our life.

The psalm continues, it says, trust in the Lord and do good. Trust in the Lord and do good. What does that mean to you? And I'll be honest with you, it was these two words, the do good, that piqued my interest this week and kind of began this thought process for the sermon this morning.

So the psalmist says that we are to trust and we are to do good. But what does he mean by that? The word do in Hebrew is the word asah, and it is this, according to Strong's, it is to do or make in the broadest and widest sense. And then it goes on to list about 30, 40, 50 examples of what that means.

Just a couple of them for you. We are to do means we are to accomplish, we are to become, we are to bestow, we are to be busy, we are to have charge of, we are to execute, we are to feast, we are to finish, we are to follow, to gather, to go about, to govern, to hinder, to be industrious, to labor, to make, to be occupied, to offer, to pass through, to perform, to provide, to sacrifice, to spend, to yield, to use, we are to do. So it boils down to a very simple phrase, to bring forth, to be actively involved in doing this.

So we must trust God, but that doesn't mean we're to sit back on our laurels and do nothing. If we're humbly submitting our expectations before God and trusting him, God says, that's great, but

don't just sit back and let me do all the work. We can't just trust God that he will deliver all of our expectations wrapped in pretty paper with a bow.

That's not how God works. I remember as a kid I would talk to my dad about different things and prayers, and I've had several fascinating encounters with my dad asking him things, and one of the things I was asking him, I was 16, 17 years old, and I was faced with going to work, you know, and my dad was a very honest man, and he said, if you want something you earn it, and you get it. You don't ask for it, you don't beg for it, you do.

That was basically what he was saying, he's like, you do, and I was like, man, but dad, why do I have to do all this? Why can't God just provide like he says in his scripture? I mean, God says, I will provide for you, and he's like, he does, he provides opportunity. I was like, I don't want opportunity, I want money bags from heaven, like, yeah. Anybody ever got a money bag from heaven? Yeah, well, stamped with heavenly coin? No, it doesn't really work that way.

See, God doesn't deliver them wrapped in pretty paper with a bow, does he? Rather, we are to trust God and take advantage of the opportunities that he sets before us. We are to do. We're to do what? We're to do good.

The word good is the word tobe in Hebrew, and it means good as both an adjective and a noun, and it can mean good, it can mean a good, it can mean a good thing, it can mean a good man or a good woman. See, the good is something beautiful, bountiful, prosperous, or precious. And you know what's interesting about the word tobe? God used it every day in creation.

As he would get to the end of the day, he would examine what he made, what did he say? And God saw that it was tobe. You are called in Psalms to do tobe, just like God. We are to bring forth, accomplish, become, furnish, make, offer, provide, serve, and advance the beautiful, bountiful, prosperous, and precious in life.

Would you like for me to repeat that for you? I just took a bunch of words from the definition. To do good means to bring forth, accomplish, become, furnish, make, offer, provide, serve, and advance the beautiful, bountiful, prosperous, and precious in life. Galatians chapter 6, 9 says, let us not be, let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we will reap if we don't lose heart.

Matthew chapter 5 or 6, Jesus tells us, let your light so shine before men. Let them observe your good works. We are to do good in life, to bring forth the beautiful and precious, not only in our own lives, this is the beauty of our faith in Jesus.

It's not just a selfish thing. We are to do good to our neighbor. I am to work to actively bring good to you, just as I am to me.

See, God gives us the ability to dream and to grow and to trust, but he also trusts us to do our part to accomplish it. One of the things my dad shared last week as he talked about the book of Jonah really impacted me, and I know a lot of people repeated it to me, but he shared as he was speaking, he said, the Lord believes in us more than we believe in ourselves sometimes. He believes that the call that he has put into our heart, we are able to accomplish it.

Isn't that interesting? The Creator of heaven who speaks everything and created you, trusts you to do good. He trusts you to make choices in your life to get you closer to the calling that he's put you in, or the calling that he's given you, or the ministry that has been laid upon your heart. I have a lot of friends who want to be in the ministry, but boy, I was talking to a friend yesterday.

He's had big dreams, he's my age, and he just wants to do all this stuff, but refuses to take one step in that direction. He thinks God's just gonna bring it all to him and it's all gonna be easy and it's all gonna be great, but that's not how God works. See, God trusts us to take steps and to make choices to accomplish what he has given us in our hearts to see fulfilled.

The expectations that he's put within us, you and I have something to do to realize it, and God trusts us and he believes in us even when we don't. So we are to trust God and to do good, and when we live this way we can dwell in the land and feed on his faithfulness. Three years ago this month, January of 2023, I preached a sermon that I have often gone back and read, and God has spoken to me many times through that sermon, and it's titled, Don't Be Dismayed, and it was preached on January 1st of 23.

If you have the app, you can go back and find it. Not that you have to, but God has really spoken to me several times through that sermon. But the part that really caught my attention back then, and he also came to mind this week as I was pondering this passage of scripture, in Deuteronomy chapter 31, Moses is setting things up as he is getting ready to pass on.

God has told him to turn everything over to Joshua, and he's given instructions to the children of Israel, and he's also giving instruction to Joshua. And he spoke to Joshua and gave him these instructions in Deuteronomy 31-7. It says, Then Moses called Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, Be strong and of good courage, for you must go with this people to the land which the Lord has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall cause them to inherit it.

