

Jesus The Prophet II

Disappointments lead to hopelessness. And fulfillment leads to trust. How many of you are totally certain that either Kamala Harris or Donald Trump is the right leader for the country and the world. People more and more use the phrase “the lesser of two evils” to express their disappointment. Or let’s talk about sports. How certain or hopeful are you that your team is going to win something? Let’s say the Broncos... or the Nuggets... the Rockies... or the Rapids?

You see, disappointments lead to hopelessness. However, the success or fulfillment of something leads to hope and certainty.

What causes such disappointments? Why so often do believers find themselves struggling to trust Jesus?

There is a beautiful story at the end of the Gospel of Luke that goes from hopelessness to hope and back to hopelessness and back to hope.

Luke 24:13-27

¹³ Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles^[a] from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. ¹⁵ As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; ¹⁶ but they were kept from recognizing him.

¹⁷ He asked them, “What are you discussing together as you walk along?”

They stood still, their faces downcast. ¹⁸ One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, “Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?”

¹⁹ “What things?” he asked.

“About Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. “He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. ²⁰ The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; ²¹ but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. ²² In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning ²³ but didn’t find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. ²⁴ Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus.”

²⁵ He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

This happened the same day Jesus resurrected, as everyone was still trying to figure out what had just happened. It was supposed to be a celebration week, as every year the Jewish people gathered to celebrate Passover. And all the sudden, in less than 24 hours it went from this beautiful celebration to court, to a sentence, to a death row, to crucifixion, to burial. Jesus had been crucified and the disciples were left confused, disappointed, and hopeless. People were very confused as many of them had reached that point of faith where they started to think of Jesus as the long-awaited savior of Israel. But his crucifixion was a disappointment and failure because it shouldn't have happened according to the expectation of many. It was not the plan. It was shocking!

Why was it shocking? Because it was not expected. And why was not expected? because even though they welcomed Jesus' life and ministry, they didn't welcome the entire message that Jesus came to give. That was the problem. It sounds familiar. A custom-made truth and therefore a custom-made faith, and therefore, a distorted view of who Jesus is.

In the story, Jesus pointed out that the issue was about "believing what the prophets have spoken." (v. 25-26) What prophets? In this case it means, the entire Old Testament. There are at least 50 direct prophecies about the Messiah that Jesus fulfilled, and there are more than 300 allusions or indirect references to the Messiah that Jesus also fulfilled. So, Jesus is saying something like "you feel disappointed because you failed to believe what it was written about me." The script didn't match the personal preferences of how the story was supposed to unfold.

So, Who is Jesus? **(slide)** What is the original script? In what ways are we like the two disciples? Are the Jesus of the Bible and my idea of Jesus aligned?

One thing that the two disciples got 100% right was that Jesus was "a prophet, powerful in word and deed."

By the time Jesus was crucified, most likely most of the people in Israel recognized him as a powerful teacher and miracle maker.

If you would have the opportunity to pick, which of the two will you pick: Jesus the powerful teacher or Jesus the miracle maker? Here is the thing, biblically someone could be a prophet without the signs and miracles, but not without the teaching. The miracles and signs that we see in the Bible occurred to validate a special time of God's intervention in the history of his people. There are three main clusters of miracles and signs in the Bible: Moses, Elijah, and Jesus. The miracles that they performed validated their identity as special messengers of God. The miracles validated their message. So, Jesus' miracles need to be seen in the context of God's most special movement in history.

When we read the Scriptures and see miracles including the Old Testament, we need to read them in context. We need to read beyond the immediate results of someone being healed, or people being fed, or the storm being calmed. Miracles in the Bible are part of a bigger message. They are pieces of a puzzle. What's the big picture, then? To validate the word of a prophet.

Jesus performed miracles as part of his overall message: “I am the Son of God, I am the Messiah.”

Matthew 11:2-5

²When John, who was in prison, heard about the deeds of the Messiah, he sent his disciples ³to ask him, “Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?”

⁴Jesus replied, Go back and report to John what you hear and see: ⁵The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor.

John’s question was radical. “I’m willing to believe and follow, I just want to make sure you are the one.” And Jesus’ answer was not, “yes” or “no.” Jesus said, believe in what you’re hearing and seeing.

Matthew 8:16-17 shows how the miracles in their totality are part of a bigger picture, as the fulfillment of prophecies regarding the Messiah,

¹⁶When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick. ¹⁷This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah:

“He took up our infirmities
and bore our diseases.”

Jesus as prophet fulfills the entire Old Testament and much of this fulfillment is about his work as a teacher, including his miracles as part of his prophetic teaching work.

This is why as we continue to serve this community, we need to be wise about how we love and show compassion. Christian compassion is not about filling in a gap or a need, it’s about helping people to find in Jesus their hope and to see their own need of salvation. For example, I love the fact that we have a foodbank, however, I have wonder if at some point we are supposed to challenge people like Jesus did,

John 6:25-27

²⁶Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. ²⁷Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.”

Jesus is still a challenge for many as it was for the first disciples. We started our conversation with a premise and a question: disappointments lead to hopelessness. What caused such disappointments? Why so often believers find themselves struggling to trust Jesus?

Jesus came to fulfill his plan not ours. His plan is to save us from the power of sin. He came to give real meaning and real purpose to our lives. As with the first disciples, Jesus will continue to disappoint us as long as we continue to have wrong expectations of who he is. We live in a culture where we have filters for everything. Filters for hotels, Airbnb, for pictures, for conversations. We are immersed in a culture that makes us believe that we can customize our faith like if it was a car. We hear “customize your experience” when buying things, and we somehow customize Jesus as well.

We don't want his whole truth. We want the truth that aligns with my preference. And this is why Jesus disappoints. We don't want Jesus The Prophet, we want Jesus the miracle maker.

Application:

Christians should always continue to pursue a clear understanding of who Jesus is. We should never assume that we are “done” knowing Jesus. We should remain humble and eager to continue learning about who Jesus is. His words are the truth, and we need to embrace them as such. There is no negotiating. We need to take advantage of hard times and moments of frustrations, disappointments, and pain because it's in those moments when Jesus will walk alongside us to reveal deeper understanding of who he is.