And I feel now, as I did back then, that God gave this word to both me and to this church, and that I must go with this people to the land which the Lord has sworn to their fathers to give them, and cause us to inherit it. Not patting myself on the back at all. I still don't fully understand what God is doing with that, but I understand that God has laid that upon my heart.

So what do I do with that? Do I just sit in my office and twirl my thumbs and be like, all right God, I'm waiting for this. No. I don't know what it means to you to dwell in the land and to feed on his faithfulness.

But God does. God has put expectations in your heart. He's put things in your heart that you really feel like, man God, I can't do this.

This is beyond me. This makes no sense. God, you see what I'm going through in my life.

I'm having trouble trusting you just to make it to bed tonight, much less whatever else is in the future. But what I do know is that if you and I are going to dwell in the land and feast on his faithfulness, it begins by trusting God to do his part. And I know, as I have shared, that can have its difficulty.

But I find most of the time when we have reason to distrust God, it's not because of anything God's done. It's because of expectations we've had that weren't God's. It's the fleshly desire to see something answered in a way that we want answered for selfish reasons.

But God says, no, I'm not gonna answer that question. I'm not gonna answer that prayer that way, because that's gonna hurt more than it's gonna help. See, life has its shares of troubles, and it's going to throw deep waters, it's gonna throw obstacles, it's gonna throw fire that burns.

But we have the promise that God is going to be with us through all of them. And we must trust that each trial brings us closer to God and closer to realizing the call and the purpose and the expectations that God has put in our hearts. But as we shared this morning, it's more than just trusting God.

We must also do good. We must make choices. We must take steps to allow God to take advantage of the opportunities that God gives us.

See, we can bring forth beautiful and precious people and things from this life. We can invest our time and our energy into people and different activities that will bring glory to God and bring about beauty in someone else's life. We have the ability to do good.

See, God has given us the ability to create, and he believes in you more than you believe in you. I saw something this past week that I took comfort in, and it was the fact that it was a meme or something, and it said that when God called you, he understood the fool that he was calling. I'm not trying to say you're a fool, but man, I have answered that bell more times than I want to tell you this morning.

But God didn't call you thinking you would be perfect. He didn't put expectations in your heart saying, man, if I do this, they're gonna walk the straight and narrow from now till then. Absolutely not.

He called you knowing every bit of your humanity, every struggle you've had, every sin you deal with. And he's like, you know what? I trust. I trust that person.

I trust you to see your faults, to ask me to help you, but also to make choices to help yourself. And God does that. So as we look forward to this year and we set our expectations, we must understand that they don't happen on accident.

That's really the the phrase that caught me this week. We don't realize expectations accidentally. They have to be purposely sought after.

They have to purposely be in our hearts and minds, and as we make choices, we make choices to be where God has told us we're going to go. To make choices to accomplish the calling that he has put in our hearts. See, expectations are fulfilled when we move and act with purpose to trust God and do good.

That's when you dwell in the land, and that's when you see his faithfulness, and it fills you and can give you the strength to continue trusting and doing good. Despite what the trials are, despite what life gives us, Jesus said it in the Gospels, he promised it, in this life you will have troubles. Guys, I don't have another promise for you.

You're gonna face it. They come. But this is what we do have.

We have a Savior that knows us personally. We have a Holy Spirit that lives within our hearts, that grabs us by the hand and says, hey, come on, we can get through this together. And as we grasp that help, we begin to walk in God's faithfulness.

Amen. Stand with me this morning. Two things today.

Two questions. Have the trials in life caused you to let your trust in God waver? See, we're all going to experience overwhelming seasons, emotions, obstacles, and attacks, but we can't settle in them. Isaiah says we have to pass through them.

Second, are you doing good? Are you actively making choices? Are you accomplishing? Are you hindering the things that need to be hindered in your life so that you can do good? Are you doing? Are you participating? Because here's the truth I have found. We're either doing good or we're doing bad. See, God's expectation is to give us a land to dwell in, to fill us with his faithfulness, but you'll never get there by accident.

You'll never just wake up one day and be like, hey, I'm here. Wow. We only reach and fulfill God's promises if we purposely trust God and do good.

So this morning as I close, expectations are looking forward to where I want to be, making choices today to set myself up to succeed tomorrow. Trust God. Do good.

Live in peace. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for your word this morning.

And Lord, I am very much expecting what you're going to do this year, both in my personal life, in my heart, but I'm also filled with great expectation of what you're going to do in this church. The direction and the path that you have set us on, Father, I pray that you would help us all to understand and to realize, Lord, that it's not by accident, but yet that you have a purpose to accomplish, and you have called each one here to play their part to accomplish that purpose. And Father, I pray that you would be with us personally this month, this week, as we reflect on your word, that we would understand that trusting you doesn't come on the high and easy road.

Trusting you happens in the midst of the battles, the rivers, the obstacles, the fires. It is through that time that you are preparing and making us stronger to be able to handle the place that you have called us to. But also let us not get tired in doing good, Father.

Let us keep our hands to the plow to continue to make choices to honor you, to bring about holiness in our life, to bring about the change that you've promised, and that you help us accomplish, but have given us a part to play. I thank you for this this morning, Father. I pray that you'd bless those who've heard this word today.

I pray that you would change our hearts, change our minds, Lord, that we might become more like your Son, Jesus. And I ask this in your heavenly name. Amen.

Amen. Thank you guys so much. Glad to have you.

Tuesday night prayer at 6, if you'd like, and we'll see you next week.